



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: February 4, 2022

Agenda Item: 2022–2023 Black Bear Mandatory Harvest Reporting Requirements

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Minutes

Background: Currently, successful black bear hunters are required to present their harvest for physical inspection by a department employee, who must collect a premolar from the bear for use in cementum aging of the animal. The age data is used by the department to monitor population demographics that influence harvest recommendations. During the inspection, information about the location of the harvest is routinely collected. Current regulations only require that black bear harvests must be reported through the Harvest Reporting Line within a limited number of hunting districts that have an established quota.

The department proposes to eliminate the physical inspection because it is a burden on the hunter and the department. In lieu of the physical inspection, the department is recommending the commission require hunters to submit a premolar from the harvested animal and drop it off at a department office or mail it to the department within 10 days following the harvest. The department also recommends that all harvests should be reported on the Harvest Reporting Line, and all harvests should include a location that includes the legal description known as Township, Range, and Section. This proposal would require that all harvests would be reported through the Harvest Reporting Line at 1-877-FWP-WILD (397-9453) or (406) 444-0356 within 48 hours of the kill. Details of this proposal are included in the black bear master list that accompanies the black bear hunting regulation proposals. The commission is also considering all regulations and descriptions of boundaries for the 2022–2023 season for adoption at the February meeting, whether a change is proposed or not.

Public Involvement Process and Results: Public comment was accepted through Jan. 21, 2022. Based on the substance of public comment received through Jan. 14, the department is recommending no changes to the proposal to change black bear physical inspection requirements. Any final adjustments to these recommendations based on final public comment will be made at the commission meeting on Feb. 4

Alternatives and Analysis: Public feedback was not largely supportive of the proposed change, but the department believes that the required data to monitor black bear populations will be adequately captured using the mandatory tooth submission from harvested bears. Using comparative data obtained from other states that use mandatory tooth submissions indicates that statistically valid samples may be obtained using this approach. The commission may provide the department with additional amendments on this proposal or on any aspects of the black bear regulations that are not proposed to change.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends the commission adopt the proposed 2022 and 2023 black bear mandatory reporting regulations as described in the black bear master list.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission vote to approve changes identified in the black bear master list regarding black bear harvest reporting requirements as presented by the department and as part of the overall black bear regulations.