



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** June 23, 2022

**Agenda Item:** Remove all bag limits on Rainbow Lake, R1, effective upon commission approval

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 min

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**Background:**

The Fish and Wildlife Commission approved the Rainbow Lake fish removal project during the December 2021 commission meeting. The Rainbow Lake removal project involves depopulating the fishery which is predominantly composed of non-native Yellowstone cutthroat trout with the subsequent restocking of native westslope cutthroat trout. This is an important area for westslope cutthroat trout recovery and the project will protect downstream westslope areas. Fisheries staff are currently preparing the environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed project. Fish removal is expected to proceed as soon as August 15, 2022. Removing all bag limits on the lake prior to treatment allows the public an opportunity for unlimited harvest prior to the lake being depopulated.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:**

Fisheries staff are currently preparing the EA for the proposed project. The EA is expected to be released by May 15 for public review and comment. In similar removal projects, FWP often receives public comments that support unlimited angling opportunity prior to depopulating the fishery. This proposed regulation change may partially address similar concerns.

**Alternatives & Analysis:**

There are two alternatives:

Alternative 1: Remove bag limits on the lake prior to the fish removal effort to allow additional harvest opportunity of fish currently in the lake. This alternative would allow anglers to catch and keep fish that would otherwise be killed during the project. Similar proposals with other fish removal projects generally have strong public support.

Alternative 2: Do not remove bag limits prior to the fish removal effort. All the fish in the lake will be killed during the project without the opportunity for liberalized harvest. Projects that do not provide this fishing opportunity prior to depopulating the fishery have received less support during public comment periods.

**Proposed Motion:**

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission remove bag limits on Rainbow Lake located in the Ten Lakes Scenic Area of Lincoln County, effective immediately through August 15, 2022.