



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** April 18, 2023

**Agenda Item:** White Bear FAS Biennial Seasonal Closure (R4)

**Action Needed:** Final

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

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**Background:** White Bear Fishing Access Site (FAS) is located on the south edge of Great Falls on the Missouri River. The site has been seasonally closed between June and September every year since 2015 because of a high volume of unsavory activities such as underage use of alcohol, illegal drug use, violent behavior, public disturbance, vandalism, and litter. This activity caused numerous disturbances with neighbors and other site users and required a high law enforcement presence and high demand on maintenance resources. Neighbors expressed concerns about their safety and security. In response, the commission has maintained a biennial seasonal closure for the site to mitigate management issues. The department continues exploring alternatives that would allow the FAS to be open in the summer months but has not found a satisfactory solution.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** Neighbors to the site approached the commission in September 2014 during the open-microphone session and raised concerns about their safety. Public comment has been routinely offered at subsequent commission meetings when the seasonal closure is reviewed and has generally supported closing the site though some have supported keeping the site open.

**Analysis & Alternatives:**

Alternative A: Renew the biennial seasonal closure at White Bear FAS to be effective June to September in 2023 and 2024. Instituting a seasonal closure has proven to inhibit unlawful activities at this site.

Alternative B: Do not renew the biennial seasonal closure. FWP expects if the FAS remains open between June and September in 2023 and 2024 there would be significant impacts to FWP and county law enforcement resources as well as maintenance and recreational staff.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** FWP requests the commission renew the biennial seasonal closure proposed in Alternative A. The biennial seasonal closure has greatly reduced unlawful activity at the site. When it was not in place in June 2016, the previous problems returned quickly. They were reduced again after the closure was renewed in July 2016.

**Proposed Motion:** I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission implement a biennial seasonal closure of the White Bear FAS from June 1 to Sept. 4, 2023, and from June 1 to Sept. 2, 2024.