



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: Aug. 17, 2023

Agenda Item: City of Geraldine Urban Deer Management Plan

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: The 2003 Montana Legislature authorized cities to create plans to control game animals for public health and safety within city limits (MCA 7-31-4110). These plans require approval by the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission before implementation. The City of Geraldine considers a healthy population of wild deer important for hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities. While minor, occasional property damage within city limits by urban deer is acceptable and inevitable, high deer densities sometimes result in individual deer threatening human safety and health, injuring pets, and damaging property. Wild deer within Geraldine city limits have resulted in complaints over the last few years, and the mayor worked with local department staff to develop a draft Urban Deer Management Action Plan. This plan was approved at the Geraldine City Commission's March 14 meeting, and the approval of the Fish and Wildlife Commission is needed prior to implementation.

Public Involvement Process and Results: At the Feb. 14 Geraldine City Commission meeting, all residents present supported the city commission's action plan as presented. On March 14, the City of Geraldine approved the draft deer plan in a public meeting. Public comment will be solicited for a four-week period starting June 9. Public comments will be posted online and provided to Fish and Wildlife Commissioners at least two weeks prior to the August commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis: The city evaluated public input and, with the department, considered biological alternatives.

Alternative A: The commission may choose to approve the City of Geraldine Urban Deer Management Action Plan. The Choteau County Sheriff's Department and city employees will respond to individual deer-human conflicts and limit or reduce overall deer density within city limits, as necessary.

Alternative B: The commission may choose not to approve the deer plan, and the city and the department would continue to respond to deer complaints on an individual basis and urban deer density would remain high.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends proceeding with the proposed City of Geraldine Urban Deer Management Action Plan. The plan as written will allow peace officers and city employees trained with firearms to remove problematic deer selectively and safely within city limits. No effect on the overall deer population within the surrounding hunting districts of 447 and 471 is anticipated.

Proposed Motion: I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the proposed City of Geraldine Urban Deer Management Plan.