



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: Aug. 17, 2023

Agenda Item: Town of Philipsburg 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 Town of Philipsburg considers a healthy population of wild deer important for hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities. While minor, occasional property damage within town 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 Philipsburg town limits has resulted in complaints over the last few years, and the mayor worked with local department staff to develop a draft Deer Management Action Plan. This approved plan was forwarded to the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks on May 1, requesting the approval of the commission. The town also provided a copy of a non-feeding ordinance adopted by the town council on March 21.

Public Involvement Process and Results: The Town of Philipsburg solicited public comment consistent with development of an ordinance prohibiting the feeding of deer, which was adopted on March 21. On May 1, the town forwarded its plan and ordinance to the department for consideration and approval by the commission. Public comment will be solicited for a four-week period starting June 9. Public comments will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the August commission meeting.

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

Alternative A: The commission may choose to approve the Town of Philipsburg Urban Deer Management Plan. The Granite County Sheriff's Department will respond to individual deer-human conflicts. Additionally, the town may limit or reduce overall deer density within town limits, as necessary, in coordination with the department.

Alternative B: The commission may choose not to approve the deer plan, and the town 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 Town of Philipsburg Deer Management Action Plan. The plan as written will allow peace officers trained with firearms to remove problematic deer selectively and safely within town limits. The town may take additional steps to limit or reduce overall deer density within town limits. No effect on the overall deer population within the surrounding hunting districts of 210 and 212 is anticipated.

Proposed Motion: I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the proposed Town of Philipsburg Deer Management Action Plan.