



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: Dec. 14, 2023

Agenda Item: Translocation of marten to the North Bridger, Big Snowy, and Crazy mountains

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: In 2020, the Fish and Wildlife Commission approved the reintroduction of marten into high-quality, but unoccupied habitats in the Little Belt and Castle mountains in central Montana. During the winters of 2020–2022, 110 marten were live-trapped by volunteer fur trappers in southwest Montana and released in the Little Belt mountain complex. The department is proposing to expand the areas into which marten may be restored to include other habitats where they were historically present but are currently absent.

Public Involvement Process and Results: The department has worked with the public, including trappers, in the restoration efforts of marten in the Little Belt and Castle mountains. Public news releases and articles in the Montana Outdoors Magazine, as well as at the Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus, were well received. To date, FWP has not solicited comment on the new proposed sites, however an environmental assessment of the planned action will be done prior to seeking commission approval. In addition, public comment will be taken for four weeks following the October commission meeting. Public comments will be posted online and provided to the commission at least two weeks prior to the December commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis: This proposal would allow for marten translocations into the North Bridger, Big Snowy, and Crazy Mountains where marten were historically present but currently do not occur. Marten are abundant in southwest Montana in FWP Regions 2 and 3, and the department intends to use fur trappers to assist in the live capture of marten in these areas. The proposal would be to relocate up to 150 marten over six years (about 25/year), with a target of 75 females (about 15/year). The expansion of their range into formerly occupied but currently vacant habitat will improve their conservation status. Harvest may be recommended at some point in the future when the new populations are deemed sustainable.

Alternative A: The commission may choose to approve the proposed translocation of marten to historically occupied habitat.

Alternative B: The commission may choose not to approve the proposed translocation and no assisted range expansion will continue.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends proceeding with the planned translocations to restore marten to formerly occupied mountain ranges in Montana, pending the completion of the environmental assessment, to improve their conservation status into the future.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the proposed translocation of up to 150 marten over six years, beginning in the winter of 2023–2024, as presented by the department.

Alternative Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission amend the proposed translocation of up to 150 marten over six years, beginning in the winter of 2023–2024, as presented by the department as follows (insert changes here).