



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

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Meeting Date: Dec. 19, 2024

Agenda Item: Implement Smallmouth Bass Catch, Kill, and Report Regulation on Placid Lake

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: On September 13, 2024, an angler reported catching a ~ 10 inch smallmouth bass from her dock on Placid Lake. The angler provided photos of the catch, with the species, location, and date confirmed through a subsequent interview by FWP Fisheries staff. This is the first reported observation of smallmouth bass in Placid Lake. Ongoing fisheries monitoring at Placid Lake has never detected smallmouth bass, but water temperatures and habitat availability suggest high suitability for this species.

Smallmouth bass are predatory and an established population would likely adversely impact the existing native and non-native coldwater sport fishery in Placid Lake. Since population abundance is still low, relying on angler harvest and mandatory reporting is a cost-effective tool to determine a change in abundance and preferred habitats for smallmouth bass in the lake. This information could also help in determining the origin of the introduction and the efficacy of potential control measures. Smallmouth bass were illegally introduced in nearby Seeley Lake in the early 2000s and have been progressively expanding in the interconnected Clearwater lake-river chain that is adjacent to Placid Lake since that time. Smallmouth bass could not reach Placid Lake through natural expansion as the outlet dam has been intentionally modified to prevent all upstream fish movements into the lake.

Public Involvement Process & Results: There has been minimal public outreach due to this very recent discovery. The commission has an Unauthorized Placement of Fish rule ([ARM 12.7.1501- 1505](#)) to guide FWP's response to unauthorized introductions. The proposed action falls within management action listed in rule ([ARM 12.7.1503](#)). Similar actions to unauthorized introductions of fish have generally had wide public support. The proposed regulation change will be available for public comment. Submitted public comments will be compiled and submitted to the commission.

Alternatives & Analysis: The commission could adopt the FWP proposed regulation, not adopt the regulation, amend the proposed regulation, or propose another alternative.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends adopting the proposed catch, kill, and report regulation for smallmouth bass in Placid Lake. Catch, kill, and report is an effective tool to efficiently determine the status and potential impacts of a new fish population and helps FWP determine a course of action to minimize resource impacts of the introduction.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the mandatory catch, kill, and report regulation for smallmouth bass in Placid Lake, effective immediately.