

# FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AMENDMENT

**FWP proposal to be amended: Region 2, Ravalli County Setbacks**

**Commissioner: Burrows**

**Date Received by Commission: 10/24/24**

**Proposed amendment:**

I move the Commission amend the “No Setbacks Required for Furbearers and Wolves” to the following:

Region 2: All of Ravalli County roads closed to motor vehicle and OHV use during the designated trapping season. Roads seasonally closed to motor vehicles and OHV’s, but are lawfully open for over snow vehicles are included.

Exceptions – Maintain current setbacks of 50 ft for furbearers and 150 ft for wolf at:

- Forest Service Road #429 (Lost Horse Creek)
- Forest Service Road #468 (Nez Perce Pass Road)
- State Highway #38 (Skalkaho Pass)
- Forest Service Road #75 (Skalkaho/Rye)

**Requested by FWP (YES/NO): NO**

**If YES, then FWP’s Rationale: NA**

**If NO, then FWP Response:**

Public land trap setbacks to avoid user conflicts and incidental captures of non-target species including domestic dogs have a long history in Montana. Trap setbacks along public routes, by one definition or another, have been part of Montana’s trapping regulations since 1998. Contemporary regulated wolf trapping in Montana began in 2012, including a wolf trap setback of 150 feet from roads and trails on public land. A 500 foot setback for all ground sets including wolves was first adopted in 2013 for specifically identified public land roads and trails with high levels of recreational use.

In October 2019, the commission directed the department to review the need for additional expanded setback areas in each region in response to feedback from the Montana’s Trapping Advisory Committee. The objective was to update trapping setbacks to be effective and consistent with current public land uses, both in areas where dog-related recreation has increased and in areas where setbacks are not needed because there has been little to no dog-related recreational use. In response, the department engaged both trappers and recreational stakeholders as well as public land managers for their familiarity with recreational use on public lands. In 2021 at the conclusion of this review, setbacks in one area in Region 1 were removed while in other places setbacks were expanded with some areas restricting trapping altogether.

The current trap setback regulations were the result of extensive public process and are in place to reduce conflicts between trapping and non-trapping users. The department believes trap setbacks reduce both incidental capture of non-target species and social conflicts with recreational non-trapping recreational users of public lands. The physical corridor established by setbacks on both sides of a public route physically reduces the opportunity for incidental captures of domestic dogs and other non-targets using the route. Further, the public's awareness of setbacks allows for recreationist with domestic dogs to choose public routes with setbacks over other routes without them. The amendment reduces the number of routes with setbacks and has real potential to increase non-target captures of domestic dogs and reduce support for recreational trapping. While it is not clear how the amendment will exactly impact trapping efforts, trap captures of target species, conflicts and incidental captures of non-target species, or non-trapping recreational use of public routes, all these metrics stand to be influenced to one degree or another, from one route to another. The department does not anticipate harmful impacts to the wildlife populations in the area.