



Protecting Montana's wildlife, land, waters, and hunting & fishing heritage for future generations.

November 4, 2024

To: Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

RE: Comments on Commissioner Burrows Amendment on removal of trapping setbacks

I write to you on behalf of the Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF). We are Montana's oldest and largest statewide conservation organization, founded in 1936 by dedicated hunters, anglers, conservationists, and landowners. We represent a diverse group of public and private land users and advocates who hunt and fish and recreate in Montana.

MWF objects to the amendment by Commissioner Burrows to remove the requirement for trapping setbacks for:

"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. With the exception of maintaining current setbacks of 50 ft for furbearers and 150 ft for wolf traps and snares on:

- 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)"

Trapping setbacks were established years ago to reduce incidental captures domestic animals such as dogs when owners walk their dogs along roads on public land for recreation and exercise and to reduce conflicts between trappers and the public. This proposed amendment would remove the requirement for setbacks for placement of traps and snares along all the public roads in Ravalli County except for the four roads listed above.

In existing FWP records of incidental captures obtained by MWF from FWP through a formal records request, between 2018 and through March of 2022, there are at least 306 records of non-target captures of animals in foothold traps, snares, and conibear traps. These are likely only a small portion of the actual number of such non-target captures that occurred during this 5-year period. Of these 306 non-target captures, at least 123 were domestic dogs. Of the 123 domestic dogs incidentally captured, at least 49 were injured enough to be reported to FWP and 4 were dead. This information clearly shows that traps and snares are a danger to non-target wildlife and particularly to domestic dogs whose owners take them for walks on public lands along public roads.

In this amendment by Commission Burrows, there are no reasons presented for this proposed change in trap and snare setback requirements and no background on the origin of this idea. MWF does not see any reason to accept this amendment and remove the requirement to set back traps and snares along public roads in Ravalli County. MWF believes that the data show that this amendment will:

1. Increase the numbers of injured and dead domestic pets (dogs) along roads on public land in Ravalli County.
2. Result in fewer members of the public safety recreating on public land in Ravalli County.



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3. Increase the risk to the recreating public and particularly to children from injury from traps and snares close to public roads in Ravalli County.
4. Increase the level of conflict between the public and trappers.
5. Increase public resentment of trappers and trapping.

MWF believes there is no justification whatsoever to eliminate the setback requirement for traps and snares along roads in Ravalli County and that this amendment should be rejected.

Thank you for considering our comments. Please feel free to reach out to me at servheenc@mtwf.org should you wish to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

Christopher Servheen

Christopher Servheen, Ph.D.

President and Board Chair

Montana Wildlife Federation