

# ***FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** March 10, 2016

**Agenda Item:** Trout Creek Fishing Season Exception

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 Min

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## **Background:**

In 2015 we comprehensively reviewed and recommended changes to our Montana State Fishing regulations, which were approved by the Commission in December 2015. During this process we reworded the default Central District Standard fishing season to leave rivers and streams open to angling all year. In making this change we eliminated the need to list over 40 different exceptions for various streams, but we also knew that some water bodies would need to be listed as new exceptions to preserve the protections already in place. As the 2016 regulations are set to go into effect on March 1, 2016, we have learned that we didn't include a seasonal closure exception for Trout Creek in the 2015 process, inadvertently opening this important trout spawning tributary that joins Hauser Reservoir near Helena to angling earlier than was intended. Spawning fish in this stream are particularly vulnerable to angling because the stream is relatively small, it is located near a larger urban center, and is readily accessible from a public roadway. Rainbow Trout are already staging downstream and will soon enter the stream to spawn. To avoid unintended harm to these particularly vulnerable fish, we ask to enact a seasonal stream closure that would allow angling from the third Saturday in May through November 30 each year.

## **Public Involvement Process & Results:**

We are asking for a stream fishing season exception to correct an oversight in the 2016 fishing regulations. This year the stream would be signed, with public notice of this extended closure provided on the FWP website and in all appropriate media outlets. The regulation exception will be incorporated in the 2017 Montana State Fishing Regulations, correcting the 2016 oversight. A press release and notice on the FWP website solicited public comment as soon as we became aware of the oversight. Public comment will be solicited at the March 10 Commission meeting as well.

## **Alternatives and Analysis:**

No other alternatives are currently under consideration.

## **Agency Recommendation & Rationale:**

Our recommendation is to approve the recommended angling closure on Trout Creek, effective immediately.

## **Proposed Motion:**

I move that the Commission approve the recommended fishing season exception for Trout Creek to allow angling from the third Saturday in May through November 30 each year.