

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

**Meeting Date:** August 6, 2015

**Agenda Item:** Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes for 2016

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Proposed

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 1 hour

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## **Background**

Montana's fishing-regulation process is based on a four-year cycle. The first year of every cycle (such as 2016) establishes fishing regulations that have undergone a recent thorough review, including ways to simplify and standardize regulations for individual waters, regions, fishing districts, or statewide. The public, too, is asked for their ideas on changes.

## **Public Involvement Process & Results**

To begin development of Fishing Regulation Proposals for 2016, a brochure was developed which listed a number of ideas under consideration by FWP. The public was asked to respond to the ideas and given the opportunity to present additional ideas for regulation changes. The brochure was sent to all FWP regional headquarters in April for public distribution. In addition, the brochure was posted as an online survey on the FWP website. A total of 97 people responded to the online survey, and about 40 more comments were received electronically or by other means of communications. FWP compiled the public responses to be used in drafting proposed regulations. Further engagement with the public occurred in April and May in every FWP region – at open houses, presentations to angler groups, or discussion at FWP Regional Citizens Advisory Committees. Based on all of this input, FWP staff has developed a list of proposed regulation changes for the F&W Commission for 2016. Once approved by the Commission, a formal 30-day public comment period will follow as proposals are further assessed and refined. The Commission will consider final adoption of the regulation changes in October.

## **Alternatives and Analysis**

FWP's "Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes for 2016" lists items individually, and indicates if they change or delete an existing regulation, or if they create a new regulation. New language is indicated in italics and deleted language is indicated with a strikethrough. One or more rationale is provided for each proposed change. Proposals received from the public that were not directly incorporated here are retained by regional staff for consideration at a future time. The Commission may adopt, or modify, the regulations proposed by FWP.

## **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends adopting for 2016 the existing 2015 fishing regulations with the proposed changes, and offering them for public comment. Twenty-three of the 69 regulation changes proposed here for 2016 are intended to simplify or standardize existing regulations (primarily by deleting regulation exceptions for harvest limits, seasons, or specific sections of water bodies). Another 16 changes are primarily for fish conservation purposes, 6 are proposed as clarifications, and 24 provide new or enhanced fish harvest opportunities for anglers.

## **Proposed Motion**

I move to adopt for public comment, FWP's proposed fishing regulations for the 2016 fishing season.