

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 11, 2016
Agenda Item: 2017 Fishing Regulation Changes
Division: Fisheries
Action Needed: Proposed
Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 Min

Background

Montana's fishing-regulation process is based on a four-year cycle. The first year of every cycle (the last was in 2015 that set regulations for 2016-2019) establishes fishing regulations that have undergone a thorough internal review by FWP that includes consideration of ideas, comments, and regulation suggestions from the public. Once approved by the Commission in the first year of the cycle, these regulations are meant to remain in place four years during which time their effectiveness is evaluated with respect to fish management objectives as well as angler use and satisfaction. Changes to these regulations are presented to the Commission in subsequent years only if one or more of the following eligibility criteria are satisfied:

- Clarifications** (regulation change is needed to clarify intent of regulation or to correct typos or other errors that led to erroneous information in regulations);
- Enforcement** (regulation change is needed to improve enforcement efforts, to prevent illegal take, or to clarify intent to reduce innocent violations);
- Conservation** (regulation change is needed to conserve or protect the population of any species, but primarily Threatened and Endangered species);
- Relevancy** (regulation no longer has a real management purpose or value and there is little public following, constituency or controversy);
- Management Plans** (FWP has committed to implementing certain regulation changes if certain events transpire, e.g., changes in fish populations, angling pressure, catch rates, etc.)

In 2017 we have 15 regulation changes to recommend to the Commission that met one or more of these eligibility criteria. Each proposal is intended to improve ease of understanding, relevancy, and the consistency of protections for our fisheries in the upcoming years.

Public Involvement Process & Results

With Commission approval, the recommended proposals including any changes by the Commission will be made available during a formal 30-day public comment period. The proposals will be further assessed and refined based on this new information. The Commission will consider approving final fishing regulation recommendations in October, 2016.

Alternatives and Analysis

The Commission may dismiss, adopt, modify, and/or approve for public comment any of the regulations recommended by FWP for the 2017 fishing year.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends approving the regulation proposals, as submitted, for public comment. Public involvement is essential to achieve a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of each recommendation.

Proposed Motion

I move to authorize FWP to solicit public comment on proposed fishing regulation changes for 2017.