

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 7, 2017

Agenda Item: 2018-2019 Turkey - Upland Game Bird - Migratory Bird Regulations and Quotas

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

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Background: Season structures and hunting district boundaries are adopted biennially for most game species every other year between December and final adoptions in February. FWP proposes adopting the existing (2017) structures except for specific changes. Proposals are based on population status and/or other circumstances.

FWP proposes the following changes to turkey regulations:

- Make crossbows legal during the fall turkey season.
- Regions 2 and 3 to go to a general license opportunity

There are no changes proposed to upland bird or migratory bird regulations. The justification for the proposed change is in the Commission packet.

The use of crossbows for fall turkeys would make regulations consistent with those for forest grouse where rifles, handguns and crossbows are legal. Spring turkey means of taking would not change. The exclusion of rifles and handguns during the spring turkey season is an important safety consideration because hunters are usually camouflaged and use calls and decoys that could potentially invite a shot at a decoy from another hunter at long range with a rifle or handgun.

Turkey populations in Regions 2 and 3 are doing well; they are robust, broadly distributed and productive. Currently, Missoula and Ravalli Counties in Region 2 are general license opportunities. This proposal would make it so for the rest of Region 2 and all of Region 3. The proposal would create more and equitable opportunity for turkey hunting in areas where turkey populations are thriving. It would also give landowners additional means to address problems with too many turkeys on their property, something we have heard more of, especially in parts of Region 3.

Except for calendar rotation, all other aspects for turkey, upland birds and migratory bird regulations are to remain unchanged from the 2017 regulations.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The crossbow proposal came to FWP from an interested public. In addition to public comment at the December 7 Commission meeting, public comment will run through 5 p.m., January 24, 2018. Any final adoptions will take place at the February 2018 Commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis: No alternatives were analyzed.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt for public comment the changes to the turkey regulations and no changes to upland birds and migratory birds as presented by FWP.

Proposed Motion:

I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt for public comment the changes to the turkey regulations and no changes to upland birds and migratory birds as presented by FWP as presented by FWP. All other aspects of these seasons are to remain unchanged.