

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

**Meeting Date:** February 15, 2018

**Agenda Item:** 2018 Fishing Regulations

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 Min

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### **Background:**

The fishing regulation process is based on a four-year cycle, where the first year of each cycle is dedicated to actively soliciting ideas for changes from the public. During the following three years of the cycle (“off-cycle” years), ideas are only solicited internally from FWP biologists, fish managers and enforcement personnel. Proposals developed during off-cycle years are proposed to the commission only if they meet certain criteria: achieve certain enforcement needs, provide clarification for regulations, are important for the conservation of a fish species, are making changes to regulations no longer relevant, or fulfill direction provided in management plans. The fishing regulation proposals for 2018 are an off-cycle year; the next year with full public involvement will be 2020. The Commission already approved a package of regulation changes for 2018 at their October 2017 meeting. The two regulation changes under consideration here were proposed to the Commission at their December 2017 meeting.

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

The proposals were approved by the commission on December 7, and then were put out for a 30-day comment period from December 15, 2017 to January 14, 2018. A total of 42 comments were received. Regarding the proposed change to the Canyon Ferry walleye regulation, most commenters supported the increased bag limit but desired a different length restriction. Three of four people commenting on the Newlan Creek Reservoir regulation were in favor of the snagging proposal, but two of these expressed a desire for a lower bag limit than 35 daily and 70 in possession.

### **Alternatives and Analysis:**

The proposed regulation changes for 2018 list each proposal individually, and summarize public comments and then the FWP response to those comments.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale:**

FWP will continue to support the walleye regulation as proposed to the Commission in December, reasoning that a bag limit of 20 with a harvest restriction of 1 over 20 inches will do more to achieve management goals than alternatives provided by the public during the comment period. FWP has lowered its snagging limit proposal for kokanee on Newlan Creek Reservoir from 35 daily and 70 in possession to 15 daily and 30 in possession in response to public comment and a desire to take a conservative approach to harvest on this spawning population while evaluating the interest and pressure by anglers. Adoption of these regulations will occur too late for inclusion in the 2018 Montana Fishing Regulations booklet, and therefore public notification of the regulations will be done by means of signage posted at public access points on both reservoirs.

### **Proposed Motion:**

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt FWP’s proposed regulation changes for the 2018 fishing season.