

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 19, 2019

Agenda Item: Lake Mary Ronan Emergency Fishing Regulation (R1)

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

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Background: Northern pike were first identified in Lake Mary Ronan in 2014. In 2016 a second northern pike was captured during FWP monitoring surveys. Micro-chemical analysis of that fish determined that it was transported from another waterbody and unlawfully introduced into the lake. Further analysis of a northern pike captured by an angler in 2018 determined that pike are now successfully reproducing in the lake. Two additional pike were captured during FWP monitoring in 2019. Analysis has not been completed to determine the origin of these fish. The population density of northern pike is currently unknown, but the lake contains habitats conducive for northern pike and the department believes there is a high risk of population expansion in the lake. The lake contains popular kokanee, largemouth bass, rainbow trout and yellow perch fisheries that would be negatively impacted by a sustaining northern pike population. Lake Mary Ronan is also the only certified source for kokanee salmon eggs to maintain kokanee fisheries statewide. To gain additional information on the northern pike population, the department is proposing mandatory catch, kill, and report regulations for northern pike in Lake Mary Ronan. Similar regulations have been implemented for unauthorized introduction of walleye in Swan Lake and brown trout in the Kootenai River below Libby Dam. Data collected from fish captured by anglers would be used to further determine the source of the fish (reproduced in the lake or continued unauthorized introduction) and population size and viability. Edible portions of the fish may be returned to the angler upon request. Rules associated with unauthorized placement of fish provides guidance on FWP response to discovery of unauthorized introductions and instituting mandatory catch and kill is one of the identified management actions (ARM 12.7.1503).

Public Involvement Process & Results: This proposal is in response to the unauthorized placement of northern pike in Lake Mary Ronan. No public process for this proposal occurred prior to the commission meeting. Reproduction in the lake was just discovered in spring 2019, precluding proposed changes at an earlier commission meeting and accommodating full public process.

Alternatives and Analysis: With no action the department will lack data needed for determining appropriate management actions. The proposed regulation is expected to allow the department to collect additional data to determine population status.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends approving mandatory kill, report, and turn in regulations for northern pike in Lake Mary Ronan. The proposed regulation falls under Unauthorized Placement of Fish Administrative Rule (ARM 12.7.1501-1505) and uses anglers as a tool to manage unauthorized species through harvest and provides FWP the means to collect additional population data.

Proposed Motion: I move to approve a mandatory kill, report, and turn in fishing regulation for northern pike as recommended by FWP for Lake Mary Ronan.