



Wildlife Division
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
April 1, 2021

Dear Interested Person:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is requesting public review and comment on the following items. Supporting information on these items can be found on our website under "Public Comment Opportunities" at <https://fwp.mt.gov/hunt/public-comment-opportunities>.

AVISTA RECREATIONAL ACCESS AGREEMENT, R1

A biennial rule for the 5,029-acre Avista Recreation Management Area was previously established by the Fish & Wildlife Commission in 2014. This area is heavily used by the public for year-round recreation and is located in Sanders County along the Clark Fork River near Thompson Falls. The Avista Recreation Management Area biennial rule was renewed by the Fish & Wildlife Commission in 2016 and 2018. The renewal of this biennial rule would perpetuate year-round recreational access for public use for an additional two years.

STIMSON LUMBER RECREATIONAL ACCESS AGREEMENT, R1

A biennial rule for the 119,761-acre Stimson Lumber Company Recreation Management Area was previously established by the Fish & Wildlife Commission in August 2019. Prior to the initial biennial rule approval in 2019, FWP worked closely with Stimson Lumber Company to develop a joint proposal for managing public recreation on their privately owned timberlands in FWP Administrative Region 1. The renewal of this biennial rule would perpetuate year-round recreational access for public use for an additional two years.

NATURE CONSERVANCY RECREATIONAL ACCESS AGREEMENT, R2

A biennial rule for the 151,000-acre Nature Conservancy Recreation Management Area was previously established by the Fish & Wildlife Commission in August 2015. Prior to the initial biennial rule approval in 2015, FWP worked closely with the Nature Conservancy to develop a joint proposal for managing public recreation on their privately owned Western Montana Forest Lands in FWP Administrative Region 2. The Nature Conservancy Recreation Management Area biennial rule was renewed by the Fish & Wildlife Commission in 2017 and 2019. The renewal of this biennial rule would perpetuate year-round recreational access for public use for an additional two years. One change to the previous rule is that it would be unlawful for a person to set traps or snares on TNC lands without a Special Use Permit.

2021 MOUNTAIN LION QUOTAS

Proposed harvest quotas for mountain lion are based on research, surveys, harvest and mortality data, and public comment. Below are proposed changes from 2020 quotas and subquotas. All other quotas and subquotas are proposed as unchanged from 2020 levels. Quotas apply to "any legal lion" unless otherwise noted and as influenced by subquotas.

Region 2

- Mountain lion hunting district (HD) 204/260/261/262: increase total quota from 5 to 6

- Increase female subquota from 1 to 2, and maintain male subquota at 5
- Restructure mountain lion combinations for HDs 211 through 217
 - HD 214: male subquota 2, female subquota 1
 - HD 212/213/217: male subquota 5, female subquota 1
 - HD 215: male subquota 3, female 1
 - HD 211 and 216: no change to quotas, but eastern boundary will change to Storm Lake Road

Region 4

- Mountain lion HD 418/420/448: increase total quota from 8 to 10, increase female subquota from 4 to 5, increase male subquota from 4 to 5

MONTANA CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The current Montana Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management Plan operates under the 2014 Decision Notice by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks regarding the department's surveillance and response to CWD detections in the state. Approved by the commission and implemented in fall 2017 following the first detection of CWD in free-ranging wild deer in Montana, this plan builds on prior plans and adds logistical details for implementation. This plan includes adjustments based on experience gained through surveillance, testing, management, and outreach efforts since 2017. The intent of the plan remains to: 1) limit the spread of CWD since detection in Montana; 2) maintain or reduce the prevalence of CWD in specific locations once detected; and 3) improve communication and outreach on CWD among the public, other agencies, and the department.

The department anticipates minor edits to this plan in preparation for final approval in June, as the likely edits use an evolving approach to the assessment and prioritization of surveillance areas. The commission recently adopted commission rule language to address updated carcass disposal guidance, and the commission is considering proposed administrative rule language to address the use of scents while hunting as addressed in the last revision of the plan.

MONTANA ELK MANAGEMENT PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Elk Management Plan that currently guides elk management for FWP was adopted in 2005. Since adoption, many changes on the landscape and new social considerations suggest that the development of an updated plan is appropriate. In April 2020, the Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission endorsed a process to develop a new Elk Management Plan. The first step was to assemble a citizens group to provide initial guidance to identify relevant issues and define durable principles to be used in the plan development. The citizens group was to be diverse and independent yet represent multiple stakeholder perspectives. FWP solicited applications for the Elk Management Plan Initial Guidance Citizens Group over a 30-day period and received 59 applications. FWP deliberated extensively before recommending a subset that could provide a diversity of perspectives including that of landowners, hunters, outfitters and guides, backcountry users, wildlife enthusiasts, and interested members of the public. Membership was selected from varying regions and elk management challenges across Montana. Members were chosen to serve based on demonstrated ability to respectfully express an important and unique perspective, to hear others well, to think independently, and to lead effectively. The group met using a virtual platform for five days (Nov. 19 and Dec. 2, 3, 16 and 17, 2020). The group articulated elk management issues and defined 19 Guiding Principles to address elk management challenges in Montana. If adopted, the department plans to build upon the Elk Management Guiding Principles to develop more specific elk management strategies and actions in Montana's new Elk Management Plan.

TO MAKE A COMMENT

For further clarification or additional materials, please call the Wildlife Division office at 406-444-2612 or send an email to fwpwld@mt.gov. Comments will be accepted online by using the link below, in writing sent to the address above, and by email to fwpwld@mt.gov.

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

If you would like to receive further public comment opportunities via email communications, please email fwpwd@mt.gov to be put on our mailing list.

COMMENT PERIOD DEADLINE & FINAL ADOPTION MEETING

Comments on the proposed items will be accepted until **Monday, May 3, 2021, at 5 p.m.**, with final adoption at the **June 2021** commission meeting.

- ✓ <https://fwp.mt.gov/hunt/public-comment-opportunities>