



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: April 1, 2021

Agenda Item: Montana Elk Management Plan Guiding Principles

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 45 Minutes

Background: The Elk Management Plan that currently guides elk management for Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (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 and 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 5 days (Nov. 19 and Dec. 2, 3, 16 and 17, 2021). The group articulated elk management issues and defined nineteen 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.

Public Involvement Process and Results: FWP had two public comment opportunities during the Elk Management Plan Initial Guidance Citizens Group meetings and received three comments. If adopted for public comment, comment will be taken on the Elk Management Guiding Principles until May 3, 2021 at 5 p.m. Public input is important and will be solicited throughout the Elk Management Plan development. The department will continue to use the commission process to solicit public comment and update the public.

Alternatives and Analysis: The proposed Elk Management Guiding Principles can be adopted as proposed, altered with suggestions, or no action may be taken.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission vote to adopt for public comment the proposed Elk Management Plan Guiding Principles developed by the Elk Management Plan Initial Guidance Citizens Group as presented by the department.