



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 23, 2020

Agenda Item: Implementing the HB 311 Nonresident Hound Handler Permit

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 min.

Background:

House Bill 311 was passed by the 2019 Montana State Legislature and created a Nonresident Hound Handler License (Class D-4). The primary intents of the bill were to reduce the amount of illegal outfitting that may be occurring, increase resident lion hunting opportunity, and to shift outfitted lion hunting to those properly licensed in Montana.

Statutory limitations of HB311 include that no more than 35 D-4 licenses be issued in any year, and no more than two in any district. A D-4 license is for personal use only and cannot be used to assist any other person in the pursuit of a lion for harvest. The cost of a D-4 license is \$500 and will be adjusted annually. HB311 requires that the license fees be used for mountain lion management, conservation, and monitoring. Montana-licensed outfitters and guides and nonresidents hunting with any Montana-licensed outfitters are not required to have a Class D-4 license.

FWP proposes to implement HB311 as stated in statute with the first draw for D-4 licenses for license year 2020 concurrent with other big game drawings. Thirty-five D-4 license applicants would be selected from those that apply. All lion districts would be eligible, but only the first two applicants to be drawn for a specific district will receive the license for that district.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

HB311 was passed by the Montana Legislature and was supported during legislative testimony by the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association, resident houndsmen, Citizens for Balanced Use, and the Montana Wildlife Federation. A very limited number of opponents were opposed because they thought the bill empowered Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks too much or that more enforcement of current regulations could solve the problem. Proponents of the bill were more numerous and commonly described their experiences encountering illegal outfitting where nonresident houndsmen are seen with multiple groups of "friends" they were helping hunt lions. The public commission process will allow further input and refinement.

Alternatives and Analysis:

HB311 is state law and must be implemented. While the statute allows for limiting the number of nonresident hunters in lion districts and for the commission to attach certain conditions to the use of a D-4 license, no limits or conditions beyond those clearly stated in the bill are proposed at this time. It should be noted that the commission could choose to provide less than 35 D-4 licenses.

Proposed Motion:

I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt for public comment the proposed implementation of HB311 by holding the first drawing for 35 D-4 licenses with no more than 2 D-4 licenses issued in any one district in 2020 concurrent with other big game drawings where all lion districts can be applied for.