



Wildlife Division
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
June 25, 2020

Dear Interested Person:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is requesting public review and comment on the following items. Supporting information on these items can be found on our website under “Opportunity for Public Comment” at fwp.mt.gov/hunting/ or directly by using the link below.

2020 Furbearer Trapping Regulations and Quotas

The department is proposing two regulation changes to furbearers and trapping as outlined below.

Swift Fox

- Expand the Trapping District 6 swift fox eastern boundary to align with Deer-Elk hunting district 670.
- Change swift fox season close date in Trapping District 6 from March 1 to January 15 to reduce overlap with the breeding season.

Regulations regarding trapping setbacks in specific locations will be considered by the department. If you have suggested locations where a trapping setback might be considered, please share that with us as well.

2020 Contractual Public Elk Hunting Access Agreements (HB 454 Agreements)

Under the provisions of 87-2-513 MCA, the department may issue an either-sex or antlerless elk permit, license or a combination thereof, in exchange for allowing four successful elk permit holders, as well as additional public hunters to lands enrolled in a contractual public elk hunting access agreement for the purposes of wildlife management.

House Bill 43 in the 2019 Legislature amended this statute so that these agreements no longer require commission approval, use the successful permit applicant list identified through a random drawing, and authorize the department to offer a landowner who enrolls a license in addition to the permit. The permit, license or combination thereof that is granted to the landowner is only valid on the lands enrolled in the agreement. Historically, the department issued additional elk permits to applicants who were unsuccessful in the drawing process after commission approval. Due to the amendments in the 2019 Legislature, the department will now randomly select hunters for access from the successful drawing list.

The department will draft agreements and solicit public comment. After the public comment period, the department will make recommendations to the director for final decision.

Under these contractual agreements, the landowner works with the department to define the areas open to public elk hunting, the number of elk hunting days that will be allowed on the property, and other factors that the department and landowner consider needed for elk management on the landowner's property.

Two agreements are being considered for 2020: the John Swanz Ranch and the Robert Lee Ranch. The Swanz and Lee agreements specify a single 411-20 either-sex permit each for the respective owner or a family member or an authorized full-time employee. Landowner permits are valid only on their enrolled properties. The Swanz agreement was first used in 2002 and the Lee agreement in 2015. Each has been reapplied annually since those dates based upon continued positive post-hunt evaluations.

In turn, for each of the properties, the department will notify four public 411-20 permit holders for each landowner permit of the access opportunity. Public hunters are offered the opportunity to hunt on the enrolled property but may also hunt anywhere else the permit is valid. If any of the public hunters declines the opportunity to hunt on the ranch properties, it will be offered to the next randomly selected permit holder.

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 any of the links 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 fwpwld@mt.gov to be put on our mailing list.

COMMENT PERIOD DEADLINE & FINAL ADOPTION MEETING

Comments on the proposed furbearer regulations and quotas will be accepted until **Tuesday, July 28, 2020, at 5 p.m.**, with final adoption at the **August 20th** commission meeting. Comments on the contractual public elk hunting access agreements will be accepted until **Monday, July 27, 2020 at 5 p.m.**, with department input to the director for final decisions.

✓ **2020 Furbearer Trapping Regulations and Quotas**

<http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2020/proposedFurbearer.html3>

✓ **2020 Contractual Public Elk Hunting Access Agreements (HB 454 Agreements)**

<http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2020/HB454Agreements.html>