MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION
AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: October 22, 2020

Agenda Item: 2021 Elk Shoulder Seasons

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background:
The Commission adopted elk shoulder seasons for fall 2020 but chose not to authorize the fall 2021 seasons during the last biennium season setting process, with the intention to revisit the seasons this fall. The Commission adopted "Final Elk Season Guidelines - Flexible season structure with performance-based shoulder seasons" on October 8, 2015. From that document: "A 'shoulder season' here is defined as: *any firearm season printed in the hunting regulations that occurs outside the 5-week general firearm season between August 15 and February 15 in one or more hunting districts or portion(s) thereof.* Examples might include B licenses or general seasons extended early or late or additional sets of B licenses or permits valid early or late. Shoulder seasons here do not include early backcountry hunts, primitive weapon hunts, game damage hunts, management seasons, or season extensions."

Regional and headquarters staff with the department reviewed the existing season structure associated with the 2020 elk shoulder seasons. Currently, the department is recommending no change to the 2020 season structure for implementation in fall 2021.

Public Involvement Process:
Public comment will be accepted on proposed 2021 elk shoulder seasons through 5p on Nov. 23, 2020.

Alternatives and Analysis:
The commission may choose to amend the proposed seasons. Although some early seasons have occurred, many portions of shoulder seasons have not yet occurred, and harvest data is not yet available. In the past, shoulder seasons have allowed hunters to harvest greater numbers of elk in the hunting districts where these seasons are implemented. The department has received limited comment regarding ongoing 2020 seasons, and we are hopeful that this may be indicative of reaching a workable balance in seasons.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale:
The department recommends adoption of the proposed 2021 elk shoulder seasons for public comment.

Proposed Motion:
I move that the commission adopt for public comment the 2021 elk shoulder seasons as presented by the department, except for standard calendar rotation and all other aspects of these seasons unless addressed in other proposals.