



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS
MONTANA**

March 21, 2024

Chair Robinson, Vice Chair Tabor, Commissioners:

On behalf of the Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, we submit the following comments on the proposed 2024 WMA Closure Exceptions. Our members and supporters value our fair-chase hunting heritage and the wild public lands habitat needed to support it. Our thoughts on this come from a standpoint of doing what's best for the resource and then adding opportunity where it makes sense.

We support the Blackfoot Clearwater WMA closing on Dec. 1 at 11:59 p.m. as this better aligns with the unique Hunting District 282 season dates.

We support the Calf Creek WMA closing on Dec. 1 and opening at noon on May 15th, as this better aligns with other WMA seasons and takes into account the increasing development in the area and lack of suitable winter range elsewhere.

We support adding an exception for the J. Ray Kuhns WMA and opening this on April 14 at noon. As stated in the proposal, this WMA is primarily white-tailed deer winter range and by mid-April, the deer have dispersed. Opening this WMA before the turkey opener will allow our members the ability to hunt turkeys on public lands.

Finally, we ask that FWP put added resources into enforcing these closures as trespass - specifically before opening dates for shed hunting - is becoming a growing concern amongst our membership.

In closing, we respectfully ask that the Commission approve the Agency Recommendation & Rationale for the proposed 2024 WMA Closure Exceptions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

Dan Tracey, Volunteer Missoula Valley Board Member
The Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

