



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 5, 2019

Agenda Item: City of White Sulphur Springs Urban Mule Deer Management Plan

Action Needed: Approval

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: MCA 7-31-4110 recognizes that cities or towns may need to manage wildlife within their boundaries to protect residents or their property. Recent FWP surveys of mule deer within the city of White Sulphur Springs found a minimum winter density of >120 deer/mi². The Meagher County Sheriff's Office, FWP, and city staff regularly respond to incidents of deer acting aggressively or damaging residents' homes and landscaping.

The White Sulphur Springs City Council developed a Mule Deer Management Action Plan, which is intended to 1) reduce the negative impacts to people caused by mule deer within the city of White Sulphur Springs and, 2) provide the city of White Sulphur Springs and the Meagher County Sheriff with the management tools necessary to effectively respond to individual deer-human conflicts and to limit overall mule deer density within the city limits, as necessary.

The city requests that FWP issue the Meagher County Sheriff (the city's law enforcement) a Permit to Destroy Game Animals Causing Damage. The permit would allow the sheriff, or his agents, to 1) euthanize individual deer within city limits that threaten human safety or property and, 2) reduce the potential for human-deer conflicts by lowering the density of deer resident within the city of White Sulphur Springs.

All deer removed under the permit would be professionally processed (at the city's expense) for distribution to residents in need. The city would prepare an annual report for FWP describing how the plan was implemented.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The city council presented a draft of the action plan during an open meeting in Dec. 2018, collected public comment, and adopted the final action plan at their Aug. 5, 2019, open meeting. Public comment was supportive. The Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission moved to open public comment on the plan at their Oct. 17, 2019, meeting. The public comment period was open from then until Nov. 18 and we received three comments. Two did not support the plan and thought deer should be harvested by hunters rather than city/county officials. The other supported the plan but thought a trained civilian marksman should harvest the deer rather than city/county officials. All comments are included in the commission packet.

Alternatives and Analysis: Hunting resident deer in the city would be unsafe and resident deer aren't present or vulnerable outside of the city where they can be safely hunted. If the action plan is not endorsed by the commission, FWP will continue to respond to aggressive deer within the city. Resident deer density would likely remain high.

Proposed Motion: I proposed the commission approve the City of White Sulphur Springs Urban Mule Deer Management Plan.