

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: July 10, 2014

Agenda Item: Senate Bill 200 Wolf Quota

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background

Senate Bill 200, passed by Montana's 63rd Legislature, provides for landowners or their agents, without a wolf license, to take wolves that are a potential threat to human safety, livestock or domestic dogs. The bill also provided authority for the Fish & Wildlife Commission to create rules and set a quota to regulate this specific take. This quota and take is separate, and in addition to, any quota or general harvest associated with the wolf hunting and trapping season. The Commission has already adopted ARM rules that confirm such requirements as landowners reporting within 24 hours any wolf taken under this expanded authority. The carcass must be left where it was killed until FWP investigates. The hide, skull and carcass must also be surrendered to FWP. FWP proposes an adjustment to the initial adoption--a statewide quota of 50 wolves with the option for the Commission to allow an additional 50 if the first 50-quota is met. This would remain in place until another annual quota is adopted in July 2015.

Public Involvement Process & Results

During the public hearings on this administrative rule, public comment included requests for the quota to be liberal enough to ensure legislative intent for additional authority to take potentially threatening wolves while also maintaining a viable wolf population. Public comment end June 23 with comments forwarded to the Commission. There was a relatively large volume of public comment with some comments in "form letter" format. Many of these comments opposed the proposed quota.

Alternatives and Analysis

Assumptions based upon the history of relatively few wolves taken by landowners suggest a relatively small total take. In this light, a 100-wolf quota is likely overly sufficient to maintain this authority throughout the year.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends a statewide quota of 50 wolves representing potential threats to humans, livestock or domestic dogs with an option for an additional 50 to be approved by the Commission. Historical harvest of wolves by landowners suggests a 50-wolf statewide annual quota (with an option for an additional 50) would maintain the opportunity to take wolves throughout the year without unduly risking Montana's wolf population. In the event take of wolves under this authority exceeds expectations and represents real concerns, the Commission may restrict this take in specific areas before the statewide quota is met. This quota and take is separate and in addition to, any quota or general harvest associated with the wolf hunting and trapping seasons.

Proposed Motion

I move the Commission adopt as final the statewide 50-wolf quota with a Commission option for an additional 50 for wolves taken under the terms of Senate Bill 200 as presented by FWP.