

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 10, 2016

Agenda Item: Lake Helena and Canyon Ferry Reservoir Five-Year Commercial Carp Fishing Permit

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed for this Presentation: 5 Min

Background

FWP received an application for a commercial fishing permit to harvest carp via active seining from Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena. By statute, the Fish & Wildlife Commission is authorized to approve one commercial fishing operation for each body of water and to establish specific regulations regarding gear, limits, seasons, closures and any other limitations deemed necessary. This application is for a Class B Permit that requires a fee of \$200 annually plus a \$1,000 Surety Bond. The Commission has approved the commercial fishing regulations for Canyon Ferry and Lake Helena annually for the past eight years. The current applicant (Tracy Fortner) has held the permit for the past five years. This year he has requested a five-year permit (2016-2020). The proposed regulations are included in the information package. At the December 2015 meeting, the Commission again tentatively approved the regulations for a commercial fishing operation on Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena for 2016, pending public comment. The proposed regulations are included in the information package.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Commercial fishing regulations for Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena were originally approved by the Commission in 2005 following public input and an environmental assessment. In subsequent years, when FWP has received an application to fish commercially on these waters, the public has been provided an opportunity to comment. For this application, two comments were received during the public input period from Dec 22, 2015 – Jan 21, 2016, one in favor and one against. The comment against the application noted that fly fishing for carp has become popular on these waters and should be a higher management priority than a commercial use. The comment in support expressed the belief that carp are predators on perch eggs and by suppressing their numbers through commercial harvest the perch population can be protected

Alternatives and Analysis

The Commission has two options: approve the proposed regulations or revise the proposed regulations and solicit public comment again. FWP recognizes the increasing popularity of fly fishing for carp, but feels that at this point the commercial harvest is miniscule relative to the carp population and therefore unlikely to impact that sport. FWP will continue to track this issue through efforts of its creel clerks who interview these anglers each year, and will consider changes to the commercial permit if impacts are realized. The concern that carp prey on perch eggs is not supported by the scientific literature, but if true would be consistent with the goal of the commercial permit to reduce carp biomass in order to increase game fish biomass or desired forage fish biomass (such as yellow perch).

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends approval of this application because of the potential benefit that a commercial operation may have on the game fish of the two waters.

Proposed Motion

I move that the Commission approve the proposed regulations for a commercial fishing operation on Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena for 2016-2020.