

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: July 9, 2015

Agenda Item: 2015 Furbearer Regulations

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background

Furbearer season structure and quotas are defined by the F&W Commission. Proposed changes for 2015 are addressed below. All other season elements and quotas are proposed as unchanged from 2014. Highlighted sections represent proposed adjustments or clarifications from the May adoption.

- Reduce Region 4 bobcat quota from 200 to 100
- Reduce Region 5 bobcat quota from 250 to 200.
- Reduce Region 6 bobcat quota from 90 to 50.
- FWP is proposing that people harvesting bobcats, otters and swift fox be required to turn in the lower jaw for ageing. The jaw would not be returned but sent directly to the independent tooth-ageing lab for tooth extraction and ageing. This differs from the current system of requiring that the entire skull be turned in and the skulls are sent to the FWP lab in Bozeman at the end of the season. The lab then boils the skulls, extracts the teeth, sends them to the tooth-aging lab, and then returns the skulls to the individual harvesters if they want them back. The reason for the proposed change is twofold: 1) the FWP lab no longer has the capacity to process skulls, and 2) our analysis indicates it will be cheaper.

FWP is proposing that the Commission adopt the regulation changes outlined in the lynx lawsuit settlement.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Regional FWP staff attended annual district meetings of the Montana Trappers Association. The public comment period ended June 29. Comments were forwarded to the Commission. Many comments spoke to deficiencies in the proposed Lynx Lawsuit Settlement Agreement and offered specific adjustments for consideration. While FWP has worked to address this input at the time of this writing there are no proposed adjustments to the settlement language pending review by plaintiffs.

Alternative and Analysis

Proposals provide sound furbearer management to include trapping with consideration of comments and concerns from other user groups. Proposals for bobcat quotas include current information assembled by regional FWP staff.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale

Recommend maintaining 2014 structure and quotas except for the proposed changes noted here. This is consistent with existing information and represents reasonable and appropriate consideration of user groups and the continued presence of contemporary data in furbearer management that include trapping.

Proposed Motion

I move to approve the 2015 furbearer season structure and quota changes as proposed by FWP.