

# ***FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** October 8, 2015

**Agenda Item:** 2016 Brucellosis Annual Work Plan

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 minutes

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## **Background**

In January 2013, the commission endorsed elk management recommendations from a citizen working group for application in areas with brucellosis (including the Designated Surveillance Area as described by the Montana Department of Livestock). The commission also recognized the need for annual work plans based upon these recommendations. The annual work plans describe specific management actions available for implementation. The proposed 2016 annual work plan represents the fourth iteration of annual plans and it builds upon the 2013, 2014, and 2015 plans and the experience gained through implementation. The proposed 2016 plan largely restates the 2015 plan and includes hazing, fencing, lethal removal of elk, habitat modifications, and other efforts to adjust elk distribution at small scales to mitigate the risk of brucellosis transmission from elk to cattle. This proposed work plan also includes the potential for local work groups to propose modifications or additions to the 2016 plan to the commission at a later date. Proposed changes in the 2016 annual work plan include definitions and clarifications to aid common understanding and implementation across staff, landowners, sportspersons, and other members of the public. Also proposed is allowing up to 25 percent of hunters for an elk management removal to be identified by the landowner if hunters from the Hunt Roster cannot respond as needed.

At the Aug. 8 commission meeting FWP staff was directed by the commission to explore additional refinements to hazing language. The proposed final work plan includes adjusted hazing language and other clarifications based upon public inputs. A supplemental document contains the proposed final 2016 annual plan and is available to the public from FWP.

## **Public Involvement Process & Results**

The public comment opportunity ran through 5 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 8. Five comments were received and forwarded to the commission. Comments included continued opposition consistent with comments to previous years' plans.

## **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends adoption of the proposed 2016 annual work plan with minor adjustments from the Aug. 8 adoption. This plan reflects FWP experience gained from 2013, 2014, and 2015 efforts as well as participation and input from the statewide working group, landowners, and sportspersons. The proposed plan reflects a continued focus and commitment to risk management. Some interests continue to advocate eradication. This plan represents a viable alternative to that contentious debate.

## **Alternatives and Analysis**

Proposals may be adopted as proposed or with adjustment per FWP justifications, public comment and commission discussion.

## **Proposed Motion**

I move to adopt as final the proposed 2016 annual work plan for elk management in areas with brucellosis as presented by FWP.