

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: November 12, 2015

Agenda Item: Public Scoping on Biennial Season Setting

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Informational

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background

While regional and other FWP staff routinely engages the public throughout the year, the formal season setting process has historically started with the public introduction of proposals in December of odd years with opportunity for public comment and public introduction of alternative proposals available at that time. These same adopted proposals are then made available for public comment through most of January. This includes more than 40 public meetings and other contacts with sportsmen across the state. Final proposals and adoptions take place in February 2016 so that regulation booklets may be available for spring bear and turkey seasons and nonresident deer and elk license application deadlines.

While the biennial season-setting process has successfully generated considerable public comment to FWP and the Commission, one criticism was the lack of public participation opportunity prior to initial proposals being framed by FWP. In response to this criticism, starting in 2014 FWP inserted an additional scoping step during the summer and early fall prior to the December meeting. For 2015 this scoping includes two additional F&W Commission presentations or discussions (August and November) and public comment opportunities online using Survey Monkey from August 6th thru September 9th. FWP also previously held public open houses in each region, because these were poorly attended (commonly 0-6 people) they were discontinued.

Public Involvement Process & Results

A total of 135 people offered online comments, in addition to three email comments and one comment received after the deadline. The late and email comments reflected general issues. Montana residents made up 92% of the total comments, and addressed multiple issues and species. Comments spoke to multiple geographic scales (hunting district, region-specific, statewide). The comments have been forwarded to the Commission and regional staff for their consideration prior to drafting and reviewing formal season proposals. This Commission informational session is to generally summarize and provide additional exposure to those comments. Any formal recommendations will be presented to the Commission at its December 10th meeting.