

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 11, 2016

Agenda Item: Brucellosis 2016 Work Plan Review and Proposed 2017 Annual Work Plan

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Min

Background

In January 2013, the commission endorsed elk management recommendations from a citizen working group for use in areas with brucellosis (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 2017 annual work plan represents the fifth iteration of annual plans and builds upon the 2013 - 2016 plans and experience gained through implementation of these previous plans. The proposed 2017 plan largely restates the 2016 plan to include hazing, limited fencing, limited 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 2017 plan to the commission at a later date.

The proposed 2017 annual work plan includes new language addressing the potential for elk exposed to brucellosis to mix with elk not exposed in areas near the DSA boundary. In response, the proposed 2017 plan identifies non-lethal hazing as a potential management response, where practical. A supplemental document contains the proposed 2017 annual plan and is available from FWP.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The public comment opportunity for any proposed adoption will run through 5 p.m. Monday, Sept. 12 with any final adoption scheduled for the Oct. 13 commission meeting. Any final adoption would be available for implementation at that time.

The citizen working group originally charged to develop recommendations for elk management in areas with brucellosis was informally reconvened July 5 to review the past year's efforts. This meeting was open to the general public. The work group advocated the additional proposed language relative to different elk groups potentially mixing (some exposed to brucellosis, others not).

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends adoption of the proposed 2017 annual work plan. This plan reflects FWP experience gained from 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 efforts as well as continued, informal participation from the statewide working group and input from landowners, sportspersons, industry groups, other members of the public, and other agencies.

Alternatives and Analysis

The proposal may be adopted as presented or with adjustment per FWP justifications, public comment, and commission discussion.

Proposed Motion

I move to adopt the proposed 2017 annual work plan for elk management in areas with brucellosis as presented by FWP.