

***FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET*****Meeting Date:** December 8, 2016**Agenda Item:** Wildlife Management Area Biennial Public Use Rules**Division:** Wildlife**Action Needed:** Proposed**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 Min**Background**

Public use rules for Wildlife Management Areas, Wildlife Habitat Protection Areas, and Fisheries Conservation Areas (FCAs) are adopted by the F&W Commission on a biennial schedule. FWP is recommending retaining existing rules with three edits and one addition. A copy of the proposed rules with highlighted and underlined edits is part of the Commission packet. The first proposed edit is to eliminate Osprey View FCA as one of the exceptions for year round accessibility. This change would make the property open to year round access which is compatible with the property's habitat values. The second directs public users of Foys Bend FCA to special hunting restrictions posted on site. This property has operated on a reservation system with designated days of the week that are rested from public access to help retain game on the property during hunting season and to maximize harvest. The third proposed edit is a requirement for daily removal of tree stands from the FCAs in the Flathead Valley in Region 1. This is intended to provide equal opportunities for the public to hunt on these properties that are heavily used.

The new rule pertains the use of drones and similar remotely controlled vehicles. The addition would prohibit the use of these vehicles except as authorized in writing by the regional wildlife manager for educational value or other public benefit. The purpose for such a restriction is to avoid potential impacts such vehicles can have on habitat function and wildlife distribution and behavior.

**Public Involvement Process & Results**

Upon tentative approval, the public use rules would be available for public review and comment. The Commission would take final action in February 2017.

**Alternatives and Analysis**

The package of rules adopted in February 2015 as well as the proposed changes may be modified or added to based on public comment and Commission direction.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends the Commission provide tentative approval of the proposed rules, allowing for further public review. The function of these rules, as described therein, is to "protect fish and wildlife habitat, wildlife presence on WMAs, and public use of the WMAs, including but not limited to fishing, trapping and hunting opportunities. All other uses are secondary and must be in accord with the primary goals and objectives of the wildlife management areas."

**Proposed Motion**

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission provide tentative approval of the public use rules as proposed.