

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

**Meeting Date:** December 8, 2016

**Agenda Item:** Archery Technology Commission Policy

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 30 Min

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**Background:** Montana Code Annotated (87-1-301) states “The commission may adopt rules regarding the use and type of archery equipment that may be employed for hunting and fishing purposes, taking into account applicable standards as technical innovations in archery equipment change.” In recent years, there has been increasing pressure for the Fish and Wildlife (FW) Commission to allow electronic devices on archery equipment and to include crossbows in archery only seasons. These types of equipment proposals have a history of being contentious within the Montana bowhunting community with the debate spilling over into the legislative arena as well. At their October 2016 meeting, the Commission adopted a proposed policy addressing archery technology, prepared for them by the Montana Bowhunters Association (MBA). This includes an archery equipment evaluation matrix designed to standardize and strengthen the review process for any new archery equipment proposal presented within the existing biennial season setting process.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** During the May 2016 Commission work session, the MBA presented a historical perspective on archery season intent, justification of current regulations, and current equipment discussions and challenges within the bowhunting community. Subsequently the MBA designed a policy and evaluation matrix for the Commission to better focus equipment discussions to aid the Department, Commission, and Public in their deliberations on archery equipment proposals. That policy was proposed by the MBA to the Commission during the open mike portion of the October commission meeting. The Commission adopted the policy for public comment as proposed by the MBA. At that point FWP took on the task of managing the public comment opportunity and preparing a final proposal on behalf of the Commission

The public comment period ran through Friday, November 18. A total of 251 comments were received and forwarded to the Commission. Not surprising, public comment was diverse. Many comments addressed specific technologies instead of the broader proposed policy and its intended functionality. There were comments for and against the policy with some proposing specific changes. Many comments did recognize that some technology might be reasonable to allow and still be consistent with current archery only seasons. Others spoke against any changes, felt that archery technology had already exceeded the essence of primitive weapons, and expressed concern about that trend continuing.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** Based on public comment FWP has modified the policy to include the addition of a question in the matrix and to remove the fixed number of “yes” or “no” answers that might require one or another Commission action. FWP does believe the concept of a standardized review will help future archery technology discussions.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** Other options include no policy or further adjustments to the proposed policy. While FWP supports the intent of a policy the department does recognize other refinements may be helpful.

**Proposed Motion:** I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt as final the Archery Technology Commission Policy as presented by FWP.