

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 10, 2017

Agenda Item: Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area Memorandum of Understanding with Bureau of Reclamation (R4)

Division: Wildlife **Action Needed:** Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Min



Background

Initial acquisitions, lease agreements, and subsequent management of Freezout Lake WMA by the Montana Fish and Game Department (now MT FWP) began in 1953. An updated 50-year lease agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) was established in 1967. In short, this agreement transferred all management authority of the described lands from the BOR to the Montana Fish and Game Department. In order for FWP to maintain management authority of the WMA in its present form, a new lease agreement is necessary. Since there is no language in the 1967 agreement that specifically speaks to an official renewal process, Commission approval is a necessary step to begin this process.

Public Involvement Process & Results

No official public process or comments have been taken at this time. Upon Commission endorsement, an environmental assessment (EA) would be completed with an opportunity for public comment.

Alternatives and Analysis

The EA would describe potential alternatives with analyses of impacts and pros and cons.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends endorsing the process to conduct a MEPA analysis and begin establishing a new lease agreement with the BOR in order to, at minimum, maintain management authority of Freezout Lake WMA in its current form.

Proposed Motion

I move the Commission authorize the Department to proceed with negotiations and analysis for establishing a new lease agreement with the BOR for continuing to manage properties within the Freezout Lake WMA.