

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

**Meeting Date:** June 7, 2017

**Agenda Item:** Sunburst Lake Fishing Regulation Waiver (R1)

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 Min

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### **Background:**

Westslope cutthroat trout have been reduced to less than 10% of their historic range in Montana. The South Fork Flathead River Drainage comprises approximately half of the remaining genetically pure, interconnected populations of westslope cutthroat and provides a world class fishery resource. Persistence of this native trout fishery is threatened by non-native rainbow and Yellowstone cutthroat trout historically introduced into 21 mountain lakes in the drainage that are moving downstream and hybridizing with westslope cutthroat. The South Fork Flathead Cutthroat Conservation Project has been systematically removing non-native fish and replacing them with pure westslope cutthroat. The project to date has successfully chemically treated 14 lakes and 6 more lakes are being genetically swamped. Sunburst Lake is scheduled for treatment in September, 2017. Sunburst Lake is located on the Spotted Bear Ranger District of the Flathead National Forest. Anglers have asked for limit waivers prior to previous treatments to allow more harvest of fish. Current bag limit is 3 trout per day.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results:**

Limit waivers were discussed at the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex public meeting in Seeley Lake and at the Flathead Wildlife, Inc. meeting in Kalispell. The only comments received pertained to how soon anglers could take advantage of waived limits.

### **Alternatives and Analysis:**

The Commission could choose to take no action on this waiver proposal. It would mean less demand on the Enforcement division to determine from which lake fish were harvested; conversely, anglers would not harvest increased numbers of fish prior to treatment; limit waiver builds public support for program.

If the Commission approved the waiver, the action would meet anglers' desires to not waste fish, and there have been no known problems with previous limit waivers. Conversely, it would place more demand on the Enforcement Division.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale:**

FWP recommends temporarily waiving limits on Sunburst Lake to build public support for the project and to answer anglers' desires to not waste fish.

### **Proposed Motion:**

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted the Combined Trout daily and possession bag limits for Sunburst Lake be removed effective immediately through August 31, 2017.