

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 10, 2017

Agenda Item: Furbearers and Trapping Regulations, Seasons and Quotas

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 45 Minutes

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Background: FWP proposes to:

- 1) Establish a **Trapper Education Program and Mandatory Trapper Education requirement** for most people trapping furbearers, predators (coyote, weasel and skunk), wolves, fox, badger and racoon to start taking effect in 2018.
- 2) By the 2019 trapping season require **Modifications** to ground-set foothold traps set for the above species that include a center swivel and an additional chain swivel.
- 3) Persons trapping for purposes of livestock or property protection would be exempt from these requirements.
- 4) Increase the Regions 1 and 2 otter per-person take and possession limit from 2 to 3.

Mandatory Trapper Education will ensure that new trappers have the basic knowledge and skills to trap safely, humanely, and effectively. It will also provide peer-to-peer interaction that sets ethical standards even where regulations may not exist or provide clear guidance or may be difficult to enforce. The Trapper Education program will also cover wolf trapping so that in the future there will not be a separate wolf trapping class.

Trap modifications including center swivels are Best Management Practices that have been shown to increase animal comfort and decrease injury. Today's trappers consider these features necessary to trap ethically and humanely.

A mandatory trap check time was discussed, but rejected in favor of the current recommended 48-hour check as recommended by the Montana Trappers Advisory Committee. The Committee's recommendations are included in the Commission packet.

In addition, we are proposing to increase the R2 otter per-person take and possession limit from 2 to 3 to better match opportunity with the distribution of trapping.

All other elements of the furbearers and trapping regulations are to remain unchanged from 2016. Further details on this proposal are in the justification found in the Commission Packet.

Public Involvement Process & Results: During the 45-day comment period we received 282 comments. Comments ranged from support to total opposition to trapping. A summary of comments has been provided to the Commission.

Alternatives and Analysis: Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, or no change from 2016 as per staff justifications, public comment and Commission discussion.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends that the Commission adopt the proposed mandatory trapper education, trap modifications and Regions 1 and 2 otter take and possession limit.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the proposed mandatory trapper education, trap modifications and Regions 1 and 2 otter take and possession limit as proposed by FWP, as well as the other existing trapping regulations.