

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 10, 2017

Agenda Item: FWP Draft Forest Management Plan

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Min



Background

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) has prepared a Draft Forest Management Plan (Plan) for forested land administered by its Fisheries, Wildlife, and Parks Divisions. Almost 200,000 acres of forested lands are distributed amongst 170 different sites including Fishing Access Sites (FAS), Fisheries Conservation Areas, Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), Wildlife Habitat Protection Areas, and State Parks. This is a programmatic plan designed to provide consistent management direction and guidance for developing property-specific forest management plans, implementing forest management projects, and identifying forest management priorities. This Plan applies to all forested land under fee-title ownership administered by FWP. In § 87-1-622(1), Montana Code Annotated, the legislature has directed the Fish and Wildlife Commission and State Parks Board to adopt forest management plans for lands under their jurisdiction. Accordingly, this Plan will also be submitted to the Board for endorsement at their August meeting. The Plan was developed through a collaborative process led by FWP's forester, Jason Parke, who worked closely with a team of wildlife biologists and a WMA maintenance supervisor in coordination with the FAS program coordinator and the state parks chief of operations. The Plan has undergone review by midlevel managers across all three divisions and by the legal unit.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Upon endorsement of this proposed Plan, FWP would release the draft for public review and input.

Alternatives and Analysis

There are no alternatives for the Plan but FWP may make changes to the Plan based on comments from the public and interested parties.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends endorsing the proposed Draft Forest Management Plan, which would allow FWP to seek public input. Forest lands under FWP ownership would benefit from a consistent approach to planning, identifying priorities, and managing individual forested properties. The filter approach described in the plan would help assure forest management decisions are well informed and objective-based.

Proposed Motion

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorse the proposed Draft Forest Management Plan as presented, allowing FWP to proceed with a formal public review.