

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 10, 2017

Agenda Item: Off-Cycle Fishing Regulation Changes for 2018

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Min

Background

The fishing regulation process is based on a four-year cycle, where the first year of each cycle is dedicated to actively soliciting ideas for changes from the public. During the following three years of the cycle (“off-cycle” years), ideas are only solicited internally from FWP biologists, fish managers and enforcement personnel. Proposals developed during off-cycle years are proposed to the Commission only if they meet certain criteria: achieve certain enforcement needs, provide clarification for regulations, are important for the conservation of a fish species, are making changes to regulations no longer relevant, or fulfill direction provided in management plans. The fishing regulation proposals for 2018 are an off-cycle year; the next year with full public involvement will be 2020. The proposed regulation changes are:

- Handkerchief Lake Grayling catch and release (R1)
- Big Hole River brook trout limit liberalization (R3)
- Little Prickly Pear Creek rainbow trout spawning closure (R4)
- Live bait prohibition on Rock Creek River drainage (R5)
- Western pearlshell mussel take prohibition (western and central districts)

Public Involvement Process & Results

Because the 2018 fishing season is an “off” year, changes are only solicited internally. The public was not solicited directly, although ideas received from the public were considered. After the proposed tentative regulations are distributed to Commissioners, they will be posted on the FWP website for public review. After the proposals are approved (or changed) by the Commission on August 10, they will again be posted along with a notice of a 30-day public comment period. Following public input, the tentatives will be revised if necessary and final proposed regulations will be submitted to for Commission approval on October 12.

Alternatives and Analysis

The proposed regulation changes for 2018 list each proposal individually, and indicate if they are a new regulation or a change or deletion of an existing regulation. A rationale is then provided for each proposed change.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

All regulation changes proposed here are based on either the conservation criterion (protecting western pearlshell Mussels, protection of spawners in Little Prickly Pear Creek, liberalizing non-native trout harvest in the Big Hole River to Protect Arctic Grayling, and catch and release for Grayling on Handkerchief Lake) or the clarification criterion (live bait use in the Rock Creek drainage). An immediate adoption of the catch and release regulation on Handkerchief Lake is also requested, because the fish will be stocked shortly.

Proposed Motion

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve for public comment, FWP’s proposed regulation changes for the 2018 fishing season, including an immediate catch and release regulation for Grayling on Handkerchief Lake.