

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 12, 2017

Agenda Item: Nevada Lake Wildlife Management Area Forestry Project (R2)

Division: Wildlife **Action Needed:** Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Min

Background

FWP proposes to enhance forest habitat on approximately 429 acres of the Nevada Lake WMA southeast of Helmville. The treatments would restore historically open stand conditions dominated by large ponderosa pine, remove conifers from bunchgrass/sagebrush communities to increase bunchgrass and woody browse production, and enhance aspen stands. Treatments are aimed at improving winter and spring habitat for elk and mule deer, reducing the susceptibility of forests to uncharacteristic disturbance events, and promoting the development of ecologically site-appropriate habitat conditions for a variety of species endemic to forests on the WMA.

The cost of the forest habitat treatments are expected to be covered by the sale of merchantable timber byproduct. Any revenue in excess of project costs would be deposited into the FWP Forest Management Account to implement additional forest management projects. Contingent on analysis and approvals, this work could begin as early as summer 2018.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Upon endorsement, FWP would complete further analysis and obtain public input in the form of a draft environmental assessment and associated public review.

Alternatives and Analysis

No action would result in perpetuating the current condition and, barring the occurrence of a natural disturbance event, forests would continue to grow and expand in predictable successional pathways, including conifers shading out aspen, bunchgrasses, and important woody browse. Stand structure and species composition is expected to become more homogenous and simplified (increase in single-story, closed canopy forests with less diverse understory) resulting in a long-term decline in biodiversity and habitat availability for a number of sensitive species.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends the Commission endorse this project, which would allow FWP to develop an environmental analysis and public involvement. Implementing the proposed treatment would enhance aspen, forage production for big game, and favor development of productive wildlife habitat for a variety of endemic species.

Proposed Motion

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorse for further analysis and public comment these proposed forest treatments on the Nevada Lake WMA.