

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 19, 2018

Agenda Item: 2018-19 Peregrine Falcon Falconry Take

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed for Presentation: 10 Minutes

Background

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed peregrine falcons in 1999 when there were fewer than 30 known occupied territories in Montana. Monitoring since that time has shown steady increases in the number of nesting pairs and the production of young, primarily in western Montana. In 2017 the Montana Peregrine Institute reported a total number of 216 known territories, more than ten times the number of territories confirmed in the mid 1990's. In 2017, 105 of the 136 territories monitored were found to be occupied.

The take proposed here is based on the 2012 productivity estimate of 203 young fledged and the agreed take of not more than five percent of annual productivity described in FWP's 2007 Final Environmental Assessment. While productivity overall in 2017 was below average, productivity at nine new territories exceeded a 16-year average (Montana Peregrine Institute, 2017.)

In the 2012-13, 2014-15, and 2016-17 bienniums take operated under a 10-bird quota for resident falconers with one permit for non-resident take. Resident take over these bienniums resulted in the take of three, seven, and five peregrines respectively of the 10 allowed per biennium. Non-residents took one peregrine as allowed per biennium in both the 2012-13 and the 2016-17 biennium.

Public Involvement Process & Results

FWP received 37 comments with all but two from Montana residents. Thirty-three comments supported the proposed take with 20 specifically supporting the proposal and removal of any quota. Comments in opposition to this proposal were generally in opposition of falconry overall.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Based on findings in FWP's 2007 Final Environmental Assessment and the history of peregrine take in Montana FWP proposes that the commission:

- authorize resident take of 10 nestling or fledged peregrines through a quota system during the 2016-17 biennium.
- authorize non-resident take of one nestling or fledged peregrine through a 2016-17 permit.
- restrict take to June 1-Aug. 31.
- limit take to one peregrine per year per falconer.
- impose a two-year waiting period for any falconer successful in taking a peregrine.
- allow only general or master falconers to take peregrines.
- prohibit take from eastern Montana to encourage expansion of the breeding population.
- prohibit take from certain nests of high value wildlife viewing opportunity and/or part of on-going agency approved research efforts (current list of closed-to-take nests = 8).
- prohibit the sale, barter or exchange of birds from the wild.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve FWP's recommendation to authorize the take of up to 10 peregrine falcons for falconry purposes by residents and one peregrine falcon for falconry purposes by nonresidents during the 2018-19 take period.