

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 9, 2018

Agenda Item: 2018/2019 Furbearer & Trapping Seasons and 2018 Quotas

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background: Furbearer season structure and quotas are defined by the Fish & Wildlife Commission. FWP is proposing four changes for 2018/2019 as addressed below. All other season elements and quotas are proposed as unchanged from 2017/2018.

1) Region 3: Decrease bobcat quota from 250 to 150.

Region 3 is proposing this change because both the juvenile-adult ratio and the number of bobcats caught per day are declining, likely indicating a declining population. Also, trappers are reporting concerns about fewer bobcats and observing fewer rabbits, the bobcats' main prey.

2) FWP is proposing to clarify the definition of a center swivel on the underside of a ground-set foothold trap to be a swivel within five chain links from the trap and the chain/swivel connected to the underside of the trap as close to the center as the trap design reasonably allows.

3) FWP is also proposing to clarify the language about trapping within 1000 feet of occupied dwellings. Below is the current language with the proposed new sentence highlighted.

Occupied Dwellings – Ground sets, including all snares, are prohibited within 1000 feet of an occupied dwelling without written notification of the occupant(s). **This requirement does not apply to live cage traps or mouse and rat traps.**

4) In the 2017 regulations, FWP tried to clarify where the roads and trails setbacks apply as “roads having any type of motorized use at any time of the year.” This change was not brought to the commission because it was meant to clarify and not change the regulation. The 2017 language has led to more confusion and concern. Therefore, at this time we propose to go back to the 2016 definition of open roads and hiking trails as “designated by administrative signs or numbers.” FWP is prepared to come back to the commission next year with language for the commission to act on based on further internal discussion, input from FWP's internal Regulations Review Committee, and the recently assembled citizen Trapping Advisory Committee.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Regional FWP staff attends annual district meetings of the Montana Trappers Association each spring. The public-comment period for the proposed changes was open from June 14 to July 15. We received 275 comments, which are included in the commission packet. The vast majority of comments were general anti-trapping. Many spoke to beaver management, were against trapping swift fox, and advocated a trap-check time. Comments that addressed the proposed changes were supportive.

Alternative and Analysis: Proposals provide sound furbearer management to include trapping with consideration of comments and concerns from other user groups. The intent is to reasonably share the landscape, associated resources, and opportunities to the extent possible.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: FWP recommends maintaining 2017 structure and quotas except for the proposed changes above. This is consistent with existing information and represents reasonable and appropriate consideration of user groups and the continued presence of contemporary data in furbearer management that include trapping.

Proposed Motion

I move to approve the proposed 2018/2019 furbearer season structure, regulation, and quotas as proposed by FWP. All other season elements and quotas are to remain unchanged from 2017/2018.