FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: July 12, 2012

Agenda Item: Proposed HB454 Hunter Access Agreement

Division: Wildlife **Action Needed:** Approval of Final Agreement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: Under the provisions of 87-2-513 MCA, FWP received the authority to issue either-sex or antlerless elk permits to landowners for management purposes. The landowner must offer free public elk hunting, meet the various conditions of the statute, and enter a contractual public elk hunting access agreement with FWP.

The contract defines the areas open to public elk hunting, the number of elk hunting days that will be allowed on the property, and other factors that FWP and the landowner consider necessary for the proper management of elk on the landowner's property.

The Swanz Hunting Access Agreement specifically states that in return for allowing access to elk hunters, Mr. Swanz, or a family member, would receive one 411-21 either-sex permit. In turn, FWP would issue four additional 411-21 permits from the already randomized list of unsuccessful applicants for that license permit type (LPT). Successful applicants could only hunt on the Swanz deeded property. This agreement was first used in 2002 and has been repeated annually since then based upon continued positive post-hunt evaluations. The proposed agreement for 2012 represents no change from the 2011 agreement.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The Swanz agreement has received public review in previous years via the Commission's hunting season setting process. To date, that review has generated relatively few public comments. Additionally, the post-hunt evaluations have sought feedback from all identified hunters and the landowner. To date, the evaluations generally confirm that agreement terms, and reasonable expectations, are being met to all parties' satisfaction. Public comment ran through 5 PM Monday, June 18. Two comments were received and will be forwarded to the Commission for its consideration prior to final adoption on July 12.

Alternatives and Analysis: Failure to approve this agreement may result in reduced public elk hunting access in this area. Despite staff efforts to increase awareness and potentially apply this management option elsewhere, no other agreements have been identified to date.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: With additional insight from public comment, FWP recommends proceeding with the Swanz Hunting Access Agreement. The Swanz agreement terms have met with positive reviews with no adverse resource impacts identified.

Proposed Motion: I move the Commission adopt the final Hunting Access Agreements for the 2012 general hunting season as proposed by FWP.