

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: May 9, 2013

Agenda Item: Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee Recommendations

Division: Fisheries **Action Needed:** Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 60 minutes

Background

In May of 2012 the department appointed a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to develop recommendations for managing recreation on the Madison River, which has been one of the most heavily fished rivers in Montana in recent years. Department surveys in 2008 and 2009 suggested that overall satisfaction of users was fairly high, but congestion on the water and at access sites is a concern at certain locations at certain times of year. The department decided to develop a recreation management plan to ensure the quality of the experience remains high and to identify management actions that could be implemented should conditions deteriorate to an unsatisfactory level. Using a consensus process, the CAC developed recommendations that included desired conditions for the river, river-wide management recommendations, and more specific management recommendations for 8 sections of the river. Highlights follow (refer to CAC Report for details):

Desired conditions for the Madison River include a healthy and productive fishery, acceptable frequency/range of encounter among users; adequate space; no garbage; “world class” fishing experience.

Use educational material to promote river etiquette and to advise visitors on what conditions to expect during peak-season or at high-use sections of the river.

Use “iron rangers” at all access sites to collect data on user numbers and satisfaction levels (mandatory).

Implement management actions if user numbers and/or dissatisfaction reach an unacceptable level for a specified period of time (“trigger-points” to be identified over time).

Management actions range from less to more restrictive; less restrictive management actions would be considered before proceeding to more restrictive actions.

Management actions that could be considered in the future include: redesign access sites to reduce launch time and congestion; require annual permits of all users - no limit on availability; restrict use by “place/time”; cap availability of permits.

Redesign boat ramp and parking area at Lyons Bridge FAS to reduce launch wait-time and congestion.

Open the river to year-round angling from Lyons Bridge FAS to McAtee FAS.

Prohibit glass bottles from Warms Springs Recreation Area to Black’s Ford FAS.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The department would invite the public to comment on the recommendations of the CAC.

Alternatives & Analysis

Alternatively, the commission could decide not to endorse the CAC recommendations, or to amend the recommendations before seeking public comments.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

The department recommends that the commission endorse the CAC recommendations and instruct the department to solicit public comments. The department would then develop a draft recreation management plan and environmental analysis based on the CAC recommendations and public comments on the recommendations.

Proposed Motion

“I move to endorse the Madison River CAC recommendations and instruct the department to solicit public comments on the recommendations, to be followed by the development of a draft recreation management plan.”