

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** August 31, 2010

**Agenda Item:** Elkhorn Mountains Maupin Creek Beaver Relocation

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Endorsement

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

### **Background**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to relocate wild beaver from within the upper Missouri River watershed to a location in the northern portion of the Elkhorn Mountains to re-establish locally extirpated beaver colonies that will restore wetlands to enhance fish and wildlife habitat and surface water availability.

During the past year FWP Region 3 staff has been looking at potential options for a request by a local landowner to restore wetlands on private property in the Strawberry Lookout area in the north Elkhorn Mountains. On site visits by staff of several agencies all concurred that the unoccupied site is suitable for restoration of a beaver colony. Maupin Creek runs through the 146-acre property with evidence of a number of relic beaver dams and lodges. Willow, aspen and cottonwood on the property would provide ample food to sustain a beaver colony. The property is under conservation easement with the Prickly Pear Land Trust and is immediately surrounded by U.S. Forest Service land. The live-trapping of wild beaver would occur in the Upper Missouri watershed (waters within the drainage area of Prickly Pear Creek and other tributaries draining the northern Elkhorn Mountains) with 2-4 adult and subadult beaver relocated to the Elkhorn property in late summer or early fall of 2010. Efforts would be made to ensure that the source animals will be moved from the same watershed as the relocation area to minimize any likelihood of translocating any diseases/parasites. FWP Region 3 staff and volunteers would monitor the beaver for at least two years to see if the relocation and wetlands restoration is successful.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

FWP Region 3 has prepared an Environmental Assessment for the Upper Missouri Watershed Beaver Relocation Project which is currently out for a 15-day public comment period.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

No relocation to the Elkhorn site may continue to limit the natural re-colonization of beaver to the area. This proposed project would allow FWP to actively manage beaver populations by live-removal of problem animals that can be relocated to vacant habitats to establish new beaver colonies.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends approval of this project to allow Region 3 staff active management of beaver populations by controlling problem areas and re-establishing beaver in historical habitats. Conservation of water and wetland habitats is an important public issue in southwestern Montana.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move to approve the Elkhorn Mountains Maupin Creek Beaver Relocation project in Region 3.