

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: January 13, 2011

Agenda Item: Standardize WMA Opening Times

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorse Course of Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Mins

Background

Wildlife Management Areas that provide critical big game winter range are generally closed between December and May to provide protection for big game. Several WMAs receive intense public interest in the opening dates/times to collect shed antlers. This has led to large congregations of people accessing the WMA the minute it is legal to do so, even if the opening time is technically midnight. In some instances, this has led to resource and safety issues when there are large numbers of people suddenly accessing a WMA in the dark of night. To address these concerns, FWP is proposing to standardize the opening time on all WMAs with a seasonal closure to 12 noon.

Currently, there are 36 WMAs with seasonal closures – 34 to protect wintering big game, and two to protect nesting birds. Of those, 12 open at noon, whereas the remaining 24 open at midnight. Therefore, this proposal will affect those 24 WMAs that currently open at midnight.

Public Involvement Process & Results

There has been some public discussion on specific WMAs that have previously been adjusted from a midnight to noon opening time (e.g., Sun River WMA). To date, there has not been a broader public involvement process on a standardized opening time. Such a public process would commence with approval of this proposed course of action.

Alternatives and Analysis

Maintain the current opening times of noon or midnight.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

For consistency purposes, approve a standardized opening time of 12 noon on all WMAs with a winter closure. These include:

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Bull River WMA | Mt. Jumbo WMA | Calf Creek WMA |
| Fish Creek WMA | Flathead Lake | Marias River SP/WMA |
| Kootenai West WMA | Beartooth WMA | Garrity Mountain WMA |
| Lost Creek WMA | Ray Kuhns WMA | Haymaker WMA |
| Kootenai-Wood Ranch | Beckman WMA | Spotted Dog WMA |
| Nevada Lake WMA | Roundhorn WMA | Silver Run WMA |
| Mount Silcox WMA | Judith River WMA | Silver Run WMA |
| Three Mile WMA | Blckft-Clearwater WMA | |
| North Shore | Smith River WMA | |

Proposed Motion

I move the FWP Commission approve the recommendation that all WMAs with a seasonal closure have a standardized opening time of 12:00 noon.