

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

**Meeting Date:** April 14, 2011

**Agenda Item:** Standardize WMA Opening Times

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 Mins

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### **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**

The proposal was available on the FWP Website for one month, Jan.13 –Feb.14. We received six comments. Four were in favor of the noon opener, one said we were wasting our time with this issue, and one wanted the opening date to match with spring bear hunting.

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