

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

**Meeting Date:** April 14, 2011

**Agenda Item:** Mount Haggin WMA-German Gulch Grazing Lease Renewal

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Approval of Final Action

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

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### **Background**

FWP proposes to maintain a cooperative rest-rotation grazing program on the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area-German Gulch system for a 10-year term to extend June 2011 through October 2020. The program consists of a summer grazing lease (436 Animal Unit Months) with the Peterson Fairmont Ranch, Inc.

### **Public Involvement**

Under MEPA, an Environmental Assessment was completed by FWP and released for public comment Feb. 2-28. Legal notices were printed in the *Montana Standard* and the *Anaconda Leader*. The EA was also posted on the FWP webpage.

Five parties submitted comments over the 27-day comment period ending Feb. 28. Of the five respondents, one represented himself, while four represented the following organizations or agencies: Skyline Sportsmen's Association, Anaconda Sportsmen's Club, Gallatin Wildlife Association, and the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest-Butte Ranger District. Of the five respondents, four stated direct support for Alternative A; and one generally opposed livestock use of WMAs, but asked that since FWP appears committed to grazing on Mount Haggin WMA, that FWP consider his comments and incorporate his ideas into the planning process.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

To alternatives were considered in this Environmental Assessment:

- Alternative A: Renewal of the Mount Haggin WMA-German Gulch grazing lease. Cattle would be used as a management tool to improve vegetative conditions on winter range, for the benefit of elk and other wildlife across the broader landscape of WMA and Forest Service land. Minor impacts to riparian and fisheries will occur but will be mitigated by vegetative rest and stocking rate.
- Alternative B (No Action): Elimination of livestock grazing on the Mount Haggin WMA-German Gulch grazing system. Elk populations may be negatively impacted in the long term due to the reduction in quality of forage on the WMA and inadequate vegetative rest on federal land pastures. Birds, reptiles, amphibians, and other mammals will benefit from the increased standing grasses on the WMA but will be negatively impacted by inadequate vegetative rest on federal land pastures.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends the commission approve the Mount Haggin WMA-German Gulch Grazing Lease Renewal. This project will improve habitat conditions across big game winter range on the WMA and adjacent U.S. Forest Service land, for the benefit of wildlife and the public.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the commission approve the Mount Haggin WMA-German Gulch Grazing Lease Renewal as described in the Final EA.