

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

**Meeting Date:** November 10, 2011

**Agenda Item:** Fort Benton Urban Deer Plan

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Approval of Final Rule/Action

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

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**Background**

In 2003 the Montana Legislature authorized cities to create plans to control wildlife to address public health and safety within city limits. Such plans must be approved by the FWP Commission. In response to concerns and complaints expressed by its citizens concerning the growing population of "urban" deer, and the increased risk to human safety and property damage, the City of Fort Benton, in conjunction with FWP, has developed a Deer Management Action Plan. The plan lays out goals, actions needed to meet goals and a management process. The plan is patterned after plans already approved for the communities of Glendive, Colstrip and Ekalaka. Due to lack of "Open Space" areas owned by the city, within the city limits public hunting is not a viable tool for control of resident deer numbers. A process has been set up to: (1) provide residents that have experienced deer/human conflict to call the city and Fort Benton City Hall, the Fort Benton Chief of Police, or FWP Local Warden to report problem deer; (2) only City Police will dispatch problem deer; involve public in identifying resident deer that become a problem, so removal is specific to problem deer.

**Public Involvement Process & Results**

In response to urban deer complaints, during the City Council meeting the Mayor, Chief of Police, Council members and the public discussed a draft plan. Because the plan is exclusive to Fort Benton, Chouteau County Commissioners and the Chouteau County Sheriff's office deferred all decisions and action to the City of Fort Benton.

City of Fort Benton opened a two-week public comments period on Oct. 3 and approved the plan on Oct. 17. The City of Fort Benton received 15 comments all in favor of lethally removing problem deer within the city limits by city police. Public comment on the FWP Commission's approval of the proposal ended Oct. 31. The one public comment been received (as of Oct. 26) seeks to alter the plan to state that FWP will trap deer and move to a public hunting area.

**Alternatives and Analysis**

The City of Fort Benton has been proactive in developing a management plan that is both reasonable and effective. The city has sought FWP participation and has collaborated with FWP on plan development. Alternative would be for FWP to respond to deer/human conflict in Fort Benton complaints.

**Proposed Motion:**

I move the FWP Commission approve of the City of Fort Benton Deer Management Action Plan as presented.