

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: March 8, 2012

Agenda Item: Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena Commercial Fishing Regulations

Division: Fish & Wildlife

Action Needed: Approval of Final Rule

Time Needed for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background: FWP received an application for a 2012 commercial fishing permit to harvest carp via active seining from Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena. By statute, the FWP Commission is authorized to approve one commercial fishing operation for each body of water and to establish specific regulations regarding gear, limits, seasons, closures and any other limitations deemed necessary. This application is for a Class B Permit that requires a fee of \$200 plus a \$1,000 Surety Bond. The commission has approved the commercial fishing regulations for Canyon Ferry and Lake Helena for the past five years. The proposed regulations are included in the information package.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Commercial fishing regulations for Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena were originally approved by the FWP Commission in 2005 following public input and an environmental assessment. In subsequent years when the FWP has received an application to fish commercially on these waters, the public has been provided an opportunity to comment. For this application, three comments were received during the public input period from January 26-February 26. None of the commenters explicitly opposed issuance of the permit, but expressed concern for various reasons, including: 1) This type of fishing didn't work in Michigan; 2) there will be nontarget species killed in the nets; and 3) the netting will eliminate a forage species for walleye, rainbow trout, otters and mink.

Alternatives and Analysis: The FWP Commission can approve or deny the proposed regulations as written, or revise the regulations and solicit public comment again. The concern about bycatch is alleviated somewhat by the fact that catch of fish species other than carp has been negligible in the past. Also, the permittee must submit monthly reports of harvest activity and FWP will perform random spot checks of the operation to ensure it is in compliance with the permit and that bycatch is not excessive. Another concern was that this activity will remove carp as forage for other species. However, FWP monitoring suggests that rainbow trout do not eat carp and while walleye do eat carp, they are not a preferred food item. Also, the commercial fishing that occurred in the 1980s had no noticeable impact to the Hauser Lake carp populations. Accordingly, FWP does not believe that carp seining is likely to impact game fish populations in Lake Helena or Hauser Lake. Annual monitoring of fish populations in both lakes will help ensure that any changes to carp populations can be quickly detected. The comment about this type of netting not working in Michigan provided no details about the goals of that netting, and so does not allow for the formulation of a response.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommendation approval of this application, and believes the concerns expressed are dealt with in the permit stipulations and that impacts to the carp populations are unlikely.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Commission approve the regulations for a commercial fishing operation on Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena for 2012.