

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 25, 2019

Agenda Item: Statewide Fisheries Management Program and Guide 2019-2027

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 60 minutes

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Background: The first Statewide Fisheries Management Plan was completed in 2013 and provided a summary of Fisheries Division programs and how fisheries are managed across the state. The plan was not prescriptive, in that it did not propose specific management actions if specific goals or objectives were not met. Since the document functions differently than waterbody or species-specific management plans, staff is proposing a name change to the Statewide Fisheries Management Program and Guide 2019-2027 (Guide). The Guide provides the framework for how programs within the Fisheries Division function and outline how fisheries are managed across Montana. The Guide contains two parts: Part I summarizes specific programs within the division and how those programs support fisheries activities; Part II is organized by drainage and provides an overview of fisheries priorities and challenges within each drainage and outlines priorities for primary waterbodies within drainages. The Guide provides updates to fisheries programs and addresses new issues that have occurred since the first plan was completed in 2013. Drainage and waterbody-specific issues and priorities are also updated in the Guide. The Guide is intended to be used as a reference for legislators during biennial legislative sessions, to be used to inform fishing regulation setting during four-year review, and to serve as a reference to the angling and recreating public to understand fisheries programs and how aquatic resources are managed.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The initial public comment period was Dec 13 to Jan 13 but was extended to Feb 4 at the request of the public and extended again to Feb 15 at request of federal partners. Comments were submitted by 330 individuals representing themselves, angling groups, or government agencies, compiling a total of 1,275 comments. See attached comment summary for additional discussion on common comment themes and FWP responses.

Alternatives and Analysis: The commission could adopt the final Statewide Fisheries Management Program & Guide, amend the Guide, or not approve the Guide.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP staff recommend approving the Statewide Fisheries Management Program and Guide.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the Statewide Fisheries Management Program and Guide 2019-2027.