



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: August 13, 2020

Agenda Item: 2020 Furbearer Trapping Regulations and Quotas

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 45 minutes

Background: The department proposed two swift fox regulation amendments at the June commission meeting that are proposed to remain unchanged:

- Expand the Trapping District 6 swift fox eastern boundary to align with Deer-Elk Hunting District 670.
- Change swift fox season close date in Trapping District 6 from March 1 to Jan. 15 to reduce overlap with the breeding season.

The department proposes two additional amendments to marten trapping not proposed in June:

- Close marten trapping in Wheatland and Judith Basin counties and those portions of Meagher and Cascade counties east of Smith River and east of Highway 89 south from White Sulphur Springs to facilitate marten restoration efforts within the Little Belt Mountains.
- Change marten trap reporting requirement from physical inspection and tagging to mandatory call-in report within 24 hours. This change reduces potential coronavirus exposure and retains identical data collection.

The department proposes no amendment to existing setbacks for trapping:

- Setback evaluation is incomplete for proposals submitted prior to or at the June commission meeting; additional, sometimes competing proposals have been submitted since June; and some comments suggest that the public had inadequate time to submit proposals for setbacks.

Public Involvement Process and Results: Public comment on trapping was accepted at the June commission meeting and until 5 p.m. on July 28, 2020. Public comment was extensive: SWIFT FOX – 124 comments opposed swift fox trapping, one supported trapping in general; SETBACKS – 30 opposed greater setbacks, 27 expressed the need for more time to solicit input, eight supported the proposal provided by the Backcountry Alliance; and five provided various others proposals for consideration; and GENERAL – 16 provided comments in general opposition to trapping and one provided general support for trapping.

Alternatives and Analysis: Reducing swift fox season length, expanding the area available to trap swift fox, while maintaining the current quota of 10 will reduce the number of days an individual area may be trapped and may further spread trapping activity for the species. Although leaving the season dates and open area unchanged is not expected to have negative biological effects in comparison. Proposed changes to marten season will provide protection during the restoration effort, and changing reporting requirements is likely to provide the public and staff with greater health protections without compromising data. The department is not recommending any change to setbacks at this time because insufficient progress has been made since June, and the comments received illustrate the complexity of the dialogue that remains. The commission may legitimately choose locations and distances for specific setbacks with unknown, but probably limited effect on trapping activity overall.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission vote to adopt the furbearer and trapping regulations as presented by the department, with all other aspects to remain unchanged unless addressed in other proposals, except for regular calendar rotation.