



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: April 1, 2021

Agenda Item: Closures of the Ennis and Valley Garden Fishing Access Sites (R3)

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background

In mid-February, ice jams on the Madison River backed up against the HWY 287 bridge which eventually led to extensive flooding at the Ennis FAS and Valley Garden FAS and adjoining properties. Damages have not yet been fully assessed due to presence of ice still on the property, but the department expects each FAS to be closed for an extended period to repair damaged infrastructure. An emergency closure was implemented on February 16 due to public safety concerns from moving ice and debris, potentially unstable trees, and risk of injury or drowning by persons recreating at the site. With the diminished threat to public safety, the department is asking the commission to approve biennial rule seasonal closure for each FAS to adequately repair each site while maintaining safe access. This may require closures to access throughout the 2021 fishing season to safely assess and implement infrastructure repairs. Infrastructure potentially damaged by the flooding include: access roads, culverts, and parking areas; damage to two concrete vault latrines; boundary fences; signage; and a gravel boat ramp. A full assessment of needed repairs will be completed when the ice recedes, and it is safe for staff to access the site.

Public Involvement Process & Results

This commission meeting will serve as a public hearing to provide comment on this proposal. If approved by the commission, this closure will be posted on site and publicized through local media.

Alternatives & Analysis

The commission could approve this closure to ensure public safety while the department assesses and repairs damage to the site; the commission could endorse this closure and direct the department to collect additional public comment and take final action at a future commission meeting; or the commission could choose not to approve this closure, which would allow the site to remain closed under the emergency rule and the department would have to decide how to safely allow public access by June 16 (120 days after implementation of the emergency closure).

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

The department recommends closing each FAS under biennial rule because the eminent threat to public safety has passed and it is not presently clear how long each site may need to remain closed to safely and effectively repair infrastructure.

Proposed Motion

I move the commission close the Ennis FAS and Valley Garden FAS until December 31, 2021 as needed to complete infrastructure repairs needed for safe public access.