



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: June 24, 2021

Agenda Item: Elk Management Plan Guiding Principles

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Minutes

Background: The Elk Management Plan that currently guides elk management for Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks was adopted in 2005. Since adoption, many changes on the landscape and new social considerations suggest that the development of an updated plan is appropriate. In April 2020, the commission endorsed a process to develop a new Elk Management Plan. The first step was to assemble a citizens group to provide initial guidance to identify relevant issues and define durable principles to be used in the plan development. The citizens group was to be diverse and independent yet represent multiple stakeholder perspectives. FWP solicited applications for the Elk Management Plan Initial Guidance Citizens Group over a 30-day period and received 59 applications. Membership was selected from various regions and elk management challenges across Montana. Members were chosen to serve based on demonstrated ability to respectfully express an important and unique perspective, to hear others well, to think independently and to lead effectively. The group met using a virtual platform for five days (Nov. 19 and Dec. 2, 3, 16 and 17, 2020). The group articulated elk management issues and defined 19 Guiding Principles to address elk management challenges in Montana. If adopted, the department plans to build upon the Elk Management Guiding Principles to develop more specific elk management strategies and actions in Montana's new Elk Management Plan.

Public Involvement Process and Results: The department had two public comment opportunities during the Elk Management Plan Initial Guidance Citizens Group meetings and received three comments. Additionally, public comment was solicited on the Elk Management Guiding Principles through May 3, 2021. The department received 32 comments: 10 were in support, four opposed the overall process or group selection, three were generally opposed to the products, 11 commented on specific elk management tools or strategies, and four were comments unrelated to Elk Management Guiding Principles content. The department has proposed a timeline for the full plan development.

Alternatives and Analysis: The commission may choose to amend or adjust aspects of the Guiding Principles or implementation timeline.

Agency Rationale and Recommendation: The department recommends endorsement of the Elk Management Guiding Principles as proposed. Analyses of the public comment reveal support for the Guiding Principles, as well as numerous comments regarding specific tools that can be evaluated in future steps in the planning process if the Guiding Principles are endorsed. The proposed timeline will allow for additional public input and scoping as the final plan is developed.

Proposed Motion:

I move that the commission vote to endorse the Elk Management Plan Timeline and Elk Management Guiding Principles as presented by the department.