



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: October 28th, 2021

Agenda Item: Fresno Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: Fresno Reservoir has been managed primarily for walleye since 1957 when they were first stocked. Since 2003, walleye were stocked with little regard for forage fish and other species. In 2012, FWP stopped stocking walleye following an evaluation that showed that wild walleye reproduction was sufficient to support the fishery. No walleye have been stocked in Fresno since 2012. In 2020, a petition was circulated in Havre requesting that FWP again stock fish in Fresno. In April 2020, over 60 interested individuals attended a meeting with many demanding that FWP stock walleye. Due to the high level of public interest and multiple options to consider for management of the fishery, the department began a management plan process for Fresno Reservoir.

As developed by an advisory committee, the primary fisheries goal of this plan is: *The Fresno Reservoir fisheries will be managed as a walleye fishery with the primary goal of high angler catch rates for Stock and Quality walleye. This will be accomplished by stocking hatchery walleye to augment the wild walleye population. An emphasis will be placed on habitat enhancement efforts to support other species of interest (yellow perch, black crappie and forage species).*

Management criteria used to determine if this goal is being met is outlined in the plan. The plan also prescribes management actions to be taken as the fish populations fluctuate.

Public Involvement Process & Results: FWP requested applications to serve on the Fresno Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan Advisory Committee. Nine applications were received and all nine were accepted to serve on the committee. These individuals represented the following interests: local walleye anglers; out-of-area walleye anglers; general anglers and kids; local government; and local business. Additionally, representatives from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and St. Mary's Working Group served as technical advisors.

Over the course of four meetings, the advisory committee worked with FWP staff to develop the Fresno Fisheries Management Plan. A draft plan was released for public comment from August 1 to 31 and one open house was held in Havre on August 16. The department received two written comments on the draft plan and two comments at the open house. Comments were supportive of the plan and requested additional recreational access. Public comments and responses can be found in Appendix R of the management plan.

Alternatives and Analysis: The commission can approve the plan as submitted or can choose components of the plan that may require additional analysis or public involvement, or the commission could not approve the plan. The plan as presented addresses the public's desire for a walleye fishery with high catch rates. If the plan were not approved, some outlined goals may be achieved over the short term but adjusting management strategies as the fishery changes could be burdensome due to unclear management criteria or goals.

Proposed Motion: I move the commission approve the Fresno Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan as presented.