



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** October 28, 2021

**Agenda Item:** Wild Turkey Augmentations in Region 4

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 minutes

---

**Background:** The department is proposing to translocate Merriam's turkeys within Region 4 from over-objective populations or from areas associated with game damage landowner complaints, should any arise. The department's objective is to move turkeys over the next three winters to habitat within riparian or mountainous ecological systems of the Judith River, Missouri River Breaks, and the Big and Little Belt, Big Snowy, Judith and Moccasin mountains. Trapping would occur during winter months. Release sites will be identified by biologists from Region 4 based on habitat evaluations of specific locations and species habitat needs. Staff will secure permission from landowners and potentially affected neighboring landowners prior to any augmentation effort on private land. The department will coordinate with public land management agencies prior to any release. Merriam's turkeys are the only subspecies to be relocated in this effort. These translocated turkeys would supplement existing low-density populations. The proposed augmentation would provide a numerical increase to populations following severe winters in 2018–2019 and 2019–2020.

Earlier releases along the Missouri River have been successful and became a source for translocations during the past two winters; the department trapped 178 turkeys from this area and translocated them to other unoccupied portions of the Marias and Teton rivers to expand populations as part of the commission-approved augmentations.

**Public Involvement Process and Results:** Department biologists have discussed the proposal with area landowners and hunters in the proposed release sites. The National Wild Turkey Federation, Great Falls Chapter of Safari Club International, Russell Country Sportsmen, Montana Sportsmen Alliance, and Pheasants Forever have been supportive of the proposed releases. Public comment was supportive of these translocations, although one individual urged caution about turkeys having an undesired effect on private landowners.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** The department recommends that the commission approve the Merriam's turkey augmentation efforts in Region 4. If translocations do not occur, the existing populations may wane or become extirpated.

**Agency Recommendation and Rationale:** The department recommends the commission approve the supplemental translocations within Region 4 to increase numbers in low-density populations.

**Proposed Motion:** I move that the commission vote to approve the proposal to augment Merriam's turkey populations in Region 4.