



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: December 20, 2022

Agenda Item: Approval of City of Lewistown Urban Deer Management Plan

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: The 2003 Montana Legislature authorized cities to create plans to control game animals for public health and safety within city limits within MCA 7-31-4110. These plans require approval by the commission before implementation. The City of Lewiston developed a Deer Management Action Plan in cooperation with the department to address concerns about urban mule deer and associated risks to human safety and property damage. Specific goals of the plan are to 1) eliminate deer that threaten human safety and property and 2) reduce the potential for human-deer interactions and conflicts by lowering deer density within the city.

The City of Lewistown considers a healthy population of wild deer important for hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities. While minor, occasional property damage within city limits by urban deer is acceptable and inevitable, high deer densities sometimes result in individual deer threatening human safety and health, injuring pets, and damaging property. Wild deer within Lewistown city limits have resulted in complaints over the last year, and the city commission worked with local department staff to develop a draft Urban Deer Action Plan. This plan was approved by the city commission at its meeting on July 18, 2022. The plan requires permitting by the department for removal and testing for chronic wasting disease prior to distribution through food banks.

Public Involvement Process and Results: On July 18, the City of Lewistown approved the draft deer plan at their public meeting. The meeting was noticed and provided an opportunity for public comment, although no comment was received at the meeting. Additional public comment will be solicited for a four-week period starting Oct. 21. Public comments will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the December commission meeting.

Analysis and Alternatives: The department must evaluate and approve any lethal removal prior to any action by the city. The department has considered and evaluated the biological effect of lethal removals and believes that it will have a negligible effect on the population. The department recommends the commission approve the Urban Deer Management Action Plan as presented.

Alternative A: The commission may choose to approve the City of Lewistown Urban Deer Management Action Plan.

Alternative B: The commission may choose not to approve the deer plan, and the city and the department would continue to respond to deer complaints on an individual basis and urban deer density would remain high.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends the commission approve the City of Lewistown Deer Management Action Plan. The plan contains strategies that can effectively remove urban deer.

Proposed Motion: I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the City of Lewistown Urban Deer Management Action Plan.