



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** February 4, 2022

**Agenda Item:** 2022-2023 Hunting Season Dates

**Action Needed:** Final

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

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**Background:** Season dates are currently adopted biennially for all game and managed species. This is scheduled every other fall and winter with adoptions for public comment in December of odd-numbered years and final adoptions in February of even-numbered years. The proposed dates are a combination of fixed dates (e.g., mountain grouse season Sept. 1 opener) and “formula” dates (e.g., general deer and elk is defined by counting backwards five weeks from Thanksgiving Sunday). For the “formula” dates, there is an annual change due to the annual rotation of calendar dates, which results in at least one day’s difference and, periodically, nearly a full week difference among years. All hunting season dates are being considered, whether changes are proposed or not.

The only date change proposed by the department is to standardize spring turkey season dates on fixed dates of April 15 to May 31. This was shared with the commission in December, and the department proposes no change for final adoption. The commission asked the department to consider extending season dates to Jan. 31 for several upland game bird species. Public comment identified several substantive issues including effects on overwinter survival, landowner concerns, and increased risk of inadvertent capture of bird dogs in traps. The department is not recommending that the commission adopt the later season closure dates.

**Public Involvement Process and Results:** Public comment was accepted through Jan. 21, 2022. Based on the substance of public comment received through Jan. 14, the department is recommending no season date changes from that which was presented in December. Any final adjustments to these recommendations based on final public comment will be made at the commission meeting on Feb. 4.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** The department presented conceptual changes for each species season structure and season dates for public discussion and feedback beginning in August. The proposals being presented to the commission include changes incorporated in response to that feedback. The commission may provide the department with additional amendments on any aspect of season structure, quota, or hunting district for any species and on aspects of the regulations that are not proposed to change.

**Agency Rationale and Recommendation:** The department recommends the commission approve the proposed 2022 and 2023 season dates as presented by the department and as outlined in the attached master lists.

**Proposed Motion:** I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve as final the 2022 and 2023 hunting seasons dates as proposed by the department, excepting those dates addressed in other species-specific proposals.