



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: August 25, 2022

Agenda Item: Pheasant Releases for R3

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: HB 637 authorized the department to spend up to \$1M each fiscal year for a pheasant-stocking program with the intention of recruiting and retaining hunters. To that end, the department conducted an environmental assessment of potential impacts of the program and issued a decision notice in support of the pheasant-stocking program. The department is seeking final approval for a five-year period, calendar years 2022 through 2026, to release pen-raised pheasants on state-owned lands within suitable pheasant habitat for recruitment and retention efforts. MCA 87-5-714 requires the commission approve transplants of pheasants when they are moved from one part of the state to another. Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) is implementing the pheasant-raising program for the department, including biosecurity protocols that go above and beyond what is required to keep their flock healthy. The department is mindful of the current spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and both MCE and the department will follow any additional guidance that the Department of Livestock deems necessary.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The environmental assessment included opportunity for public review and comment. Those comments were considered in the final decision.

Alternatives & Analysis: The commission could opt to not approve the release of pheasants for youth recruitment and retention.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: The department recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the proposal as presented.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the release of pheasants on state-owned lands for calendar years 2022-2026, as proposed by the department.