



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: Dec. 14, 2023

Agenda Item: Request for approval of the Circle 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 (MCA 7-31-4110). These plans require approval by the commission before implementation. The Town of Circle (Town), Montana, 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) reduce the negative impacts to persons and property from deer in and near the Town, 2) provide the Town with appropriate deer management tools, and 3) eliminate deer that threaten the safety of people or property.

The primary strategy to reduce deer within the town limits would be the direct removal of deer by the Town, following nonlethal measures described in the plan. The Town will annually request that the department issue a Permit to Destroy Game Animals Causing Damage. The permit would allow the Town or its agents, to euthanize deer within city limits between Aug. 15 and Feb. 15. The number of deer removed each year will be limited by the terms of the permit. Aggressive deer would be dispatched as soon as possible. All deer removed under the permit would be donated by the city to groups or individuals in need, and the department will provide CWD testing materials as requested.

Public Involvement Process and Results: The Town discussed the need for an Urban Deer Plan at their July 12, 2023, council meeting to hear issues and potential management actions to address urban deer. The Town Council subsequently approved the Town of Circle Deer Management Action Plan at their Sep. 11 council meeting. The department will solicit public comment for a four-week period beginning after the October commission meeting. Public comments will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the December commission meeting.

Analysis and Alternatives: The town evaluated public input and, with the department, considered biological alternatives.

Alternative A: The commission may choose to approve the Town of Circle Urban Deer Management Plan. Additionally, the Town may limit or reduce overall deer density within town limits, as necessary, in coordination with the department.

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

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends approval of the proposed Town of Circle Deer Management Action Plan. The plan will allow peace officers trained with firearms to remove problematic deer selectively and safely within town limits. No effect on the overall deer population within the surrounding hunting districts is anticipated.

Proposed Motion: I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the proposed Town of Circle Deer Management Action Plan.



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Alternative Motion: I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission amend the proposed Town of Circle Deer Management Action Plan as follows (insert changes here).