



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** February 22, 2023

**Agenda Item:** 2023-26 Fish Removal Projects

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

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**Background:** Fish removals are a common fisheries management tool to reduce competition between species, remove undesirable or invasive species, protect species with elevated conservation risk, or to improve the quality of a sport fishery. Most removal projects conducted by FWP aspire to improve fishing opportunity by reintroducing species better suited for available habitats or by reducing competition with other species. For 2023-26, there are 26 fish removal projects planned that have not previously been approved by the commission, all intended for native species conservation. There may be additional projects brought separately to the commission for approval, such as instances where illegal introductions or invasive species are discovered or for an unexpected conservation need. Proposed projects include a combination of chemical and mechanical removals.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** After commission approval, further analysis for each project will occur for Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) compliance, typically involving environmental assessment development and a 30-day public comment period.

**Alternatives & Analysis:** **Alternative A)** The commission could choose to approve all the proposed projects and the department will continue preparatory work and due diligence for removal projects  
**Alternative B)** The commission could approve a portion of proposed projects and the department would need to reevaluate priorities and determine how to proceed on the projects not approved.  
**Alternative C)** The commission could choose to not approve the projects and the department would need to reevaluate priorities and determine how to proceed.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** The department recommends approving the removal projects as proposed. Proposed projects have been identified by the department as priorities for the next four years. Commission approval allows the Fisheries Division to continue preparatory work and prioritization of projects for the next four years.

**Proposed Motion:** I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the fish removal projects proposed for 2023 to 2026.