



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: February 22, 2023

Agenda Item: Closure of Fresno Tailwater Fishing Access Site for BOR Safety of Dams Project

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: Fresno Tailwater Fishing Access Site (FAS) sits below the Fresno Dam in Hill County northwest of Havre. The FAS is part of a memorandum of understand (MOU) between the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Ninety percent of the developed FAS site is on BOR property. In the Spring of 2023, the BOR will initiate a Safety of Dams project on Fresno Dam that is projected for completion in October 2025. The FAS and the access road to the FAS will be heavily used by contractors to haul and stage materials and equipment during the project. Additionally, Fresno Reservoir will be dewatered. Given the size of the project and necessary activity in and around the FAS, the BOR has asked FWP to close the site to public access during the project.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The BOR held public meetings in Glasgow, Malta, Havre, Chinook, and Fort Belknap in March 2022. The BOR met with Region 6 FWP staff on May 24, 2022. FWP issued a draft environmental assessment on the proposed closure of the FAS in late November 2022 with a 14-day public comment period. FWP issued the decision notice on December 13.

Analysis & Alternatives:

Alternative A: The commission approves closure of the FAS for the duration of the Safety of Dams project due to public safety concerns.

Alternative B: No Action. The commission does not approve this closure request. Once construction work commences, FWP would establish an emergency closure of the site due to public safety concerns.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: Fresno Dam is one of the highest risk dams in the Missouri Basin region. It is the region's recommendation that the Fresno Tailwater FAS be closed until the completion of the BOR's Safety of Dams Project is completed or until it is safe for the public to return to the FAS. As mitigation for the loss of the site during the time of the project, FWP has requested that FAS roadways and parking areas be maintained and enhanced by the BOR. The latrine will also be pumped and cleaned by the construction company. The access road into the FAS will be widened, graded, and graveled to provide better access once the FAS reopens.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission authorize FWP to close the Fresno Tailwater FAS during the Bureau of Reclamation Safety of Dams Project on the Fresno Reservoir, for the duration of the project or until it is safe for the public to re-enter the site.