MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION
FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

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Meeting Date: December 10th, 2026

Agenda Item: Approved Commercial Bait Seining Waters

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Minutes

Background:
A Commercial Bait Fish Seining License is required for: 1) persons 15 years of age and older to seine for and transport bait fish for commercial purposes in Montana; and 2) for any person who seines for and has in their possession more than 24 dozen nongame bait fish. The commission may designate waters that are allowed for these purposes, and FWP describes these waters in the Commercial Bait Seining Application Form. Approved seining waters are regularly monitored for aquatic invasive species (AIS) and pathogens and maintain adequate population abundance to accommodate bait collection. For 2027-2028, the department proposes 6 changes to the Approved Commercial Bait Seining Waters to clarify where commercial seining can occur, add commercial seining opportunity, and to remove some waters based on population abundance or overall fishery conservation concerns.

Public Involvement Process & Results:
The proposed 2027-2028 Commercial Bait Seining List will be available for public comment. Submitted public comments will be compiled and submitted to the commission.

Alternatives & Analysis:
he commission could approve the approved waters for bait seining list, modify the approved waters list, or not approve the approved waters list. Modifying the approved waters list would require additional analysis by department staff to determine if the addition or deletion of a waterbody would be appropriate to meet demand and/or pose an increased pathogen or invasive species risk. Not approving the approved waters list could jeopardize commercial baitfish collection. Department staff expect that waterbodies on the approved list are adequate to support commercial seining while maintaining viable fish populations and minimize risk of pathogens and AIS.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:
The department recommends adopting the Commercial Bait Seining Waters list as presented.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the Approved Commercial Bait Seining Waters list for 2027-2028