MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION
FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: Thursday December 10, 2026

Agenda Item: Sacajawea Lagoon Bass Removal Project

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: FWP received reports of smallmouth bass in the Sacajawea Lagoon in late May of 2026. Six largemouth bass and three smallmouth bass were captured using electrofishing by FWP staff on June 1, 2026. The largemouth bass ranged from 11-12 inches, while smallmouth bass ranged from 10-13 inches. The presence of these two species in the lagoon is a threat given their predatory nature, proximity to wild trout populations in the Yellowstone River, and potential to be transported to other nearby waters that support popular trout fisheries. Escapement of bass from the lagoon is possible through a culvert near the inlet of the lagoon that is directly connected to the Yellowstone River. Downstream dispersal of bass into Fleshman Creek, which is connected to the Yellowstone River, is also possible through the outlet structure.

FWP is proposing to remove all fish from the lagoon by periodically capturing fish while electrofishing as the lagoon is dewatered. To dewater the lagoon, a diversion barrier will be placed where Fleshman Creek enters the lagoon to divert water to the Yellowstone River. The lagoon outlet will be screened to minimize fish escapement downstream. Once screens are in place, check boards on the outlet will be incrementally removed over several days to gradually drain the lagoon to avoid bank erosion and other issues that might result from high flows in Fleshman Creek in residential areas downstream of the lagoon. These efforts will dewater about a mile of Fleshman Creek downstream of the lagoon. However, a spring near M Street should maintain low flows in Fleshman Creek to its confluence with the Yellowstone River. FWP staff will capture and relocate as many fish as possible from the dewatered section of the stream to the section of stream below the spring. The dewatered reach of Fleshman Creek downstream of the Lagoon would remain dewatered until the lagoon is full. All fish will be collected once the lagoon is completely dry. Captured fish will be euthanized and removed from the lagoon. Yellowstone cutthroat trout will be stocked following removal efforts.

Public Involvement Process & Results: FWP scoped the proposed regulation with the City of Livingston on September 24 and members of the public at a meeting in Livingston on October 1. City staff and the 11 members of the public who attended the second meeting were all supportive of the proposed removal. FWP received 11 comments during the public comment period for the EA, which was posted online for public comment from September 17, 2026 to October 2, 2026; 10 of the comments were supportive of the proposed removal. Discussions with the City of Livingston have led to the potential to use the dewatering of the lagoon as an opportunity to improve conditions by dredging deposited sediments in the pond, which would improve the fishery and other recreational opportunities such as swimming.

Alternatives & Analysis:

A. The Commission could approve the removal as proposed.
B. The Commission could propose other mechanical removal options that do not involve dewatering the lagoon, requiring further analysis by the Department.
C. The Commission could choose not to approve any removal efforts for the lagoon.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: The Department recommends the Commission adopt the FWP proposed bass removal as presented.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the fish removal in Sacajawea Lagoon as proposed.