



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL AND INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** June 12, 2026

**Agenda Item:** Approval of beaver transplants for 2026 through 2028

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 minutes

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**Background:** Beaver activity in streams can help mitigate drought and restore degraded habitats for fish and wildlife. Beaver transplants in Montana have been uncommon, but the department recently completed a programmatic environmental assessment (EA) to facilitate removal of beavers in areas where conflicts are common and relocation into habitats where they can be beneficial. The department proposes moving beavers from sources involving conflict into 1) the Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area (WMA), 2) the Moose Creek drainage in upper Big Hole River watershed, and 3) the Flying D Ranch 15 miles south of Bozeman. The Spotted Dog WMA release will augment existing beaver populations and likely come from conflict sites in Anaconda and the Mill-Willow Bypass area. The Moose Creek transplant would re-establish an extirpated population on U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management managed areas and come from other sources in the upper Big Hole and around Silver Bow Creek. Finally, the Flying D Ranch would use beavers from the lower Gallatin and Madison rivers or within the boundaries of the ranch to augment existing populations.

**Public Involvement Process and Results:** The department is using the Montana Beaver Transplant Program to select suitable habitat with minimal risk of developing new conflicts to provide a nonlethal management option to address existing conflicts. The program ensures that private landowners within the scope of the proposed release have no opposition to the release prior to recommendation of sites for commission approval. Much of the comment received during the EA process was supportive, although caution was expressed about creating new conflicts in new locations. The program is designed to limit the risk of conflict occurring through intensive site selection and vetting.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** The proposed translocations of beavers will provide the department with additional tools (in addition to lethal removal) to address conflicts involving beavers. In reviewing the department's recommendation, the commission may:

Alternative A: Approve the department's recommendation as presented.

Alternative B: Deny the department's request to approve beaver translocations.

Alternative C: Approve a subset of locations for beaver translocations.

**Agency Recommendation and Rationale:** Section 87-5-711, MCA, requires the commission approve the transplant of wildlife to new locations. Because translocations provide a public benefit and a nonlethal tool to address conflicts arising from beaver activities and the likelihood of conflict in proposed translocation sites is limited, the department recommends that the commission vote to approve beaver translocations to the Spotted Dog WMA, the Moose Creek drainage in upper Big Hole River watershed, and the Flying D Ranch 15 miles south of Bozeman.

**Proposed Motion:** I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve beaver translocations into the Spotted Dog WMA, the Moose Creek drainage in the upper Big Hole River watershed, and the Flying D Ranch during 2026–2028 as presented by the department.