



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

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Meeting Date: October 15th, 2026

Agenda Item: 2027-2028 Fishing Regulations

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 20-30 minutes

Background: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks develops fishing regulations on a biennial cycle. The 2027–2028 fishing regulations are being presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for consideration and adoption. The proposed package contains 44 regulations that update statewide, district-standard, and waterbody-specific fishing regulations. The proposals include changes to harvest limits, season dates, gear and bait restrictions, fishing methods, and regulatory language intended to support fisheries management objectives, improve clarity and enforceability, and provide angling opportunity.

Public Involvement Process & Results: FWP scoped 41 potential regulation proposals in May 2026 and received public input through online comments and 9 public scoping meetings. The Department considered that input, along with updated biological information and staff review, in developing the regulation package now before the Commission. Some regulations received further scoping among various interest groups, more detailed public involvement is contained in the regulation descriptions. As a result of that process, the package has been revised to include 44 proposals. Of the 41 proposals scoped, FWP withdrew three scoped proposals, modified four proposals, carried forward three public proposals, and added three new proposals.

Material changes include expanding the number of poles allowed on the Missouri River (Cascade Bridge to Black Eagle Dam) and Fort Peck Reservoir (open water). Instituting a seasonal setline restriction on the Yellowstone River (Billings to mouth of Bighorn). These regulations were proposed by the public. The package also withdraws the proposed East Gallatin district standard pike-harvest and float-angling restriction, as well as the Gallatin River district standard pike-harvest proposal.

Revisions include clarifying that soft-plastic imitations are considered lures, modifying the Cow Creek–Beauchamp Creek setline season, and eliminating the proposed Madison River district standard pike-harvest change while retaining proposed side-channel closures. The package also increases the combined trout harvest limit on the Big Hole River to 1 fish and the brown trout harvest limit on the Beaverhead River to 5. Additional proposed changes would remove the Beaverhead River spawning-closure exception from Barretts Diversion to the mouth, clarify Big Hole River access-site names, and update paddlefish-tagging requirements to support enforcement.

Alternatives & Analysis:

- A. The commission could adopt the FWP regulations as is, requiring no further analysis by the department.
- B. The commission could propose other regulation changes, requiring further analysis by the department.
- C. The commission could choose not to move forward with any of FWP's proposals and roll forward the existing regulations from 2025 into 2027-28



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Agency Recommendation & Rationale: The department recommends the commission adopt the FWP proposed 2027-28 fishing regulation changes as presented and consider the regulations proposed by the public. Detail for each proposal is provided in the regulation package.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the 2027-28 fishing regulations as proposed.