



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: August 20, 2021

Agenda Item: MRL Clark Fork River Temporary Closure Rule, Region 2

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background:

Montana Rail Link notified FWP in 2021 of its intention to replace the footings of the piers on a bridge crossing the Clark Fork River near Bearmouth FAS. This bridge has been in place for many years and significant wear is present on the footings. The long-term stability of the piers is questionable and requires reconstruction. MRL has requested that a small section of the Clark Fork River be closed during construction to ensure public safety.

To repair the bridge, diversions and cofferdams would be constructed after Labor Day to avoid significant floating presence. Additionally, a side channel would be created adjacent to the abutment on the east side of the bridge to divert water away from the construction site. The river closure would be required only in proximity of the bridge site (approximately 100' upstream and downstream). The construction work window would be through December 31, but construction is expected to be completed by November 30.

The constructed channel is the primary safety concern at the work site. The entire Clark Fork River will be diverted through this side channel that will be roughly 1/3 the width of the current Clark Fork River channel. Thus, velocities will be much higher than normal through this reach during construction. This may create hydraulic conditions that could be difficult for floaters to navigate. There is also some old concrete present adjacent to the site of the constructed side channel that could also create unsafe hydraulic conditions or floating hazards.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

The commission approved releasing the proposed rule for public comment at its June 24 meeting. No public comment was provided at the June meeting. The department requested additional public comment on the proposed rule from July 29 through August 16. The department will present comments received to the commission at the August 20 meeting. The public will also have opportunity to comment at the August 20 meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis:

The commission could choose not to adopt a rule that would allow temporary short-term closures of the river during construction. However, without this option, emergency conditions may precipitate adoption of an emergency rule to close the river. FWP would prefer the ability to anticipate such needed actions to enhance public notice and safety.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission adopt the proposed Clark Fork River temporary closure rule.