

Meeting Date: July 28, 2022

Agenda Item No. 5H

Agenda Item: Opening Myrtle Creek Preserve to hunting, Fishing, and Trapping (ACTION)

Bureau Chief Approval: JR

Prepared by: Jon Rachael, Wildlife Bureau Chief

Background:

Myrtle Creek preserve was one of 33 game preserves created by the Idaho legislature between 1909 and 1939 to protect wildlife from over-hunting. Myrtle Creek preserve was created in 1937 and contains 23,000 acres in combination of National Forest land, private timber land, and Idaho Department of Lands property in Boundary County west of Bonners Ferry. Myrtle Creek is one of 4 preserves that remain closed to hunting today, including David Thompson Preserve (Bonner Co.), Lewiston Preserve (Nez Perce Co.), and Springfield Preserve (Bingham Co.; closed to take of game birds and waterfowl).

Myrtle Creek is the primary water source for the city of Bonners Ferry. Legislation provides that the Fish and Game Commission may open the lands within the preserve to hunting, fishing, and trapping with the concurrent approval of Bonners Ferry City Council and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.

The City of Bonners Ferry has provided a letter of support, and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality has provided a letter of approval for the Commission to restore hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities within the preserve.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Wildlife preserves were created by the Idaho legislature (Idaho Code §36-1901) for the purpose of providing “better protection of wild animals and birds, for the establishment of breeding places therefor and for the preservation of the species thereof.”

Idaho Code §36-1902 prohibits take of wild animals and wild birds in wildlife preserves created by state law.

Myrtle Creek Preserve has an additional restrictions (Idaho Code §36-1905) that prohibits fishing. Idaho Code §36-1905 provides that *“the Idaho fish and game commission may, after receiving concurrent written approval from the Idaho department of environment quality and the Bonners Ferry city council, open certain waters and lands lying within the Myrtle Creek preserve to hunting, fishing or trapping during prescribed seasons.”*

Public Involvement Process:

In response to a request from the public, Bonners Ferry City Council met, discussed, and voted to approve reopening the Myrtle Creek Preserve to hunting, fishing, and trapping on May 3, 2022. Kootenai Valley Sportsmen Association and the Foundation for Wildlife Management provided letters of support. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the proposal for the Commission to open the preserve at the Commission hearing on July 27.

Justification:

Myrtle Creek preserve has been closed to hunting, fishing, and trapping by legislative action since 1937. The City of Bonners Ferry is supportive and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality has approved opening the preserve to these activities. Opening the preserve will provide sportsmen access to hunt, fish, and trap on 23,000 acres that

has been closed for decades. Commission action is required by Idaho Code 36-1905 to open the preserve to hunting, fishing, and trapping.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Commission restore the opportunity to hunt, fish, and trap within the boundaries of the Myrtle Creek preserve.

Suggested Motion: That the Commission restore the opportunity to hunt, fish, and trap within the boundaries of the Myrtle Creek preserve.

