



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** June 20, 2024

**Agenda Item:** Weapon Restriction on Bjornberg Bridge Fishing Access Site

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

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**Background:** Bjornberg Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) is a 24-acre FAS along the Milk River north of Highway 2 between Saco and Hinsdale. The FAS has a picnic area, latrine, and bank-fishing opportunities. The FAS is also a river bottom property with a cottonwood gallery that offers hunting opportunities for deer, upland birds, and waterfowl.

Neighboring landowners have expressed safety concerns about hunting occurring on the FAS in proximity to their residences. The FAS neighbors, four occupied dwellings, are within .25 miles of the FAS, with the closest residence being only .08 miles away. This winter, one of the neighboring landowners requested the FAS be closed to hunting. Restricting rifle hunting on the FAS would be FWP's preferred option, allowing hunting with shotgun, muzzleloader, traditional handgun, crossbow, and archery only. Although this was not the inquiring landowner's preferred option, he was agreeable to the rifle restriction.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** Public involvement included discussion with neighboring landowners to the FAS about the safety concerns of allowing rifle hunting on the FAS. No further discussion occurred with other members of the public. The department will solicit public comment prior to the June commission meeting. Public comments will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the June commission meeting.

**Alternatives & Analysis:**

Alternative A: Adopt as final, the recommendation to restrict rifle hunting at Bjornberg Bridge FAS. This means that rifle hunting would be prohibited. Shotgun, muzzleloader, traditional handgun, crossbow, and archery only would be allowed. Pros of this alternative would be reduced safety concerns of neighboring landowners during commissioned hunting seasons. Cons would be a loss of rifle hunting opportunities by the public at this site. This is a departure from ARM 12.12.114, which would otherwise govern.

Alternative B: Decide not to adopt the rifle hunting restriction. Pros of this alternative would be no change to public use of the site. Cons of this alternative would be that safety concerns of neighboring residents would still be high with the use of rifles during commissioned hunting seasons. FWP would look for other methods of managing public safety including, but not limited to, additional signage, increased staff presence, and evaluation of potential closures or restrictions of other park use.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** FWP recommends the commission adopt Alternative A to alleviate the safety risk of rifle use on the FAS. Other hunting opportunities would remain available to the public.

**Proposed Motion:** I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt Alternative A, restricting the use of rifles at Bjornberg Bridge FAS.