

# UGBEP Advisory Council Meeting Program Updates



Montana Wild, Helena  
March 11 – 12, 2024

# UGBEP Winter Activities - Overview

- Annual Payment Cycle: 161 total payees, \$978,399
  - VPA-HIP \$451,500
  - UGBEP Capital \$526,899
- UGBEP Jan. Proposal MTG
- Strat. Plan Public Comment Period: set-up / monitor
- HB 868 Quarterly Budget Reports (x2) on 143 active agreements
- UGBEP 2024 Work Planning Meeting

- Prep for CRP Mailing
- Investigate FAS Statewide for UGBEP opportunities
- DNRC/FWP MOU Meeting
- Partner Meetings: PF/BLM Billings, NWTF/USFS Missoula
- VPA-HIP Budget Monitoring & Reporting
- 2024 UGBEP Pheasant Release enrollments



# Budget Updates

- UGBEP
- VPA-HIP



# UGBEP Biennial Budget – Starting Balance (Jul 1, 2023)

HB5 = Capital Fund (Habitat enhancement, bird planting)

- \$2.5M Authority for FYs 2024 and 2025 (ends June 30, 2025)
  - License..... \$1,520,000
  - Bird Planting.. \$388,000
  - PR \$..... \$600,000 (Now UGBEP)
  - **TOTAL.....\$2,508,000**



# UGBEP Biennial Budget – March 2024 Recap

- HB5 = Capital Funds (Habitat enhancement, bird planting)
- As of February 27, 2024
  - **Unallocated Balance:**  
**\$2,006,277**



# VPA-HIP Budget

- Total grant award in 2020: \$1,894,060
  - \$1,595,804 Habitat
  - \$298,256 Overhead
- 3-year grant awarded late 2020
- 1-year extension, expires March 31, 2024

FY24 Available Balance: **\$451,500**

FY24 Expenditures: **\$478,262**



# Recent Program Enrollment Summary

- UGBEP
- VPA-HIP



# UGBEP Proposals –Jan '24

NEW - Rate and Enrollment Cap Increases starting April 1.

- CRP Leases
  - \$5 to \$10 per acre
  - 320-acre cap increased to 640 acres
- HML
  - Payment increase ~\$5 more for security and thermal cover
  - Acreage cap increased 160 to 320 acres.
- Wildlife-friendly practices ~ \$5 increase per acre.





# UGBEP Proposals –Jan '24

33 new projects

- 10,129 Habitat Acres
- 86,154 Access Acres

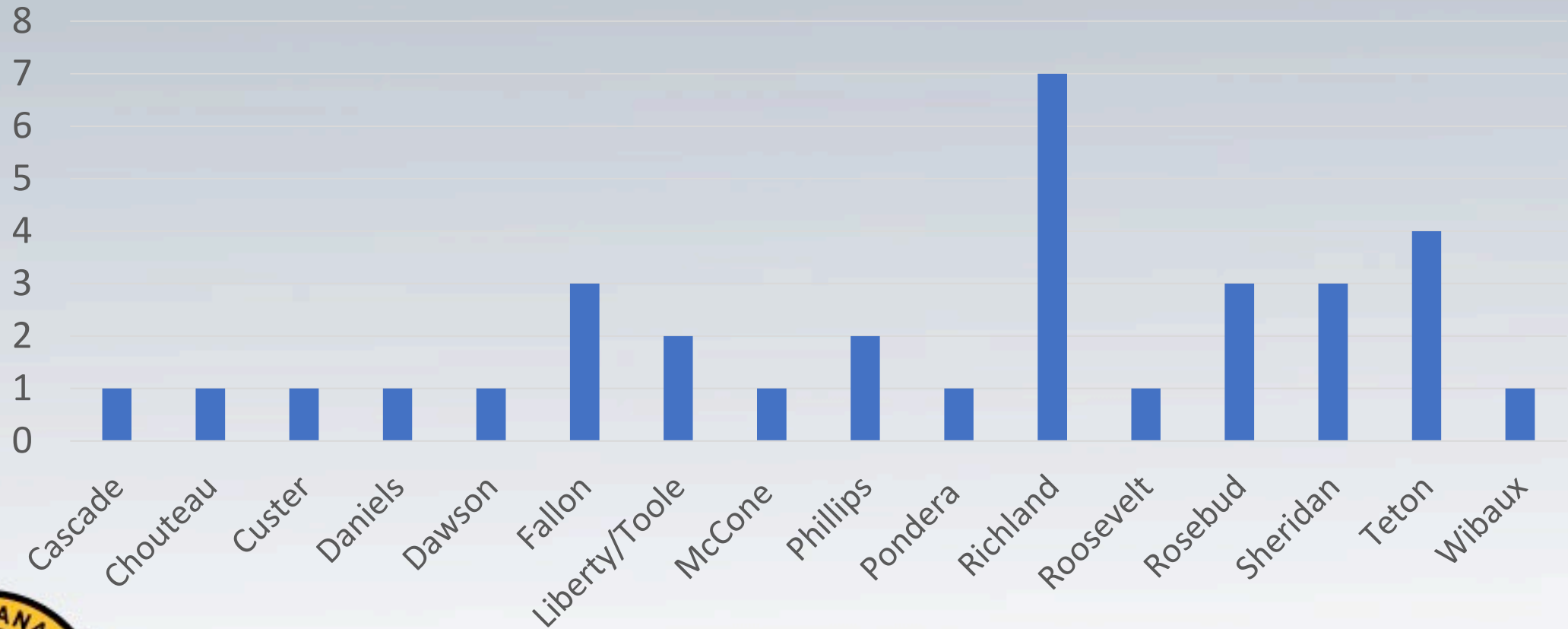
Contract length

- Min: 2 years
- Max: 15 years
- Avg: 5.6 years

Total Obligations: \$651,619

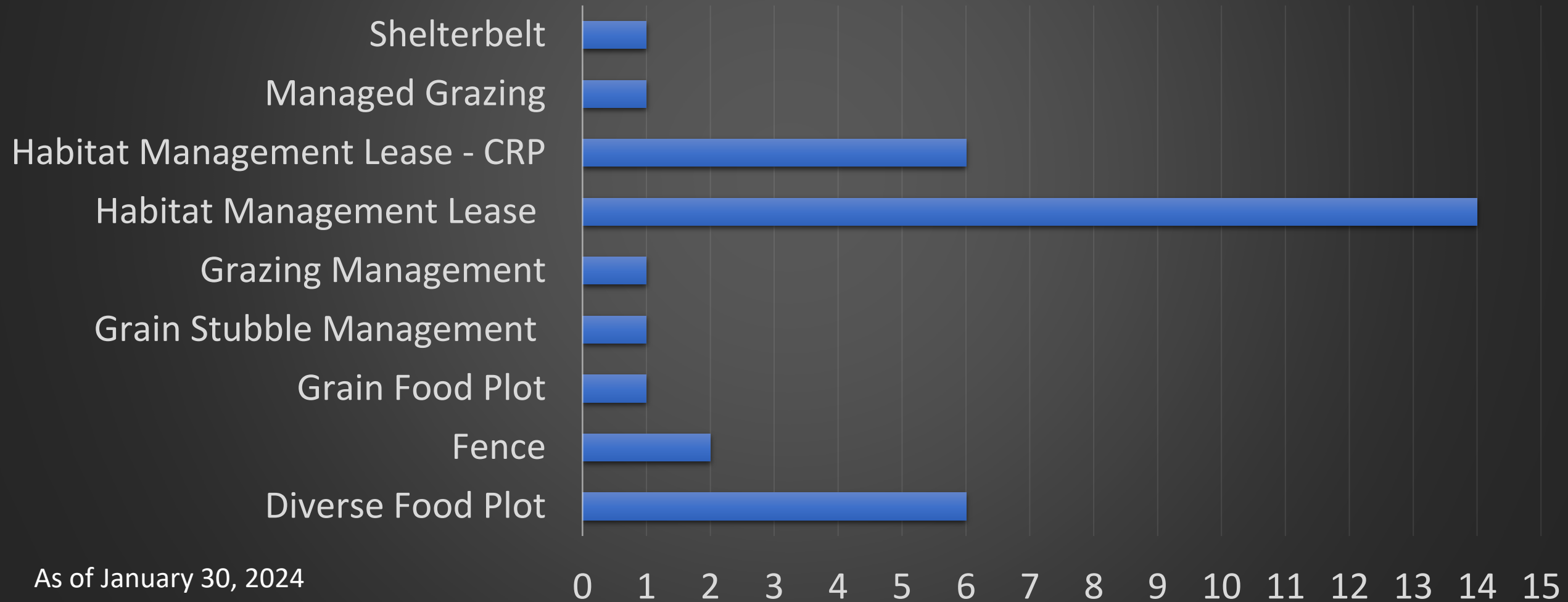


# 2024 Field Season: New UGBEP Habitat Projects by County (n = 16)



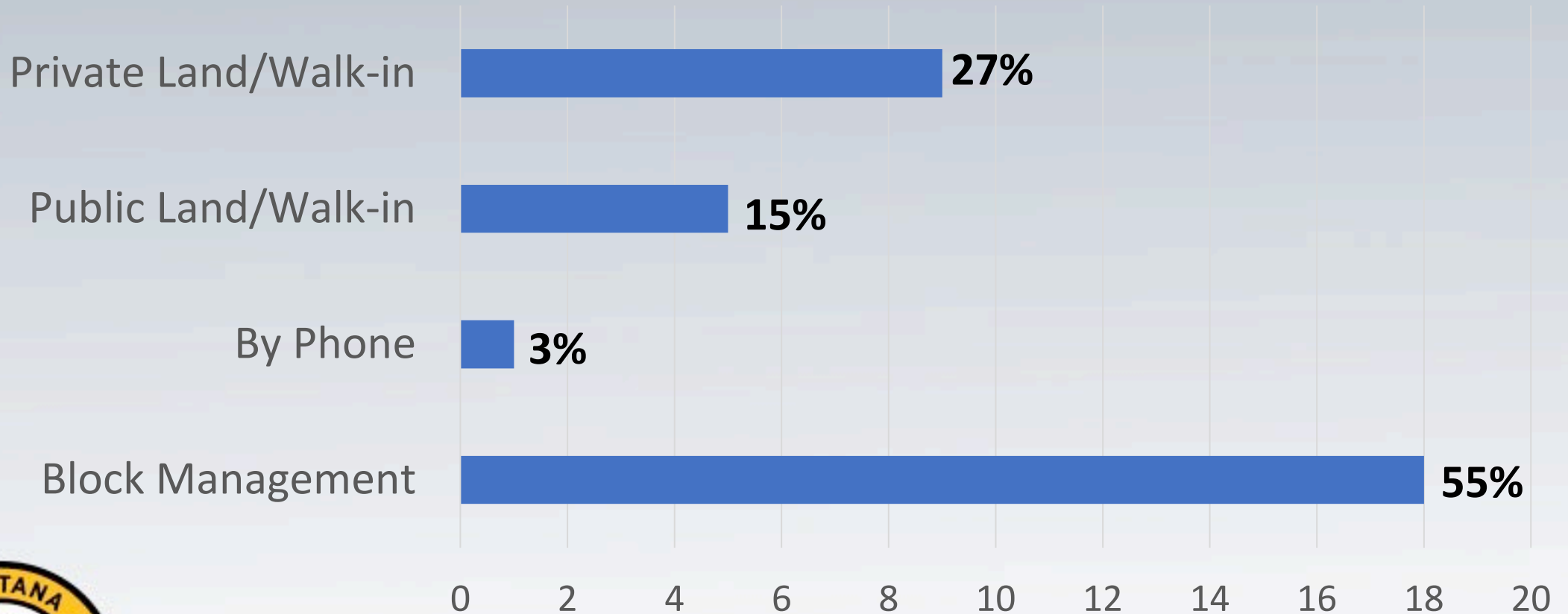
As of January 30, 2024

# 2024 Field Season: New UGBEP Habitat Project Types (n = 33)



As of January 30, 2024

## 2024 Field Season: New UGBEP Projects Access Methods



As of January 30, 2024

# Voluntary Public Access-Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) Grant

- Farm Bill program to expand public access
- Funds UGBEP's Open Fields for Game Bird Hunters "Open Fields" and eligible HMLs
- \$5/CRP acre per year enrolled
- Walk-in game bird hunting, no further permission



# Open Fields 2023 Enrollment Stats

- 38 new enrollments
- 9,377 Habitat Acres (OF & HML)
- 11,881 Walk-in Access Acres (~2,500 acres donated)



# 2024 CRP Mailing

- FSA/FWP MOU CRP data-sharing
- Statewide mailing (1,308) to generate interest for a CRP lease agreement on private & public lands during CRP sign-up (3/4 – 3/29)
- UGBEP “deadline” to apply April 19



# UGBEP & Partners Update

## Region 5 – PF / BLM / FWP

- Will be phased out end of 2025
- BLM funding challenges
- WMA project sites phased to permanent cover
- Goal for WMAs - crop-share agreements to continue habitat management.





# UGBEP & Partners Update, cont'd

## Region 2 – NWTf / USFS / FWP

- Cooperative position is vacant.
- Partnership will seek to fill vacancy to continue efforts in R2 with some expansion into R1 and R3.



# UGBEP & Partners Update, cont'd

## PF Farm Bill Biologists Support

- Historical UGBEP contributed modest funds to support 4 positions in Conrad, Chinook, Scobey, and Billings
- Currently – Mig. Bird Wetland Program & UGBEP contribute to the PF State Team (UGBEP \$10,000/year for 3 years)



# 2024 UGBEP Pheasant Releases

- 2 Contracts: Beaverhead and Phillips counties
- 165 Pheasants total (Pre-auth)
- UGBEP contributing \$11 cost-share and pay loaded mileage \$1.34.
- Poindexter Slough FAS (370 acres) and private land (1,610 acres).
- Estimate \$1,815 pheasants and \$400 mileage = \$2,215 total costs.



**Only 174 more days!!**

