

Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Committee Report and Recommendations

Presented to:
The Governor,
67th Montana Legislature
&
Fish, Wildlife & Parks
January 2021



THE OUTSIDE IS IN US ALL.



Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Committee

Report and Recommendations

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the 67th Montana Legislature
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Introduction

Passed by the 54th legislature, 87-1-269, MCA authorizes the governor to appoint a committee of persons interested in issues related to hunters, anglers, landowners, and outfitters, including, but not limited to, the hunting access program, the fishing access enhancement program, landowner-hunter relations, outfitting industry issues, and other issues related to private lands and public wildlife. This committee is known as the Private Land/Public Wildlife (PL/PW) Advisory Committee.

PL/PW is required to report to the governor and to each legislature regarding the successes of the Fish, Wildlife & Parks' hunting access program and fishing access enhancement program. The report is to include elements such as annual landowner participation, the number of acres annually enrolled programs, hunter harvest success on enrolled lands, the number of qualified applicants who were denied enrollment because of a shortfall in funding, an accounting of program expenditures, and to make suggestions for funding, modification, or improvement needed to achieve the objectives of the entire hunting access program.

While appointed by the governor, PL/PW is administered and facilitated by Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks' (FWP) Hunting Access Bureau Chief and FWP's Legislative Liaison with assistance from other FWP administrative staff.

In compliance with 87-1-269, this report provides a summary of the PL/PW activities and recommendations as well as a report of the FWP Hunting Access Program and Fishing Access Enhancement Program during the 2019 and 2020 calendar years.

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PL/PW Overview

In October of 2019, Governor Steve Bullock appointed 10 citizens representing the interests of Montana hunters, anglers, and landowners to the Private Land/Public Wildlife (PL/PW) Advisory Committee.

Most the members on the current PL/PW are re-appointments from the 2017-2018 PL/PW with the addition of one new appointed member.

Current PL/PW Members

- Sen. Duane Ankney, Colstrip— landowner and legislator
- Mr. Ed Beall, Helena— sportsperson
- Mr. Ed Bukoskey, Rosebud— sportsperson and landowner
- Ms. Cynthia Cohan— Butte, sportsperson
- Mr. Lee Cornwell, Glasgow— landowner
- Dr. Dan Fiehrer, Helena— sportsperson
- Rep. Denley Loge, St. Regis—landowner and legislator
- Mr. Richard Stuker, Chinook— landowner
- Mr. Carl Zabrocki, Billings— sportsperson
- Mr. Dale Tribby (new), Miles City— sportsperson

Current PL/PW terms expire August 1, 2021

PL/PW Meetings

PL/PW met five times in 2020. January and March meetings were conducted in-person while the remaining meetings were conducted online via Zoom. All meetings were public meetings that included specified times for taking public comment.

PL/PW Primary Accomplishment

Created through the 66th Legislative Session, the primary focus of PL/PW in 2020 was to develop guidance for the Department (FWP) to implement the new **Public Access Land Agreement Program (PALA)**(87-1-295-297, MCA). PL/PW members spent many hours working on scoring criteria and valuations to encourage equity and consistency for the landowners who applied to enroll in the PALA program. PL/PW then reviewed eligible projects at their July 2020 meeting and presented their recommendations to the Director (**Appendix A**). **The Director approved all PALA agreements as recommended by PL/PW.**

PL/PW revisited the guidance to the Department and provided modifications to the scoring and valuation of the PALA program for 2021 during their December meeting.

PL/PW Host Landowner Panel on Wildlife Movement and Migration

On December 1, 2020, PL/PW Hosted a Landowner Panel to Discuss Impacts from Wildlife on Private-Lands with a focus on how to better support the working lands that support wildlife movement and migration in Montana. See more information on page 7.

PL/PW Additional Accomplishments

PL/PW additionally continued to focus their efforts on solutions to improve hunter/landowner relations. One solution the group proposed was to develop a video that could be displayed on the FWP website and available when hunters purchases licenses online. The video is in the very initial stages of production through a partnership with the International Hunter Education Association as the video would apply to situations affecting hunters and landowners across the Western US.

PL/PW also discussed and is working on changes to existing statutes to:

- Increase the penalties for second offense of hunting without landowner permission.*
- Modify landowner preference for smaller landowners experiencing department documented and approved elk game damage.*
 - Revise persons eligible for bonus points.*
- Re-establish a commission process for HB 454 (2001 session) elk permit/license for access agreements.*
 - Make certain licenses available only once in a lifetime.
- Increase the payment cap for Block Management Cooperators.

**presented to EQC at their September 2020 meeting*

PL/PW Hosts Landowner Panel on Wildlife Migration and Movement

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke issued Secretarial Order 3362. This order provides funding for research and habitat restoration projects for deer, elk and antelope within wildlife migration corridors across the West.

To continue the Montana discussion, PL/PW hosted a private landowner panel represented by farmers, ranchers, tribal and lumber company representatives at their meeting on December 1, 2020. The panel members discussed the variety opportunities and challenges presented through wildlife impacts on private lands.

The focus of the landowner panel was to discuss the question: *How does the state of Montana better support the working lands that support wildlife movement and migration?*

Panelists expressed common themes throughout the meeting: 1) Wildlife movement and migration depends on in-tact and economically viable working lands operations; 2) Landowners are essential stakeholders in Montana's wildlife future; 3) Most landowners care about sustainable wildlife populations and overall land health for a variety of reasons; 4) Whether or not a given operation provides public access, it can bear significant costs and risks while supporting wildlife in Montana; 5) There is a troubling trend for wildlife due to private lands fragmentation at increasing rates.

PL/PW intently listened to landowner panelists and will consider possible solutions to address the needs (identified below) by landowner panelists at future PL/PW meetings.

High Level Needs Identified by Landowner Panel

- Improved recognition and appreciation of working lands contributions. Needs to be a communications campaign between FWP & local collaboratives to promote the positive benefits of in-tact working lands.
- FWP should look beyond the access question when assisting landowners with wildlife problems or challenges.
- FWP staff should work to improve partnerships and communication with landowners at the local level. Some staff do very well here, but some need to drink more coffee with landowners.
- Increased funding is needed to help private landowners with public wildlife issues. This is ongoing and increasing, but there is no statewide venue/mechanism to work toward conservation finance solutions.
- Conservation finance (e.g. bed tax) that only drives more people to the landscape (fishing access sites, promoting MT) without compensating for the impacts to the land or landowners does not help.
- Locally led collaboratives (e.g. Ranchers Stewardship Alliance, Big Hole Watershed Committee, etc) and conservation districts can be very effective, but they often lack adequate funding to provide staffing support.

Specific Needs Identified by Landowner Panel

- Mitigate the risk of disease (brucellosis and CWD) to working lands operations.
- Mitigate and manage the economic and ecological costs that wild ungulates bring to soil and forage.
- Continually address range health from the perspective of noxious weed management– in particular with general recreationists.
- Mitigate and manage the economic and human safety risks that large carnivores (e.g., grizzly bears) bring to working lands. Funding for conflict prevention (implementation of practices & infrastructure), mitigation (including effective agency response) and adequate compensation are essential. Consider a multiplier for livestock-loss.
- Stronger landowner representation on the Fish and Game Commission is needed.
- Establish an elk compensation fund or “elk-rents”.
- Offer transferable tags to landowners who provide habitat.
- Engage MSU extension, FWP and landowners in private-public partnership to accelerate the pace of innovative solutions.

Public Access Land Agreement Program Implementation Timeline and Process

- SB-341 (Blasdel) Signed by Governor—**5/6/2019**
- FWP drafts initial program guidance documents based off the Unlocking Public Lands Program (87-1-294) and identifies potential rule-making needed.
- Private Land/Public Wildlife (PL/PW) Advisory Committee meets **January 27-28, 2020** to review program and refine program guidance and review of Department ARM rule proposal.
- FWP holds ARM proposal public hearing on **2/25/2020** in Helena.
- PL/PW meets **March 2-3, 2020** to refine PALA program based on public comment from hearing and draft scoring criteria and payment structure with FWP to implement the program.
- FWP finalizes draft scoring criteria, project valuation, agreement and due diligence tracking forms **4/23/2020**.
- Final program ARM rules adopted **5/1/2020**.
- FWP works with DNRC and the Bureau of Land Management to identify ag/grazing leaseholders who may have inaccessible public lands as a part of their lease to conduct a direct mail campaign.
- FWP launches ad campaign to promote PALA. **5/3/2020**.
- Original application period closed **5/29/2020**.
- FWP staff work with landowners to collect applications and required documents to prepare for PL/PW review. Application deadline is extended to **6/19/2020**.
- Regional FWP staff meet to score projects and determine a valuation.
- Valuations and scores then examined collaboratively statewide with Hunting Access Bureau Chief and Fishing Access Site Program Coordinator
- Values then presented to landowners. If landowner agrees to potential valuation, PALA proposal goes to PL/PW for review.
- PL/PW reviews all eligible projects **7/14/2020** and provides their recommendations to the FWP Director.
- Director concurs with all PL/PW recommendations and agreements issued to eligible landowners **8/5/2020**.
- Projects signed, maps built, and properties available to the public on FWP website **9/4/2020**.



ATTENTION FARMERS & RANCHERS

Do you have a farming or grazing lease/permit or allotment that contains inaccessible public lands?

Currently millions of public land acres are inaccessible to the public for hunting, fishing & recreation.

PUBLIC ACCESS LAND AGREEMENT PROGRAM

is a way for landowners to provide public access to inaccessible public lands in exchange for annual payment and other improvements.

Agreements can be tailored to fit the needs of landowners, including when, where and how public access is granted.

The Public Access Land Agreement program is a collaborative solution that respects landowner's rights while still connecting Montanans to the outdoors.


LEARN MORE AT FWP.MT.GOV/PALA



Targeted PALA ad placed on Facebook

8/5/2020

9/4/2020



Public Access Land Agreement Program (PALA)

2020 Highlights

- Created program awareness amongst land-owners.
- Provided access to nearly **200,000 acres** of inaccessible or under-accessible public lands. Some was previously accessible via Block Management.
- Many PALA projects provide for **year-round access to public land**.
- Provided **multiple 10-year agreements** to secure public access to public lands.
- Multiple existing BMA cooperators also participated in PALA.
- Saw **new landowners enroll private land acres into Block Management with the addition of the PALA agreement** for the access to the public lands.
- PALA program **payments for 2020-2021 program year total \$154,450 with another \$7,500 for improvements to facilitate public access**.
- FWP spent approximately \$25,000 to promote PALA radio, direct mail, print, tv and social media.

PL/PW Recommendations for Improvements to PALA

1. Compensation amounts for the value of public access to public lands are high relative to the FWP Block Management program. Block Management (BMA) landowners are providing much more private and public land hunting access and in some cases getting compensated substantially less than PALA. The Legislature needs to examine the overall maximum compensation between the two programs— particularly the inequity of the maximum payment cap for both programs.
 - For example, one PALA landowner can have multiple agreements —each for up to \$15,000. In 2020, one PALA landowner will receive \$25,500 per year. However, a Block Management landowner can only be compensated a total of \$15,000 regardless of agreements or private land enrolled and the access provided by the BMA to public lands.
2. The legislature should authorize for a Department initial screening process. If the Department disagrees or does not see value in a proposed application, provide the Department the ability to reject an application, for cause, prior to a PL/PW review.
3. The Department should set a flat-rate payment for small public land acreages. Some public land parcels are only a section (640 acres), or less, but being compensated at a rate too high for the quantity and quality of access.
4. The PALA program had some good projects and some not as good projects in the first year (2020). During the review process, the Department should improve ability for PL/PW to better understand access, and the habitat and game populations available prior to the PL/PW committee review.
5. The Department should improve PL/PW understanding and bring clarity to scoring and valuation process by having local PL/PW member(s) review projects with the Department prior to discussing valuations with a landowner.
6. PL/PW and the Department should work together to continue to refine scoring criteria, process and valuations for the overall program as it develops in future years. Year two (2021) will see a refined approach for scoring and valuing a project from year one (2020).
7. Consideration should be given if the public lands being submitted have been enrolled or are currently enrolled in Block Management. Block Management landowners should receive extra consideration for PALA enrollment and payment. If a PALA is not granted, the Department should work with the landowner to determine the likelihood of the landowner to remain in Block Management.
8. Improvements being requested should only be allowed if a multi-year agreement is issued. The legislature should place cap on the maximum \$ dollar amount of improvements for any one landowner.
9. The Department should start the application process earlier in the year to provide more time for the landowner, the Department and PL/PW to review proposals submitted by landowners for enrollment in the program. PL/PW appreciates the work done by FWP staff in 2020 with the addition of this new program to their full workload during the busiest time of year for the Block Management program.
10. The Department should allocate a set amount of general license revenue (\$) being directed to this program. Current statute leaves too much discrepancy for the Department to decide, each biennium, how much it will allocate thus creating uncertainty for multi-year agreements, landowners and Department staff.

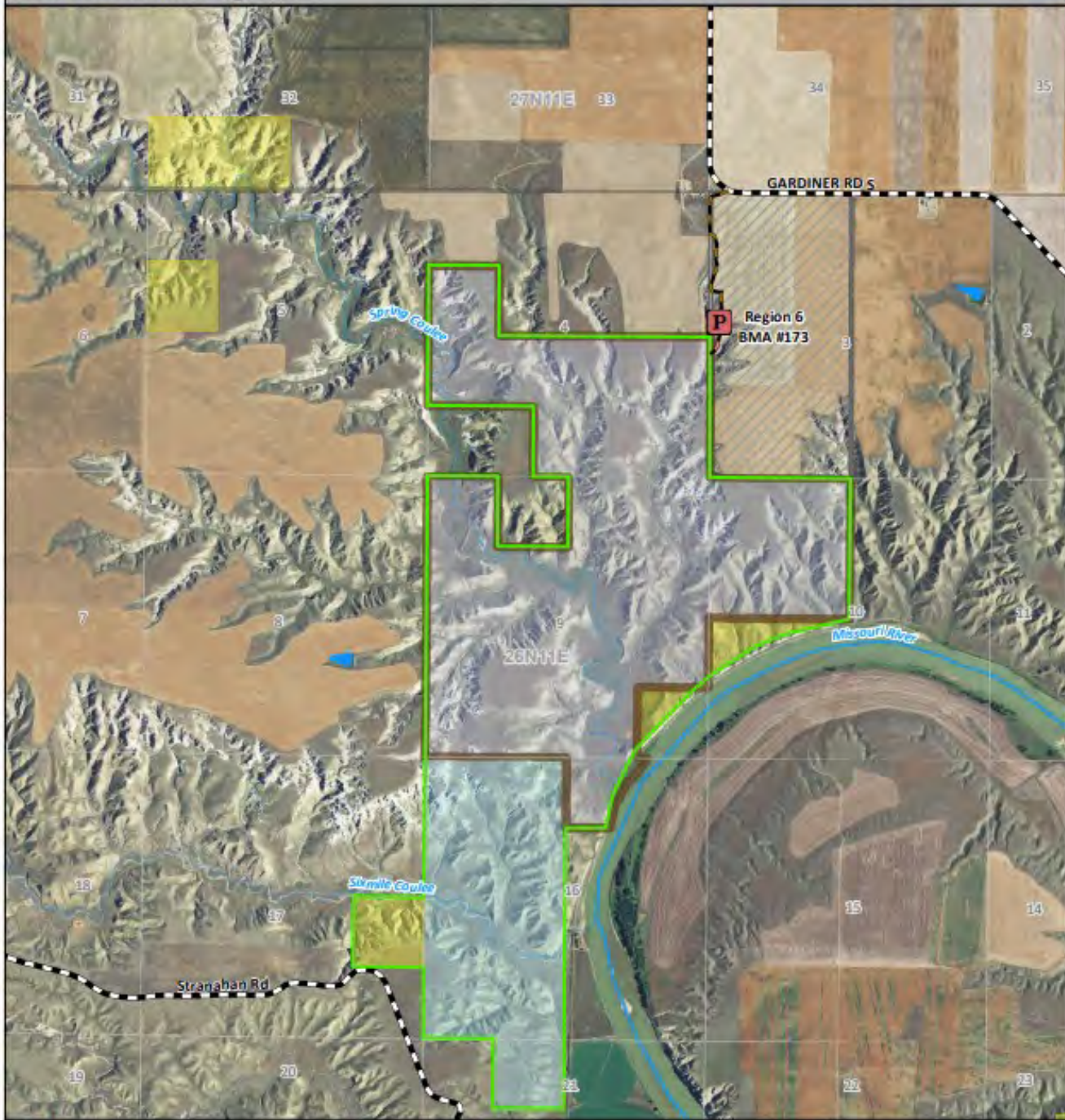
Public Access Land Agreement (PALA) in Southeast, MT improving access to land-locked Bureau of Land Management lands.



Public Access Land Agreement (PALA) improves and secures access to a FWP Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Northeast, MT. Prior to PALA this WMA was previously only accessible via the river access.

SPRING COULEE WMA PUBLIC ACCESS LAND AGREEMENT MONTANA FWP

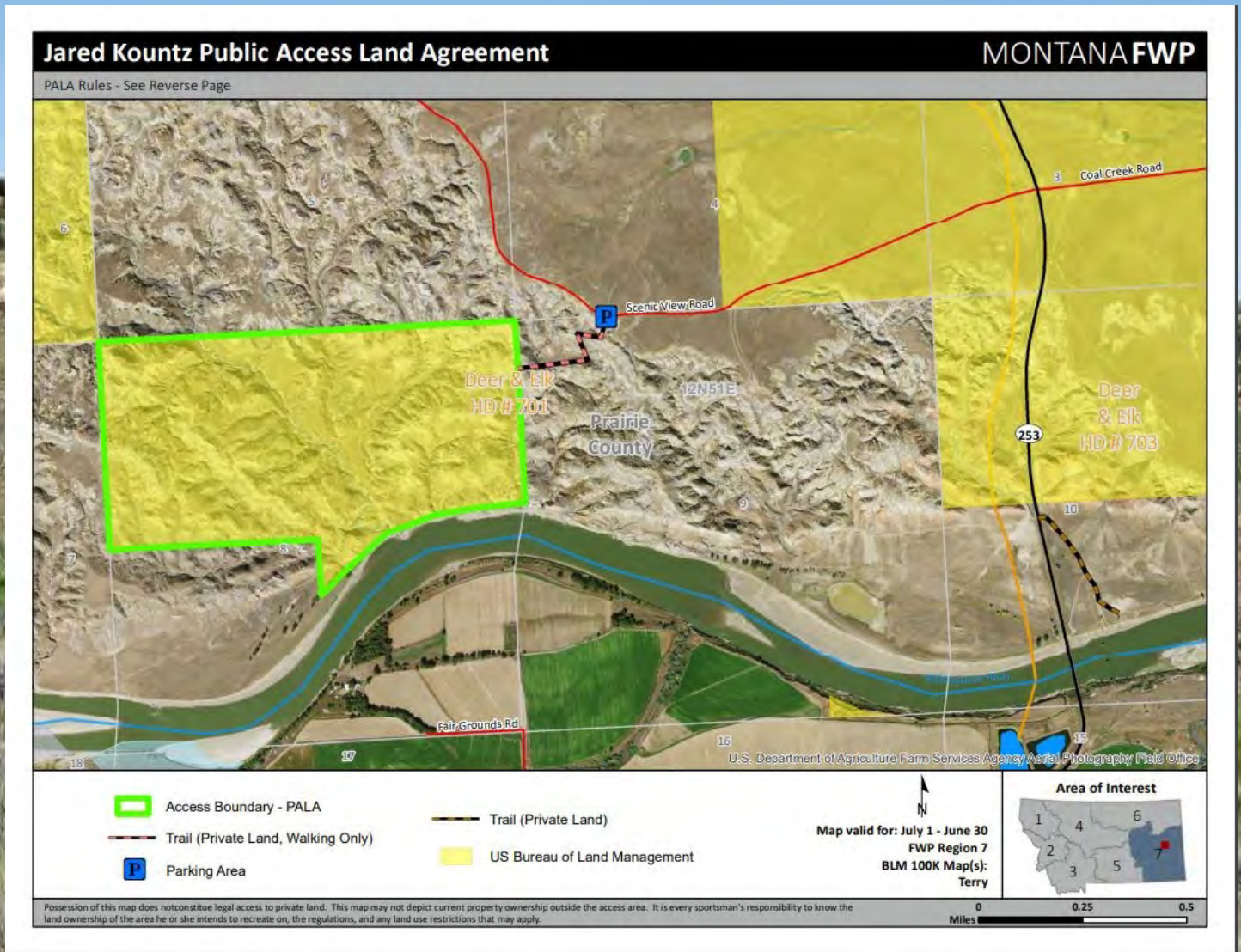
Access Rules - See Reverse Page



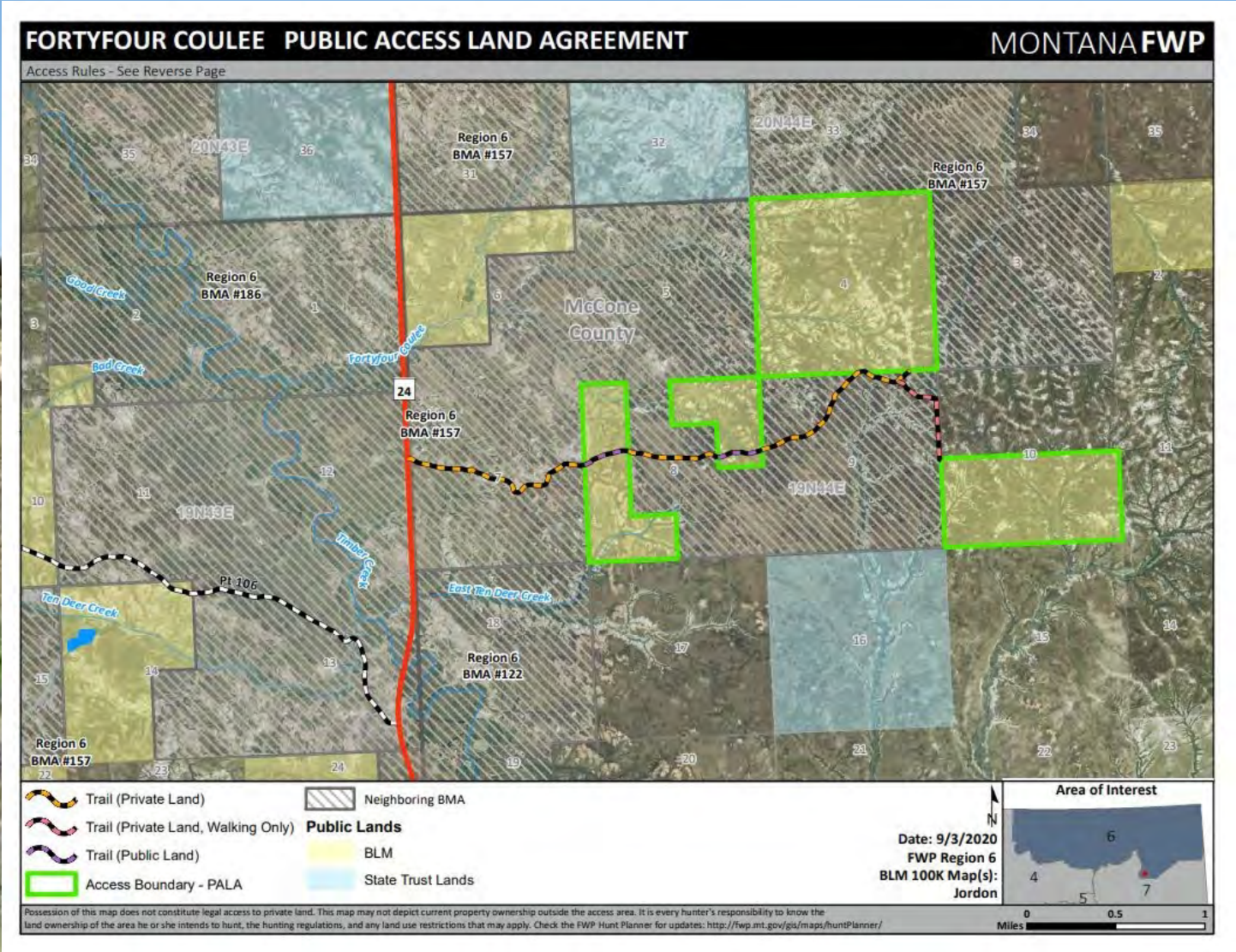
Parking	US Bureau of Land Management	 Date: 9/3/2020 FWP Region 6 BLM 100K Map(s): Billings, Bridger	Area of Interest 0 0.25 0.5 Miles
Trail (Private Land)	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks		
Trail (Private Land, Walking Only)	Montana State Trust Land		
Access Boundary - PALA	Neighboring BMA		

Possession of this map does not constitute legal access to private land. This map may not depict current property ownership outside the access area. It is every hunter's responsibility to know the land ownership of the area he or she intends to hunt, the hunting regulations, and any land use restrictions that may apply. Check the FWP Hunt Planner for updates: <http://fwp.mt.gov/gis/maps/huntPlanner/>

Public Access Land Agreement (PALA) improves and secures access to land-locked Bureau of Land Management in Southeast, MT. Also provides a new river access point for the public to launch boats to access public lands adjacent to the river as it is 40 mi between Fishing Access Site points from Bonfield to Fallon.



Public Access Land Agreement (PALA) improves and secures access to many small parcels of land-locked public land in Northeast, MT. Landowner also enrolled their private lands in Block Management as the result of PALA.



PL/PW Recommends Continuity and Timely Appointments

The ability for the interaction between private lands and public wildlife is essential to the way of life in Montana. The PL/PW Advisory Committee is one public place where hunters/anglers and landowners can come together to address opportunities and challenges related to public wildlife on private lands at a statewide level.

Unfortunately, the timing of appointments of committee members has been inconsistent over the past few years. For example, some appointments to the PL/PW Advisory Committee were made in February 2016 with member terms expiring July 31 2017. Members were appointed in January 2018 with a term ending August 1, 2019. No meetings were conducted in 2019 due to uncertainty of appointments. Current members were appointed at the end of October 2019 with current terms expiring August 1, 2021. Additionally, once a committee made up of 18 interested persons is now down to 10.

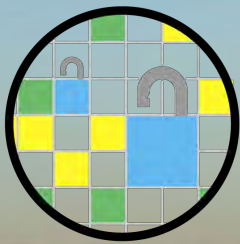
PL/PW recommends the Governor make appointments to the PL/PW Advisory Committee in a regular, and timely fashion. This will allow members to serve a minimum of a 2-year term with potentially allowing for the staggering of member terms so that information and group momentum towards solutions can be maintained without waiting on new or re-appointments. This will help maintain continuity and represent more opportunity for the group to work on private land and public wildlife issues.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Hunting Access Program Biennial Report 2019-2020



BLOCK MANAGEMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

25 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



**UNLOCKING
PUBLIC LANDS**
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Appreciate Access
hunting & fishing on
private land is a privilege

Respect the land. Respect the habitat. Pass it on.



ASK FOR ACCESS
TO HUNT & FISH
ON PRIVATE LAND

#ask4access

a friendly reminder from



Hunter Landowner
* STEWARDSHIP PROJECT *



**PRIVATE LAND/
PUBLIC WILDLIFE COUNCIL**



FWP Hunting Access Program Overview

The FWP Hunting Access Program is established through 87-1-265, MCA with the direction to develop programs of landowner assistance that encourage public access to private and public lands for purposes of hunting.

Most notably this includes the popular Block Management Program, the Unlocking Public Lands Program, Regional Access Projects Program, Access Public Lands Program, the Managed Access Project Sites Program, Livestock Loss Reimbursement Program, administrative assistance to Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Committee and the new Public Access Land Agreement Program.

The FWP Hunting Access Bureau is also responsible for the development and implementation of hunter/landowner relations efforts including the implementation of the hunter/landowner stewardship online course.

The Hunting Access Bureau is also charged with providing overall Department direction and guidance to the FWP game damage assistance program .



FWP Hunting Access Program Funding

Funded by Hunter Access Account Earmark and PR Federal Funding

Block Management Program

Hunter/Landowner Relations

Livestock Loss Reimbursement Program

PL/PW Advisory Committee Administration

Regional/Special Access Projects Program

Shoulder Season Hunter Management

Biennial Recreational Management Area Rules

Enforcement of Hunter Access Programs

Overhead & In-Direct Costs

Public Access Land Agreement Implementation Costs (Operations and Personal Services)

Access Public Lands Program (short-term)

Funded by Earmark from FWP Home to Hunt License Revenue

Access Public Lands Program (long-term)

Funded by State of MT General Fund

Unlocking Public Lands Program

Funded by FWP General License Revenue

Public Access Land Agreement Program Contract Payments and Administrative Costs

Game Damage Assistance and Operations

87-1-290 MCA, establishes an account whereby funds deposited in the account must be used for the purpose of funding any hunting access program. The Hunting Access account is funded from the following sources:

- \$55 from each nonresident upland game bird license;
- \$17 from each nonresident youth upland game bird license;
- \$25 from each nonresident 3-day upland bird license;
- Proceeds from Super Tag Lottery;
- 28.5% from each nonresident big game combination license and each nonresident elk only license;
- 28.5% from each nonresident deer combination license and each nonresident landowner deer combination license;
- 28.5% of the fee for the Native Montana license;
- Funds generated from the Home to Hunt License (87-2-526)
- \$2 of Resident/\$10 of Non-resident Base Hunting License
- Any interest or income earned on the account;
- Small private donations and grants (NWTF/RMEF);
- Wildlife Restoration/Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds.

FWP Hunting Access Account Fiscal Analyses

For fiscal year 2019, **\$7,998,394** in earmarked license revenue was generated for the Hunting Access account. Expenditures totaled **\$8,391,555** of which the over-whelming majority was spent on Block Management program **impact payments to landowners totaling, \$6,071,850** (\$1,329,000 were Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds.) This reflects program year 2018.

For fiscal year 2020, **\$7,953,548** in earmarked license revenue was generated for the hunting access account. Expenditures totaled **\$8,335,519** of which the overwhelming majority was spent on Block Management Program **impact payments to landowners totaling \$6,113,538** (\$4,563,732 were Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds). This reflects program year 2019.

In FY20 the Wildlife Division utilized a PR grant to shift contract payments from the Hunting Access Account earmarked license revenue to Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) funding. This accounts for \$3.2 million that would otherwise have been spent out of the Hunting Access License Account.



Program Year 2020, (FY21) contract payments to landowners are estimated to be \$6,199,631



The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) through a NWTF Super Fund Grant. provides between \$2,500-\$4,000 annually to support FWP operations costs for Spring Turkey Block

The primary program administered through the FWP Hunting Access Bureau is the popular Block Management Program. 2020 was the 25th Anniversary since the program began contracting with landowners and compensating for hunter impacts.

Block Management provides for managed hunting access on over 7 million private and isolated public land acres enrolled through cooperative agreements between Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (Montana FWP), private landowners, and public land management agencies. This program is available because of willing private landowners.

Originating in 1985, the Block Management Program began as the result of landowners expressing concerns about resulting impacts from allowing public hunting access on lands under their control.

Key Information about Block Management:

- **Landowners do not forfeit any private property rights by enrolling land, including the right to deny access for cause and the right to enforce ranch rules.**
- Hunter behavior is a large factor whether or not landowners participate in the program. Courteous, legal, and ethical behavior helps keeps gates open.

There are two types of Block Management Areas (BMAs):

- **TYPE 1 BMA**-Area where hunters administer their own permission. This includes BMAs that use sign-in boxes (shown right), and BMAs that do not require hunters to obtain permission. Type 1 BMAs mostly do not limit hunter numbers or require reservations, although some parking areas have vehicle limits.
- **TYPE 2 BMA**-Area where someone other than the hunter issues permission. This includes BMAs where the landowner or an FWP staff member issues permission. Type 2 BMAs often require reservations and utilize pasture assignments, hunter number limits, and other hunter management systems.

Block Management Program Overview



BLOCK MANAGEMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

25 YEAR **ANNIVERSARY**

Block Management Landowner/Cooperator Benefits:

- Cooperators receive hunter management services through FWP full-time and seasonal staff positions monitoring and ensuring compliance with hunting activities on enrolled lands.
- Recreational liability protection is provided for participating in the program through the MT Recreational Landowner Liability Law (70-16-302, MCA)
- Cooperators may receive compensation for hunter impacts up to **\$13** per hunter day with a maximum impact payment of **\$15,000** annually.
 - **Payment is to offset impacts associated with allowing public hunting access** including but not limited to general ranch maintenance, conservation efforts, weed control, fire protection, and road/parking-area maintenance. *Payment is not for access.*
- Cooperators may elect to receive up to **5%** in additional funds for weed management.
- Cooperators may elect to receive a resident Sportsman's license (without bear) or nonresident Big Game Combination* license for themselves, employee or family member.
- Cooperators are provided a free annual subscription to the FWP Montana Outdoors Magazine.

*This does not count against the non-resident cap of licenses.

Enrollment Process:

- Landowner makes an application (new property) often with the assistance with local FWP staff.
 - As existing contracts expire, cooperators go through a similar re-enrollment process to be scored and evaluated for re-enrollment.
- Property is reviewed and scored by a FWP Regional Enrollment Committee with input from local FWP staff. Regional Enrollment Committee determines whether to offer enrollment based on enrollment criteria (below).
- If approved, a contract is drafted and signed by landowner and FWP Regional Supervisor. Signed contracts are sent to Helena for review and database approval.

Enrollment Criteria:

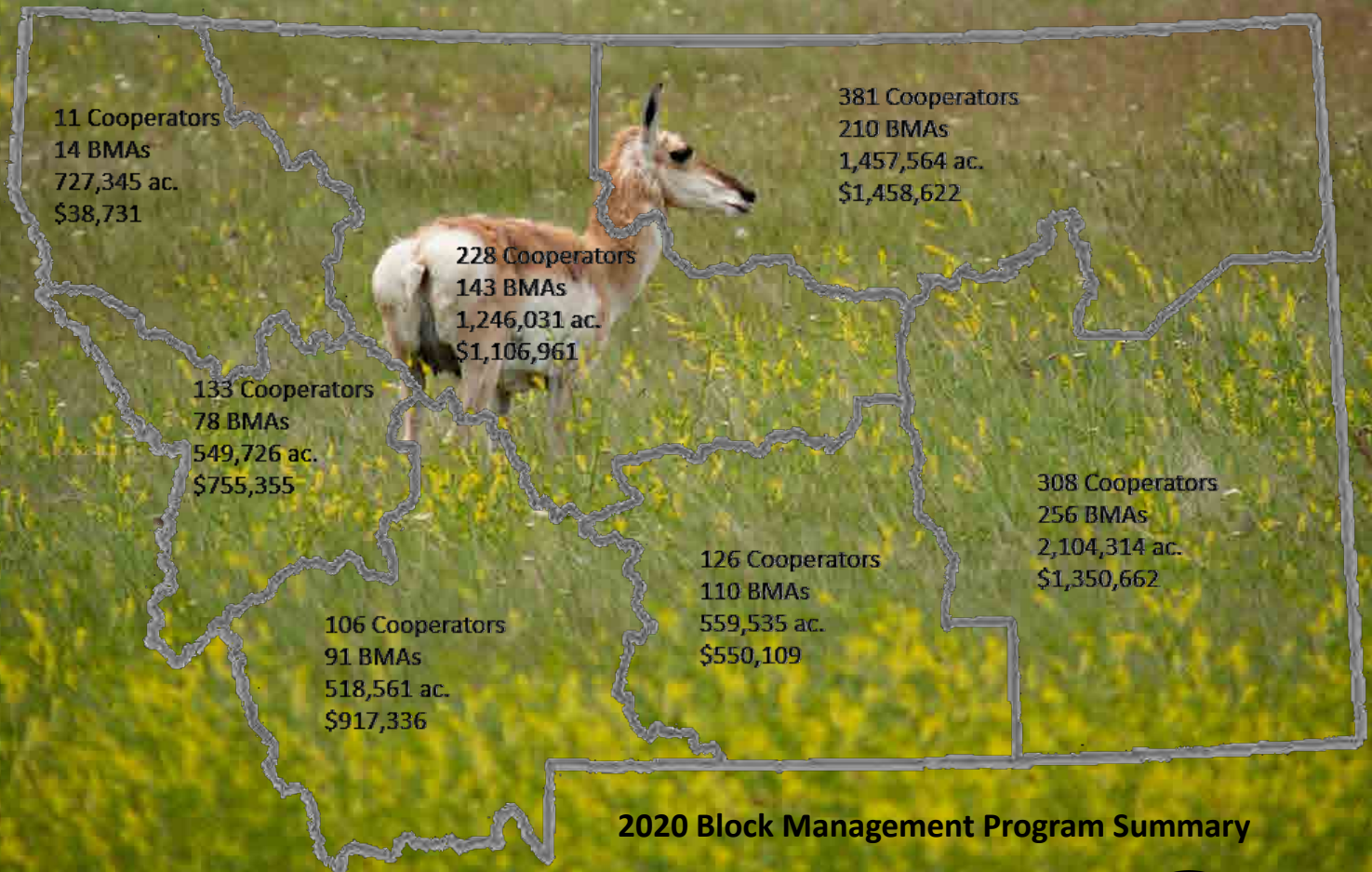
- Criteria for inclusion in the program focuses on:
 - Number of days of public hunting provided;
 - Wildlife habitat provided;
 - Presence of game populations;
 - Number, gender, and species of animals allowed to be taken;
 - Access to adjacent or isolated public lands



Block Management Participation by the Numbers

Year	Cooperators	BMAs	Total Acres*	Contract Payments
2011	1,287	930	8,166,055	\$4,939,603
2012	1,289	918	7,685,318	\$4,916,595
2013	1,231	866	7,614,097	\$4,739,277
2014	1,210	835	7,392,163	\$4,585,096
2015	1,194	828	7,376,508	\$4,477,366
2016	1,187	829	7,380,057	\$4,466,103
2017	1,225	849	7,245,756	\$5,775,805
2018	1,254	863	7,180,426	\$6,071,850
2019	1,270	864	7,067,652	\$6,113,538
2020	1,293	899	7,159,707	\$6,199,631

*includes private acres and public land acres enrolled in BMA. Private land acres in 2020= 5,970,862



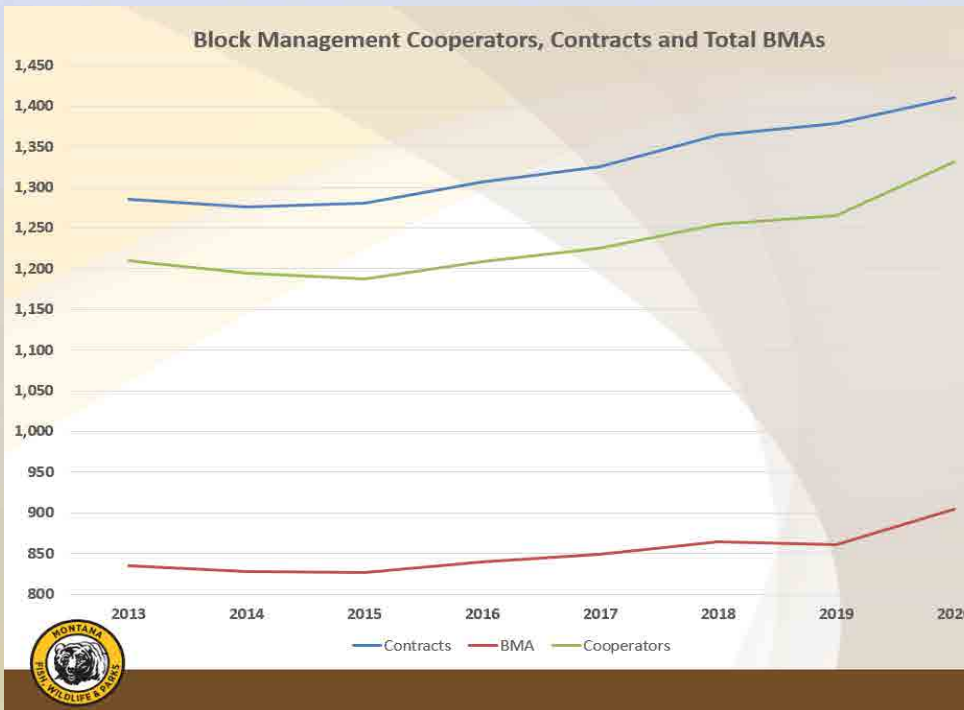
BLOCK MANAGEMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS



BLOCK MANAGEMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS



Youth hunter used the Block Management Area in Northeast, MT to harvest this buck (2019).



Block Management Program Highlights

2019-2020

In 2019:

- **1,270 cooperators** enrolled
7,067,652 private and isolated public acres in Block Management.
- **477,869** hunter days were contracted through Block Management.

In 2020:

- **1,293 cooperators** enrolled
7,163,120 private and isolated public acres in Block Management. **An increase of 95,424 acres from 2019.**
- **547,530** hunter days were contracted through Block Management.
- Over **90 new** BMAs

For those 2019 Block Management comment and response cards that were returned hunters reported:

- **90%** satisfaction with BMAs
- **64%** of hunters observing game
- **23%** of hunters harvesting game

Zero landowners were denied enrollment in the Block Management Program due to budgetary constraints.

Zero formal complaints were filed for the 2019 hunting season. The 2020 program year results will not be finalized until March 2021. However, previous survey responses have shown similar satisfaction rates over the life of this program.



"Your BMA program is the best public hunting program I have ever experienced in any of the states I have hunted." - Sandy M.



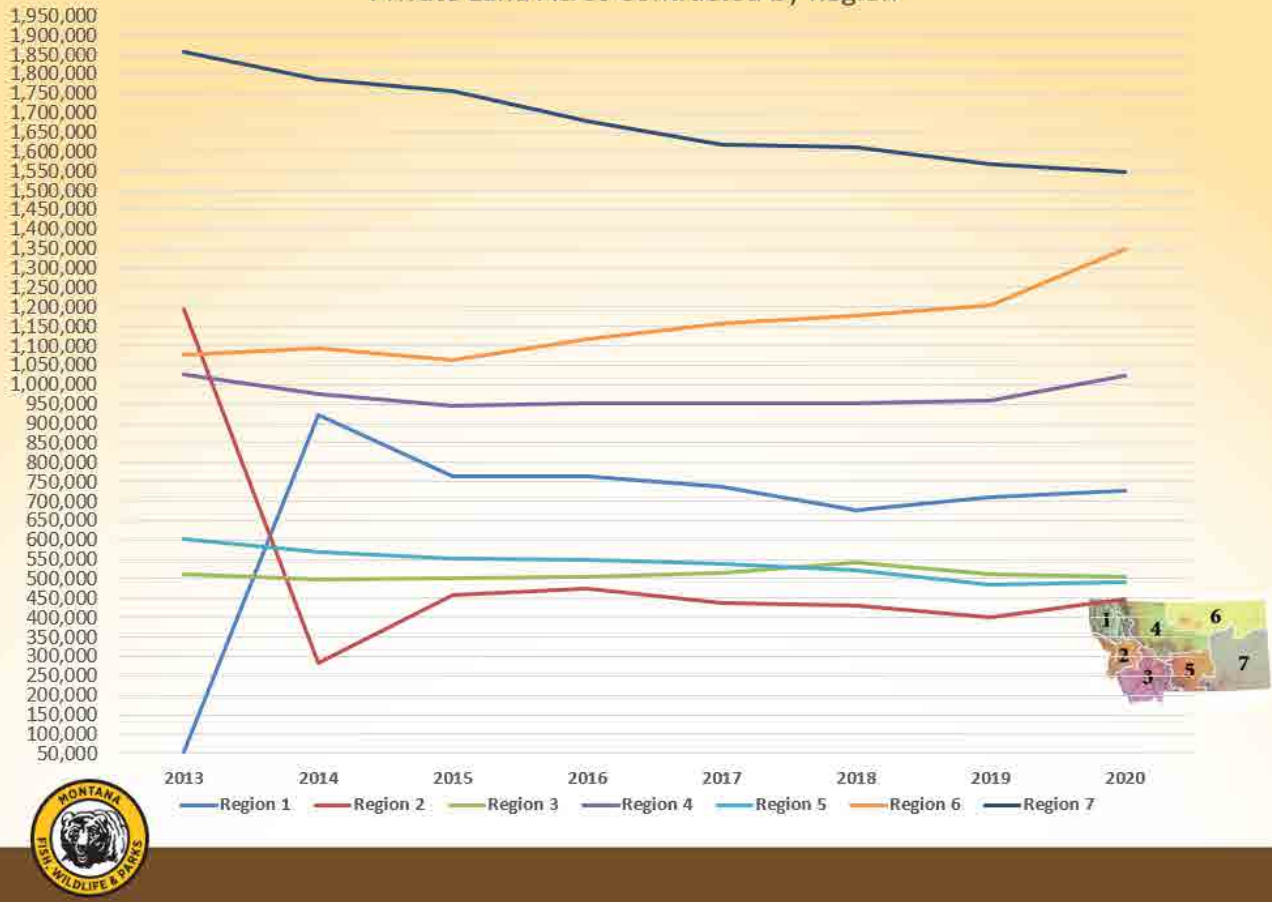


BLOCK MANAGEMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

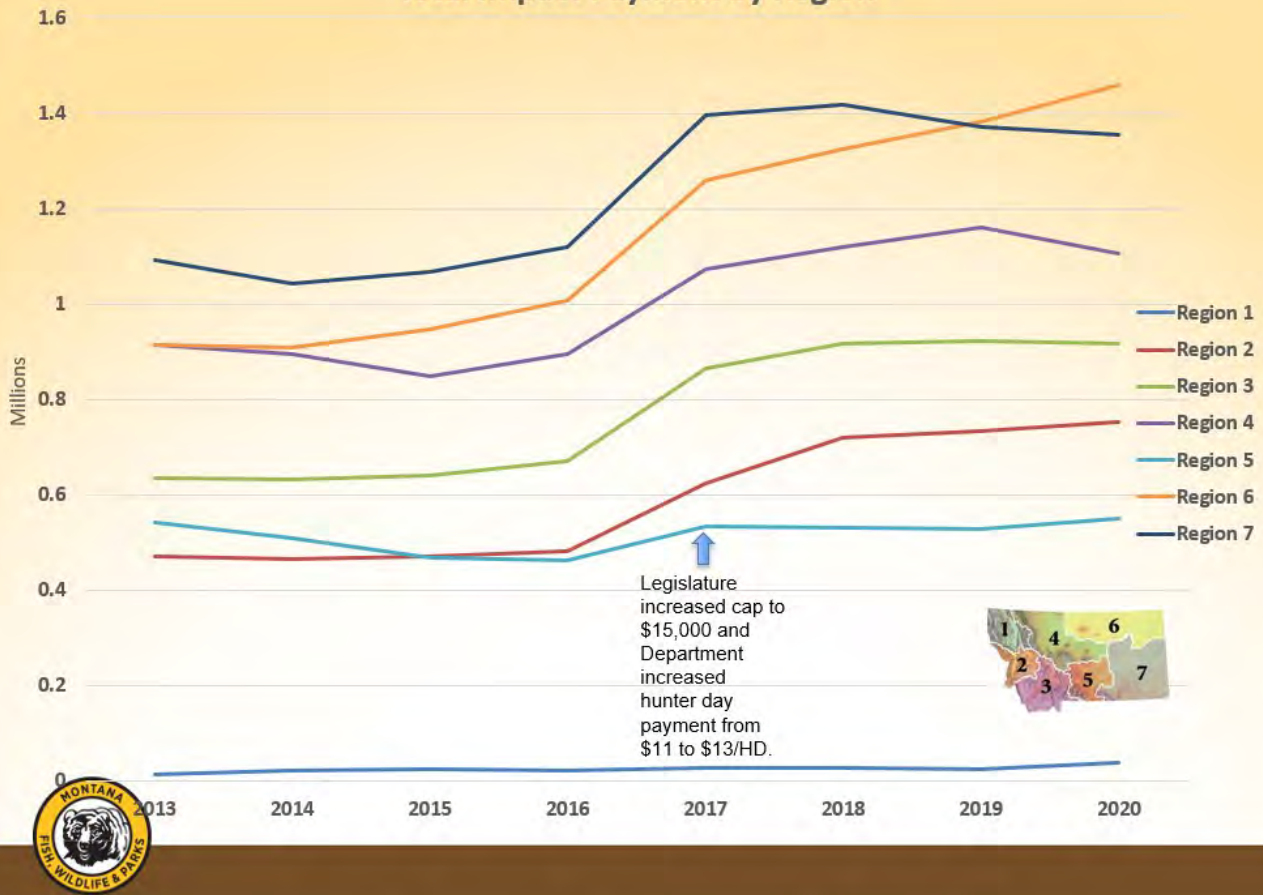


Youth hunter used the Block Management Area in Southeast, MT to harvest this buck (2019)

Private Land Acres Contracted by Region



Total Impact Payment by Region





BLOCK MANAGEMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE, & PARKS



Hunter used the Block Management program in Southwest, MT to access inaccessible public land and harvest this bull.
(2020)

Block Management Program Important Dates in History

- 1985 Block Management Program Established
- 1993 House Joint Resolution 24- creates Governor appointed citizen council representing sportspeople, landowners and outfitters to work on Private Land and Public Wildlife issues (PL/PW)
- 1995 Legislature (HB195) provides tangible benefits to enhance the Block Management Program in opening lands; compensation set at \$10.00/HD; \$8,000 cap - formally establishes a review committee (PL/PW)
- 1996 Block Management Administrative Rules created to administer the program and better define benefits to landowners. Contracting begins for compensation and thus the start date of formal program.
- 1999 Legislature increases Block Management maximum \$8,000 cap increased to \$12,000
- 1999 Block Management undergoes 1st Legislative Audit Review
- 2001 Legislature creates 5% additional weed management incentive payment for cooperators
- 2005 Legislature allows Nonresident landowners to be eligible for payment AND the complimentary deer/elk big game combo license
- 2007 Legislature allows landowners to designate their complimentary license to an immediate family member with the cost of the license being deducted from payment
- 2009 Legislature allows all landowners eligible to designate immediate family member/ranch employee for complimentary license, with not cost deduction
- 2009 Department increases \$10/HD payment to \$11/HD, resulting in approximately \$460,000 more being paid to landowners, representing an average 9% increase per contract
- 2013 Block Management undergoes 2nd Legislative Audit Review
- 2017 Legislature increases maximum payment cap to \$15,000 and Department increases the hunter day payment from \$11 to \$13/HD resulting in approximately \$1.2 million more being paid to landowners, representing an average 17.3% increase per contract
- 2017 Legislature provides landowners the opportunity to provide veterans preferential access to BMAs taking reservations on Veteran's Day.
- 2019 (Effective March 1, 2022) Option to direct limited drawing refunds to block management program.
- 2019 Large portions of MCA 87-1-295 -297 re-written through the Legislature to clarify statutes.
- 2020 **25th Anniversary** of Block Management -since cooperators started being compensated by FWP for hunter day impacts.



BLOCK MANAGEMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

25 YEAR **ANNIVERSARY**

Like most in 2020, the Hunting Access Program had to make a few adjustments due to COVID-19. Landowners were available to re-evaluate and choose how they wanted to administer permission with some opting to change to a sign-in box while others kept their permission requirements of meeting in-person. FWP adapted as well with maps and guides moving some outside and installing plexiglass and providing PPE for all staff as seen below. Hunters were encouraged by a Department developed infographic (below) to utilize on-line resources.



Infographic created in 2020 to encourage hunters to utilize online resources due to COVID-19.



Block Management Program

IMPORTANT STEPS TO FOLLOW:

STEP 1
Identify the BMA you want to hunt - by using the FWP online Hunt Planner or a printed BMA Hunting Access Guide.

STEP 2
Visit fwp.mt.gov/BMA to print or download the free georeferenced pdf BMA map & rules. Maps are also available at permission sign-in boxes, through requests made via phone, mail or email.

INSIDER TIP
Download a free pdf reader app on your smartphone & import the georeferenced pdf BMA map into the app. This will help you know your location once you're "on the map" even without cell service.

STEP 3
Read the BMA rules page that can be found with the individual BMA map. Hunters are required to understand the area rules & how to obtain permission. Not all rules are listed in the Access Guide.

STEP 4
Be respectful to the land and the landowner.
Have fun and happy hunting!



fwp.mt.gov



Block Management Survey 2019

In 2019, the Department conducted a Block Management (BMA) Cooperator Survey and a Hunter Survey to better understand BMA stakeholder satisfaction. The survey also sought to provide guidance to the Department regarding BMA implementation.



BLOCK MANAGEMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

2019 Block Management Hunter Survey Results

5,000 randomly selected Montana hunters were chosen to participate in the BMA Hunter Survey to get a better understanding from the general hunter about their impressions of the Block Management Program (BMA).

- 56.4% were familiar or very familiar with BMA
- 74.6% had hunted on a BMA previously; 45.8% hunted a BMA in 2019
- 33.4% of respondents hunt BMAs at least half the time with 14% hunting BMAs most of the time or the only places they hunt
- On a 5pt Likert Scale respondents agree (4) or strongly agree (5) that:
 - BMAs offer the experience they're looking for: 37.7%
 - BMAs have too many people on them: 38.3%
 - BMAs have the habitat conditions I'm looking for: 41.6%
 - BMAs don't offer the quantity of game I'm looking for: 28.1%
 - It's easy to gain access to most BMAs: 53.2%
 - Gaining permission to hunt BMAs I prefer is difficult: 25.3%
 - They identify as a big supporter of BMA: 66.6%
 - Dissatisfied with the BMA program: 7.6%
 - BMA program is adequately funded: 15.9%
 - BMA program has helped to improve hunter/landowner relations in Montana: 53.1%
- Most respondents hunted 3 BMAs, on average, with most hunting in Region 4 (29.8%).
- Respondents averaged 5.2 days of hunting BMAs with most hunting for deer (70.6%) and elk (50.7%). Waterfowl (76%), Upland Birds (61.7%), and antelope (50%) were the most harvested game on BMAs.
- 66.6% were satisfied (4) or very satisfied (5) by the overall hunting opportunity provided by BMA;
- 75% satisfied or very satisfied with landowner interactions
- Most respondents (82.8%) used a coupon box or sign-in/roster box for permission.
 - Respondents want to improve hunter management through the use of an app; online tool (reservations) or use of an electronic sign-in to improve permission options to BMAs.

N= 5,000; 40%
response rate



2019 Block Management Landowner/ Cooperator Survey Results

- 89.8% of cooperators are satisfied or very satisfied with the BMA program overall.
- 91.2% satisfied or very satisfied with BMA methods for permission
- 83.6% satisfied or very satisfied with behavior of people hunting BMAs.
- 77.8% believe hunter behavior has been improved or greatly improved because of BMA program.
- 72.3% believe their relationship has greatly improved with hunters because of BMA
- Cooperators in Block Management agree or strongly agree that:
 - Satisfied with dealings with FWP and BMA: 92.2%
 - FWP listens to my points of view: 80.4%
 - FWP is open and honest about BMA: 89.2%
 - FWP cares about what I (landowner) want: 84%
 - FWP provides services in a timely manner: 89.4%
- Monetary compensation, assistance with managing hunters and helping to improve landowner/hunter relations were the most important benefits of enrolling in BMA.
- Cooperators are most satisfied with the complimentary license.
- Top ways BMA could be best improved by:
 - More enforcement; (staff) warden presence
 - More signs, equipment
 - More compensation
 - Additional assistance from FWP

N= 1,251; 67% response rate



BLOCK MANAGEMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS



Youth hunter used the Block Management program in Southeast, MT to harvest this buck. (2020)

Other FWP Hunting Access Program Opportunities

- Unlocking Public Lands Program
 - Access Public Lands Program
- Regional/Special Access Projects Program
 - Managed Access Project Sites
- Recreational Management Area/Biennial Commission Rules
 - Partial Assignment of Conservation Easements
- Elk Permit/License for Access Program (HB454 Program)
 - Landowner/Sportsman Relations
- Livestock Loss Reimbursement for Hunting Access



Unlocking Public Lands Program

Unlocking Public Lands is a program whereby a landowner enters into a contractual agreement with FWP to allow public access (for all activities) across a parcel of private land to reach an isolated parcel of state or federal land. If access is open for a continuous period of at least six months, the cooperator is entitled to receive a **tax credit of \$750** (maximum of 4 contracts or \$3,000 total tax credits per tax year).

The 2017 Legislature reauthorized FWP to implement the Unlocking Public Lands Program through HB498. As a condition of reauthorization FWP committed to promoting this program more to landowners.

FWP fulfilled the commitment to promote this program by:

- Issuing press releases statewide.
- Placing an ad in the Deer, Elk, Antelope Regulations.
- Purchasing targeting advertising on Facebook and through the MT Newspaper Association.
- Extending the deadlines for enrollment.

In 2020, FWP identified that the **Montana Tax Code** prevented enrollment for some public lands. As a result participation declined. PL/PW believes the new PALA program may make this program obsolete.



Year	Number of Landowners	Number of Parcels Opened
2016	2	4
2017	2	4
2018	5	11
2019	7	15
2020	4	5



MONTANA LANDOWNERS

Do you want up to **\$3,000 in tax credits** for the **2020 tax year**?

Do you own land adjacent to inaccessible public land? Are you willing to provide access to that land from June 30 to December 31?

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks would like to visit with you about opportunities to enroll one or more of your private land parcels in the Unlocking Public Lands Program (UPL). Through annual UPL agreements, landowners can receive tax credits of up to \$3,000 (\$750 per parcel) for allowing outdoor enthusiasts to cross private property to get to inaccessible public property. **March 16, 2020, application deadline.**

For more information on the **Unlocking Public Lands program** visit: fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/landowners or contact us at 406-444-2505.

As always, THANK YOU for opening your gates.

UNLOCKING PUBLIC LANDS
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS



UNLOCKING PUBLIC LANDS
ACCESS SITE #
06-19-08

PRIVATE LAND ACCESS ROUTE TO
STATE OF MONTANA LAND

PERMITS REQUIRED - MONTANA ONLY

TRAIL: OCCASIONALLY ROUTE LIMITED TO
HOLE TRAVEL, MOUNTAIN BIKE, &
HORSEBACK

- ✓ No off-trail travel
- ✓ No campfires
- ✓ No livestock grazing

THE OUTBACK



UNLOCKING
PUBLIC LANDS

**PARKING
AREA**



MONTANA FISH,
WILDLIFE & PARKS

Access Public Lands

Access Public Lands is a program established through funds collected through the Home to Hunt License established by 87-2-526, MCA. This program seeks to **acquire (and maintain) legal public hunting access to public lands**, resolve landowner/sportsman conflicts related to public land access, assist in marking public land boundaries and access points, and disseminate information about hunting access to public lands.

Projects can consist from simple signing projects (paid for from the Hunting Access Program License Account) to rights-of-way acquisitions and access easements on term lengths or in perpetuity (paid for through the Home to Hunt License account).

Due to the complexity of some of these projects, some often take many years to come to fruition. Conversely, some may be immediate such as the signing public land boundaries.

In 2019 and 2020 FWP continued to do both short-term (less than \$5,000) and work on long-term (more than \$5,000) Commission endorsed projects through the Access Public Lands program.

At the time of publication of this document, these [on-going long-term projects](#) include:

- Everson Bench Access/Conservation Easement – 14 miles North of Denton (Central MT)
- Road Right of Way Easement in the White Rock Coulee Complex (Northeast MT)
- Big Snowy WMA (Central MT)

Projects completed in 2019 and 2020 include:

- Dedication of **\$50,000** (Cabela's 2008 Donation) to the US Forest Service for improvements to the Falls Creek Area (Central MT).
- Dedication of **\$50,000** (Cabela's 2008 Donation) to the CB White Memorial FAS (Western MT)
- Signing boundaries and sign maintenance of State (DNRC) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lands (Central and Southeast MT).
- Research road status (Northeast MT).
- Sven's Right of Way— opens 3,756 acres of DNRC and BLM and improves public access to an Open Fields project (Northeast MT).



Falls Creek (2019)



Regional/Special Access Projects

The *Regional/Special Access Program* was created to address hunting access opportunities or challenges that should protect or improve existing access, create new access, or address landowner/sportsmen conflicts associated with hunting access on private lands. Projects eligible include, but are not limited to:

- Development of maps and planning documents for access availability in a defined project area;
- Development of contractual agreements for access onto or across private lands.
- Development of agreements to provide hunter management services as a condition of access.

During 2019 and 2020, Regional/Special Access Projects included:

- H Double C Access Area– South of Deer Lodge, landowner provides 3,400 acres for public access.
- Tower Street Access Area– Opens City of Missoula property to archery hunting.
- Sapphire Ranch PTHFV Access Area– Located south of Lolo, offers Permit to Hunt From Vehicle hunters opportunities for deer, elk, waterfowl hunting from blinds and a motorized lift.
- **Region 3** Antlerless Elk Opportunity near Bozeman to reduce elk populations (2019 only).
- **Region 4** Call-in answering service for certain Block Management Areas and Conservation Easements
- **Region 4** sheep hunting opportunity on Willo Ranch and Sheep Creek Ranch- opening over 24,600 private and inaccessible public acres to sheep hunters.
- **Region 4** Sterling Ranch Company Waterfowl Access Area–adding 12 locations for waterfowl walk-in access for 18 miles of the Missouri River below Holter Dam.
- **Region 4** Blackman Waterfowl Access Area– allows walk-in waterfowl walk-in access to 1.5 river miles of the Missouri near Craig.
- **Production of maps, rules, signs, hunter management services and area maintenance for:**
 - Stimson Lumber Company Recreation Management Area
 - Stoltze Land & Lumber Company Recreation Management Area
 - The Nature Conservancy Recreation Management Area
 - Montana Correctional Enterprises Ranch Hunting Access Area
 - Manley Ranch & Douglas Creek Public Access Areas
 - Buxbaum Boulder Creek Regional Access Project
 - Graveley Ranch & Warm Springs Creek Regional Access Project
 - Dry Cottonwood Creek Ranch Regional Access Project
 - Clark Fork Islands Public Access Area
 - Five Mile Creek Public Access Area

Managed Access Project Sites Program

Overview

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' Managed Access Project Sites program seeks to work with those private landowners whose needs fall outside the limitations of Block Management Program to achieve a species-specific level of harvest.

Program at a Glance

Managed Access Project Sites are creative ways to maximize the potential for public hunters to harvest a single species of game animal for the benefit of wildlife management and resident and non-resident hunters of Montana.

Who is Eligible

To be eligible for a Managed Access Project Site a private landowner, or their representative, must be willing to provide public hunting access to achieve a species-specific level of harvest and FWP must be able to commit to the hunter management services needed.

Agreement Details

Often no formal agreements are utilized, but rather assistance is provided on an as-needed basis. The landowner in collaboration with FWP determines when, where, and how the public may access private land and may restrict access during specific times in accordance with program guidelines.

In recent years, FWP has explored many ways to work with private landowners in areas where elk numbers are high, distribution on private land is inhibiting adequate harvest of elk, and traditional Block Management may not be the best tool or incentive to affect the situation.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has contributed to funding a seasonal position (Elk Hunt Information Coordinator) through the Blackfoot Challenge to assist with providing information regarding elk harvest and distribution, public hunting access opportunities.



RMEF contributes approximately \$2,500 annually for salary, taxes, cell phone stipend, mileage.



White Sulphur Springs Case Study

Two FWP Hunt Information Coordinators (HICs) were based in the White Sulphur Springs (WSS) Forest Service Ranger District Office during the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 late elk shoulder seasons.

HICs were responsible for providing information regarding elk harvest and distribution, public hunting access opportunities, and coordinating hunting reservations by phone on more than 120,000 acres of private land in hunting districts 446, 449, 451, and 452. Some of these lands did not offer public access during the other times of year.

HICs maintained 7-day coverage, in-person and on the phone (except for federal holidays) taking reservations by phone each Wednesday for the following 7-day period. Reservations were made by hunters for an average of 2 days with an average hunter party size of 3.

Over the course of the past two late elk shoulder seasons, HICs received a total of 2,659 phone calls (approx. 17/day) and arranged 1,031 individual reservations for hunters. HICs also recorded 457 in-person interactions with hunters who walked in at the WSS Forest Service Ranger District office.

One Block Management (BMA) Hunting Access Technician also maintained four BMAs in the area and responded to field issues, as needed during this time.

Some hunters reported 200 attempts before they successfully got through to make a phone reservation.



Recreation Management Area | Biennial Commission Adopted Public Access Rules

Overview: The Recreation Management Area- Biennial Rule Program (RMA) works with those private land-owners whose needs fall outside the limitations of the Block Management Program. Biennial Rules provide for the enforcement and management of year-round recreational opportunities on large tracts of private land.

Agreement Details: The landowner in collaboration with FWP develop recreation management rules to define public use on private lands. The drafted agreement with proposed public access rules then goes through the Fish & Wildlife Commission approval process before the rules can be adopted. This process consists of commission endorsement, a public comment period, and final commission approval to formally establish rules for private land in collaboration with the landowner. Biennial Rule agreements are valid for two years.

Landowner Benefits: The primary benefit of a RMA a commitment by Fish, Wildlife & Parks to provide hunter and general recreation management assistance and enforcement dependent upon need, property rules and program availability year-round in lieu of a payment. FWP will also develop property maps with associated rules for each property enrolled in collaboration with the landowner.

In recent years, FWP primarily worked with corporate timber companies or private non-governmental organizations with large land-holdings in western Montana.

In 2019 and 2020, RMAs were implemented by:

- Stimson Lumber Company
- The Nature Conservancy
- Avista Utilities

Partial Assignment of Conservation Easements— delegation of the “right of public hunting access”

The Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) and the Five Valleys Land Trust placed conservation easements on 8,277 acres owned by the Graveley Ranch near the Garnet Range at Garrison, Montana. This easement protected against future subdivision, thereby protecting important big-game winter range, a variety of habitats for nongame wildlife and protected hunting opportunities in perpetuity.

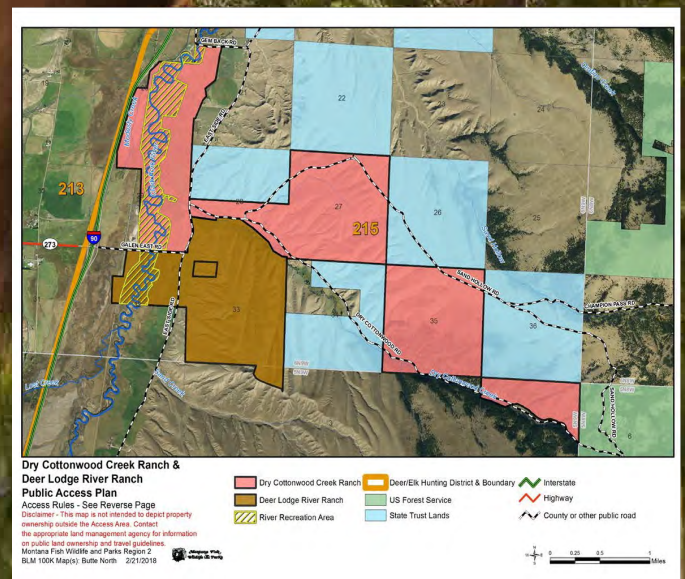
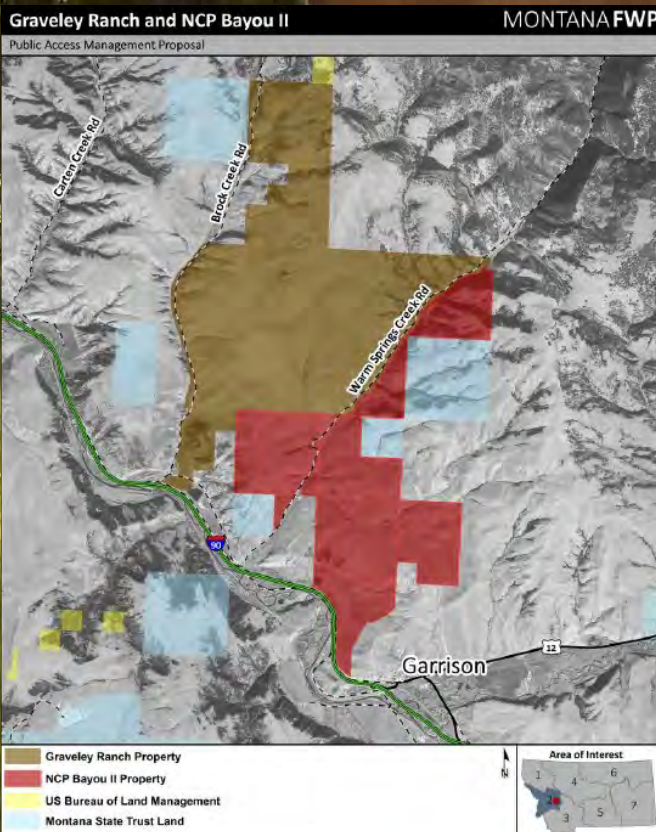
The conservation easement provided for a minimum of 400 hunter days annually of fair, equitable, free, public hunting access.

Through the approval process of the FWP commission, Five Valleys Land Trust assigned the management of public hunting access in perpetuity for this easement to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. The partial assignment of access management was completed June 11, 2019.

The Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) and the Clark Fork Coalition placed a conservation easement on the 2,363-acre Dry Cottonwood Creek Ranch and the 1,051-acre Deer Lodge River Ranch properties along the Clark Fork River west of the Boulder Range at Galen.

The conservation easement on these two properties included perpetual public hunting access for a minimum of 800 hunter days annually and year-round recreational public access to the Clark Fork River Corridor.

Through the approval process of the FWP commission, the Clark Fork Coalition assigned the management of public hunting access in perpetuity for this easement to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. The partial assignment of access management was completed December 27, 2019.



Elk Permit/License for Access | elk permit/ license for public hunting access (HB454)

Overview: The Elk Permit/License for Access Program (HB454 Program) seeks **improve elk management** by providing landowners with an either-sex or antlerless elk license, permit, or combination thereof **in exchange for allowing free public hunting access for a minimum of four elk permit holders and additional free public hunters for elk management purposes.**

Program at a Glance: For wildlife management purposes, landowners may be eligible for an either-sex or antler-less elk license, permit, or combination thereof for the landowner (or their designee) to hunt on the landowner's property. A designee may be an immediate family member or an authorized full-time employee of the landowner. Licenses or permits authorized by this program **may not be sold or bartered and are only valid for land that is opened to the public through this program.**

Who is Eligible: Private landowners must: 1) own occupied elk habitat that is large enough, in the department's determination, to accommodate successful public hunting; 2) not have been issued a Class A-7 landowner license pursuant to 87-2-501(3) during the license year; 3) enter into a contractual public elk hunting access agreement that defines the level of free public elk hunting that's required on the landowner's property throughout the regular hunting season; and 4) **not charge a fee or authorize a person to charge a fee for hunting access on the landowner's property.**

Agreement Details: The agreement will be between a private landowner, or their representative and FWP on a year-to-year basis. These agreements are also reviewed by the Fish and Wildlife Commission. The agreement specifies the areas that will be open to public elk hunting, the number of public elk hunting days that will be allowed on the property, and other factors that the department and the landowner consider necessary for the proper management of elk on the landowner's property. The agreement also reserves the right of the landowner to deny access to the landowner's property.

In 2019 and 2020, HB454 agreement opportunities were discussed with a variety of landowners. Agreements were issued to:

- John Swanz Ranch (Region 5)
- Robert Lee Ranch (Region 5)

The Swanz agreement was first used in 2002 and the Lee agreement in 2015. Each has been reapplied annually since those dates based upon continued positive post-hunt evaluations. Through the program both landowners received a 411-20 permit.



Landowner/Sportsman Relations

In 2019-2020, the Hunting Access Bureau also sought ways to say “thank you” to landowners who offer public hunting access to their lands. Examples of actions taken include:

- Provided contributions to support a variety of ag industry annual conventions.
- Placed “Thank You” ad in Western Ag Reporter
- Placed “Thank You” radio ad on Northern Ag Network
- Placed Shared Values Ad in MT Ag News Magazine

Farmers and Ranchers

On behalf of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and all Montana hunters, we'd like to say “Thanks!”

Thanks for providing habitat for Montana's public wildlife resources, and thanks for opening your gates to resident and nonresident hunters.



Hunter Landowner Stewardship Online Course

The *Montana Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project* is an information program for anyone interested in promoting responsible hunter behavior and good hunter-landowner relations in Montana. Approximately 20 students complete the online course each year.

FWP also worked with One MT and their Montana Master Hunter course to present to students about the hunter/landowner stewardship course and the variety of access programs that FWP has to offer landowners.



ASK FOR ACCESS/Appreciate Access Marketing Campaign

Another effort continued in this biennium seeks to inspire positive hunter behavior and build on landowner/sportsman relations.

ASK FOR ACCESS was a marketing campaign consisting of newspaper, Facebook, Instagram and magazine ads, bumper stickers, billboard ads, a story on the FWP Outdoor Report and an article in Montana Outdoors magazine. The hope with this campaign is that hunters are reminded to not only ASK FOR ACCESS before they hunt, but also be smart about all hunting activities and respect the landowner and the land.

In 2020, the campaign was adapted per a PL/PW recommendation to focus on Appreciating Access by respecting the land and the landowners.



Livestock Loss Reimbursement

Overview: The Livestock Reimbursement Program seeks to improve hunter/landowner relations by providing fair-market value reimbursement to a livestock producer who has livestock that is shot or wounded by a hunter from as the direct result of allowing free public hunting access during a commission approved hunting season.

Program at a Glance: This program is a creative way to keep lands open for free public hunting access by using license fees collected from hunters and anglers to provide a reimbursement (up to \$3,500 per head) to livestock producers who experience a loss as the result of allowing free public hunting access.

Who is Eligible: To be eligible for reimbursement, the incident must occur on land owned, leased, or rented by the livestock owner. Animals killed or injured on legally accessible State School Trust Lands, or legally accessible public lands are not covered.

Program Details: If a producer experiences a loss from allowing public hunting, they must contact their local Department of Livestock Regional Brand Inspector immediately. The inspector, in conjunction with FWP staff will determine if the animal has died or is wounded from being shot with either firearm or bow and arrow. The inspector will complete a complaint form and submit to the FWP Hunting Access Bureau Chief in Helena for a determination of if the loss was the result of allowing free public access. If a claim is denied, the producer may appeal the decision to the Director of FWP.

During the 2019 hunting season 3 total claims were filed.

1 denied; 2 paid

Total of \$2,250 of hunter license dollars used to reimburse producers.

As of December 11 2020, there were 4 claims filed for the 2020 hunting season.

1 paid; 3 in-process

A total of \$500 of hunter license dollars used to compensate for losses at the time of this publication.





Fishing Access Enhancement

Program Report

While a majority of the Private Land/Public Wildlife (PL/PW) Advisory Committee time and effort is dedicated to terrestrial issues, statute also requires PL/PW to report the successes of the fishing access enhancement program and make recommendations for funding, modification, or improvement to meet the objectives of the program. This is known as the Private Land Fishing Access Program.

Private Land Fishing Access Program Overview

The purpose of the Private Land Fishing Access Program (PLFA) as stated in HB292 (2001 Legislative Session) is “to provide incentives to landowners who provide access to or across private land for public fishing.”

House Bill 292 was enacted on a trial basis with the intention of augmenting the existing FAS acquisition program. The sole purpose of this program is to give practical, tangible assistance to those landowners who allow the public access across their lands in order to fish streams, ponds, or lakes that otherwise are not accessible.

The PLFA Program differs from the Fishing Access Site Program in three ways:

1. The funding is specifically earmarked for use on private land.
2. It is not a capital program through which FWP develops facilities on private land, i.e. boat ramps, dam repairs, stream bank stabilization, etc. Compensation provided to the landowner can be used for these things at his or her discretion.
3. PFLA sites are stand-alone projects that **do not** incorporate the FWP Lands Section in negotiating deals, the FWP Design & Construction Bureau to design or engineer projects, or the Parks Division to maintain the sites.

Program Fiscal Analyses

FY18 Allocation: \$ 10,000

FY18 Expenditure: \$ 11,678.62

FY 19 Allocation: \$ 10,000

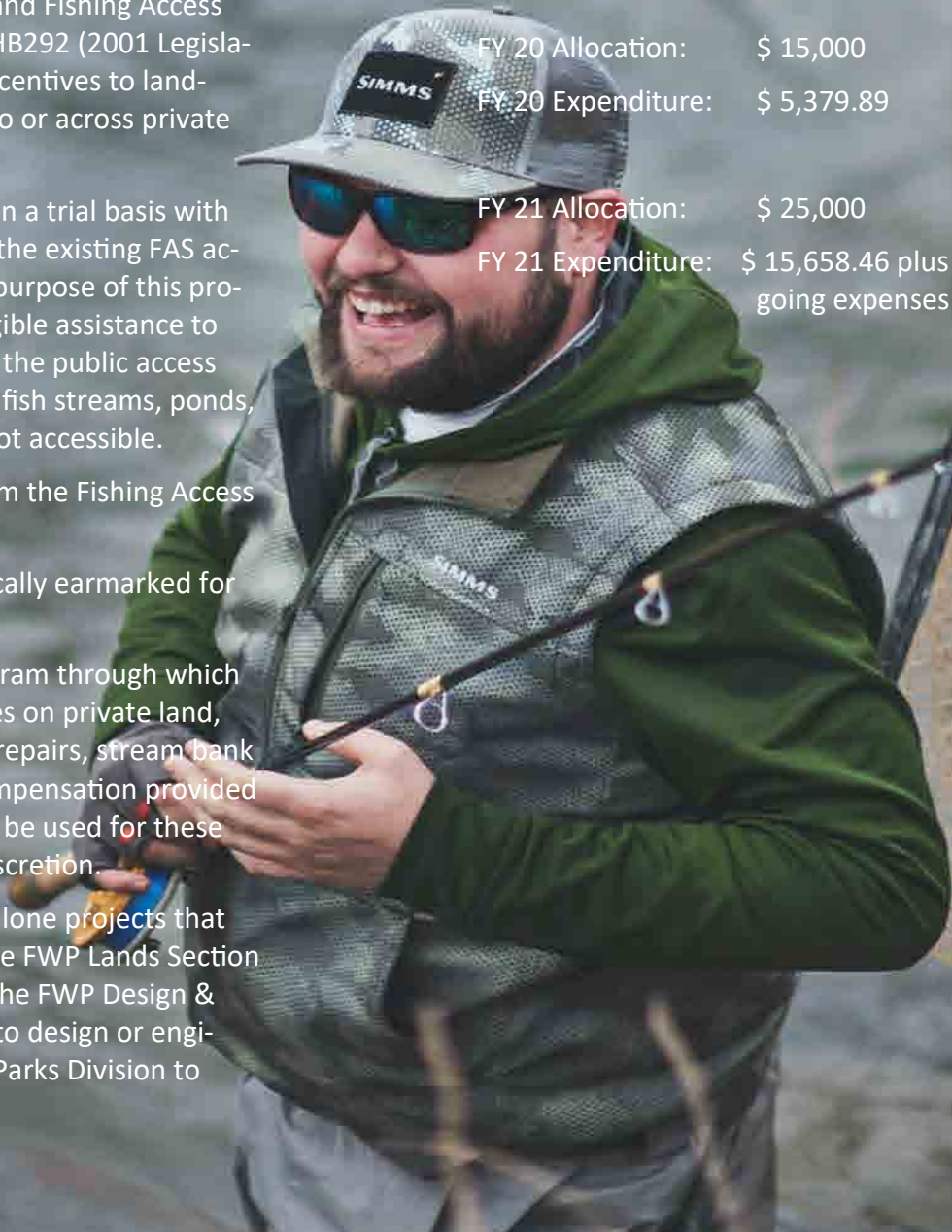
FY 19 Expenditure: \$ 751.21

FY 20 Allocation: \$ 15,000

FY 20 Expenditure: \$ 5,379.89

FY 21 Allocation: \$ 25,000

FY 21 Expenditure: \$ 15,658.46 plus on going expenses



Private Land Fishing Access Agreements

List of Active Projects (December 2020)

Site Name	Region	Agreement Start Date	Term (Years)	Expiration Date	Annual Compensation	Total Compensation	Comments
Pete Anderson	4	January 2010 (Renewed Nov 2018)	5	October 2023	\$1,000	\$5,000	Paid in full
Sterling Ranch	4	July 2012 (Renewed July 2019)	5	June 2024	\$8,500	\$42,500	High statewide priority Annual payments
Anglers Roost	2	April 2013 (Renewed July 2018)	4	June 2022	\$3,000	\$12,000	Paid in full
Gordon Cattle Company (HC Kuhr Reservoir)	6	Oct 2015	15	Oct 2030	\$1,000	\$15,000	Access bridge replacement Paid in full
Todd Jorgensen	6	Sept 2014	10	Sept 2024	\$500	\$5,000	Paid in full
Loon Lake 4H Camp	1	June 2014 (Renewed July 2020)	3	July 2022	3 year tiered	\$4,800	Paid in full
Leonia Access	1	July 2014 (Renewed June 2017)	5	Nov 2021	\$6,000	\$30,000	Partnership with Idaho F&G High priority Annual payments
Doug Gamma	1	Ice on 2020	Annual	Ice off 2020	\$1,500	\$1,500	Ashley Lake ice fishing only
Jason Rickman	5	November 2018	5	October 2023	\$0	\$0	Stocking of fish is in lieu of money
Lawrence Diacon	4	May 2018	5	May 2023	\$0	\$0	Stocking of fish is in lieu of money
Dennis Skinner	4	August 2017	5	August 2022	\$0	\$0	Stocking of fish is in lieu of money
Rorvik Ranch	6	April 2019	5	April 2024	\$1,000	\$5,000	Paid in full
Danelson Reservoir	6	January 2017	5	December 2021	\$1,700	\$8,500	Paid in full
Glendora Lake (Bouma)	4	February 2017	5	February 2022	\$0	\$0	Stocking of fish is in lieu of money
Crow Coulee Reservoir	4	October 2016	5	October 2021	\$0	\$0	Stocking of fish is in lieu of money

Private Land Fishing Access Agreements (continued)

List of Active Projects (December 2020)

Briggs Reservoir	4	May 2017	5	May 2022	\$0	\$0	Stocking of fish is in lieu of money
Doug & Valerie Anderson	4	September 2015	5	September 2020	\$0	\$0	
Perkins Ranch	4	September 2015	5	September 2020	\$0	\$0	
Applestem Inc (Scott Blackman)	4	September 2015 (Renewed 2020)	5	August 2025	\$1,500	\$7,500	Paid in full High priority
Little Big Warm Ranch	6	May 2016	5	May 2021	\$1,000	\$5,000	Paid in full
Gheny Pond (Osborne)	3	January 2015	10	December 2024	\$500	\$5,000	Paid in full
Schoonover Reservoir	4	July 2020	5	July 2025	\$0	\$0	Stocking of fish is in lieu of money
Haynie Pond	4	July 2020	5	July 2025	\$0	\$0	Stocking of fish is in lieu of money

Photo Credits:

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SDGFP– Chris Hull

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Appendix A: 2020 Public Access Land Agreement Tracking Summary

Region	Project Name	County	Project Description	Total Public Land Acres Opened or Access Improved	Annual Payment Based on Scoring Criteria	Improvement Reimbursement Cost	Project Total Cost	Previously Open through Block Management? (Y/N)	Agreement Term
3	XC Ranch	Jefferson	Provides walk-in access to inaccessible DNRC for fall hunting season only.	640	\$1,250	N/A	\$1,250	Y	1 year
4	AJ Kuhry Ranch	Petroleum	Provides walk-in access to inaccessible BLM and DNRC for year-round hunting seasons.	4,820	\$5,750	N/A	\$5,750	Y	1 year
4	American Prairie Reserve	Fergus	Provides motorized and walk-in access to inaccessible DNRC and BLM lands including motorized access seasonally for all recreations.	3,886	\$6,750	N/A	\$6,750	N	1 year
4	Betty Wherley	Fergus	Provides motorized access to inaccessible BLM for year-round hunting seasons.	362	\$3,250	N/A	\$3,250	Y	1 year
4	LF Ranch	Lewis and Clark	Provides access to land-locked DNRC lands for general rifle and elk shoulder season. Solution to historic access problems.	560	\$4,250	N/A	\$4,250	N	1 year
5	Mike Grewell	Carbon	Provides motorized access on private road to small inaccessible parcel of BLM for all recreations year-round.	163	\$3,500	N/A	\$3,500	Y	1 year
5	Nancy Elliot	Carbon	Provides continuation of motorized access on a private road from Grewell to inaccessible BLM for all recreations year-round.	308	\$3,500	N/A	\$3,500	Y	1 year
5	Sunset Colony	Musselshell	Provides motorized access to inaccessible DNRC for all recreations from 10/1-3/31	1,342	\$2,750	N/A	\$2,750	Y	1 year
6	Bergtoll Hose Reservoir	Valley	Provides and improves motorized access to inaccessible BLM and DNRC. Provides access to a previously FWP stocked fishing reservoir, that has not been stocked in a few years due to the lack of secure public access. Acreage approximate.	12,860	\$10,000	N/A but may look for future improvements	\$10,000	N	10 year
6	Bergtoll Middle Bitter Cr	Valley	Provides and improves to access the BLM's Wilderness Study Area numbered road and inaccessible BLM and DNRC. Also secondary access from the east to Hose Reservoir for fishing. Will continue public access through the BLM WSA instead having to turn around. Acreage approximate.	28,900	\$9,000	N/A	\$9,000	N	10 year
6	Bergtoll Eagle Creek	Valley	Provides and improves motorized access through private to inaccessible BLM. Will also connect other PALAs to continue the public travel through private to other public lands. Good hunting access and other access opportunities. Also access to the southern portion of the BLM Bitter Creek WSA. Acreage approximate.	7,400	\$6,500	N/A	\$6,500	N	10 year
6	Blaise Bergtoll Laundry Hill	Valley	Improves access to the south portion of the BLM Bitter Creek WSA numbered road. PALA would connect to others to complete a loop through private and public lands.	4,800	\$6,500	N/A	\$6,500	N	10 year
6	Browning Ten Deer Creek	McCone	Provides motorized and walk-in access to inaccessible checkerboard DNRC and BLM in McCone badlands with excellent hunting. Year-long access for other recreational access opportunities.	1,995	\$6,500	N/A	\$6,500	N	1 year
6	Browning Morris Coulee	McCone	Provides mototized and walk-in access to checkerboard DNRC and BLM in McCone badlands habitat with excellent hunting. Year-long access for other recreational opportunities.	1,921	\$6,500	N/A	\$6,500	N	1 year
6	Browning Forty Four Coulee	McCone	Access to checkerboard BLM in McCone badlands habitat with excellent hunting. Year-long for other access opportunities.	1,280	\$6,500	N/A	\$6,500	N	1 year

Appendix A: 2020 Public Access Land Agreement Tracking Summary

Region	Project Name	County	Project Description	Total Public Land Acres Opened or Access Improved	Annual Payment Based on Scoring Criteria	Improvement Reimbursement Cost	Project Total Cost	Previously Open through Block Management? (Y/N)	Agreement Term
6	Spring Coulee WMA	Chouteau	Provides motorized access by land to a FWP Wildlife Management Area along the Missouri River breaks for fall hunting season. Improves access to inaccessible DNRC and BLM. No other prior legal access to WMA except via water.	1,490	\$9,750	N/A	\$9,750	N	1 year
6	Downing Cut Coulee	Philips	Provides access to block of inaccessible DNRC and BLM with good hunting. Landowner wanted culverts, gravel and a gate, but only 1-yr agreement. No improvements were approved.	1,827	\$7,700	30" culvert-25ft long, 1/2mi of gravel, 16ft panel gate.	\$7,700	Y	1 year
7	Connor Beach	Fallon	Provides 1 mi of motorized access across private to inaccessible DNRC for all eligible recreations year-round. Landowner wanted culvert installed. No improvements were approved due to length of agreement.	963	\$6,500	Would like culvert install. Estimate of \$2000	\$6,500	Y	1 year
7	Country Cross	Dawson	Provides motorized access on private road to inaccessible BLM. Year-round hunting opportunity.	967	\$7,250	N/A	\$7,250	Y	1 year
7	Keystone Ranches	Custer & Fallon	Provides and improves motorized and walk-in access to large block of inaccessible BLM and DNRC. Landowner also wanted funds to repair bridge. Department negotiated half of the cost to replace bridge. Acreage is approximate. Could be more acres, but surrounded by Block Management. Public land lease of approximately 960 acres.	32,000	\$7,250	Bridge replacement over Pennel Cr. No permits are required to work on Pennel Creek. Landowner estimate of \$15,000. FWP will fund half through PALA.	\$14,750	Y	10 year
7	Jared Kountz	Prairie	Provides walk-in access to inaccessible BLM. Includes motorized access to river for boat launch. Opening lots of public land along Yellowstone river. Allows for additional access point at Terry Bridge as current FAS's 40mi apart. 318 acres public land lease. Public land acreage open approximate.	65,000	\$8,750	N/A	\$8,750	Y- land. N - river access.	10 year
7	Ralph Losing	Fallon	Provides motorized access on private road to inaccessible DNRC for fall hunting season.	640	\$2,750	N/A	\$2,750	N	1 year
7	Markuson Ranch	Carter	2.8mi of motorized access on private road to inaccessible DNRC. Good antelope opportunity. Provides for year round recreation on DNRC for all eligible activities.	543	\$6,250	N/A	\$6,250	N	1 year
7	Sackman Inc	Prairie	Year-round motorized access to BLM and adjacent DNRC for hunting and fishing. Historic issues with leaving gates open. Provides access to the mouth of the Yellowstone and Powder River and all public land adjacent to river.	702	\$8,750	cattle guard in future	\$8,750	N	10 year
7	CA Weeding & Sons	Garfield	Provides access to large inaccessible BLM parcel with high value for habitat and access to CMR. Potential to reduce elk conflicts. Public land acreage approximate.	24,000	\$7,000	N/A	\$7,000	Y	1 year
				199,369	\$154,450		\$161,950		

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In Montana, our working farms and ranches define our landscape. These lands are home to friends and neighbors who value how their land benefits the wildlife it supports as well as the products it produces.

The stewardship of these lands is a testament to the families who live there. The simple understanding that if you take care of the land, it will take care of you is one passed down from generation to generation. At Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, it's an honor to partner with landowners around the state who value the landscapes like we do; who see a river bottom, not just for the crops it can grow, but for the wildlife that live there; and who cherish the role their lands and operations play in keeping the Montana way of life alive and well.

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- In Montana, we're all neighbors no matter which side of the fence we're on.
- Good neighbors watch out for each other.
- So if you observe or suspect violations, contact **1-800-TIP-MONT** and help protect our hunting heritage.

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