

IT TAKES A DEPARTMENT

During my occasional travels outside the state, I often get compliments on this department and its management of trout, elk, wolves, grizzlies, and other fish and wildlife and our state parks. Much of that credit goes to our biologists, park managers, game wardens, and the FWP commission. But just as important are all the

staff who work with landowners to set up public hunting opportunities on private land.

Montana also receives 2.8 million “angler use days” each year. Supporting all that recreation are fisheries technicians and field workers who assist biologists in keeping fish populations healthy, and crews at FWP’s ten fish hatcheries who rear and stock fish in 500 lakes and reservoirs.

FWP processes 265,000 applications each year, ranging from nonresident big game combo licenses to permits for the Smith River float. Making sure those licenses and permits are allocated fairly and quickly requires close coordination among our Licensing Bureau, Application Development Bureau (which manages the on-line licensing), and the staff at the front desk of our headquarters and regional offices.

The Information Management Bureau manages the FWP website and maintains GIS data essential for the scientific management of fish, wildlife, and parks. Among other duties, the Field Services Bureau manages acquisition of conservation easements and new fee title lands (such as wildlife management areas). There’s also a communications and education crew that produces this magazine, along with the hunting and fishing regulations, TV reports, and hunter and youth education programs. Also out of the public eye are essential internal staff such as computer support special-

ists, accountants, property management crews, timeroll clerks, and federal projects coordinators, as well as our Legal Unit and Human Resources Bureau.

Equally essential are our clerical staff and other members of the administrative support teams. I can promise you that without them this department would cease to function.

Most of our staff are spread across Montana. In fact, 75 percent of FWP personnel work in the field, outside of the central Helena headquarters. Also found statewide are the many volunteers who help this department. Roughly 1,500 people donate their time each year to be hunter education instructors. Other volunteers serve on regional citizen advisory councils and other boards and steering committees that direct our activities and shape policies. Also essential are hundreds of not-for-profit organizations, professional associations, and land conservation groups, as well as local, county, state, and federal associations and other public agencies.

And I can’t forget the hunters and anglers whose license fees and federal excise taxes pay for most of the work this department does, nor the Montana vehicle owners who support our Parks Division.

There is no feasible way to acknowledge all the individuals who contribute to the department’s daily activities and accomplishments. But I wish there were. As proud as I am of everything this department and our partners accomplish, I’m even prouder of the people who make it happen.

—M. Jeff Hagener,
Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks



MONTANA OUTDOORS

people who work for FWP behind the scenes.

Montana sees an overwhelming amount of outdoors recreation. For example, our state parks and fishing access sites receive 5.4 million visits each year. The Parks Division’s maintenance crews keep those sites clean, safe, and inviting. Montana receives over 2.5 million “hunter use days” each year. Hunters may not be familiar with the role wildlife technicians play in collecting information used to monitor populations and set seasons. Or the Enforcement Division staff who process TIP-MONT calls. Or the Block Management

NATURAL WONDERS
ILLUSTRATION BY PETER GROSSHAUSER

Q. While hunting bighorn sheep ewes last fall, I had a hard time telling them apart from young rams, which also have short horns. What’s the best way to distinguish the two?

A. The best way to make a positive ID and not illegally shoot a ram is to check for what biologists call “evidence of sex.” In summer, the two are nearly indistinguishable. But by fall, all young males have testicles clearly visible from behind. Other methods, such as comparing the horn base (those on females are slightly narrower), are much less reliable.



Q. When I was a girl, state parks were run by what was then called the State Highway Commission. When did they join the Fish and Game Department?

A. That occurred in 1965, when the Montana legislature agreed to a request from Governor Tim Babcock. The move was a prerequisite for state parks to receive federal dollars from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It took another 12 years before Fish and Game changed its name to Fish, Wildlife & Parks.