# **FWP ANNUAL REPORT 2009**





# In 2009, Montanans worked together to solve a number of natural resource issues, and that's worth applauding.

After years of controversy over fencing at bridges that blocked the public right-of-way to streams, individuals with differing viewpoints on the 1985 Stream Access Law came together and agreed to a proposal that came before the 2009 Montana Legislature. With the passage of House Bill 190, the bridge access law, FWP is now working at multiple sites with landowners and recreationists to assist with the mechanics of providing public access to Montana's rivers and streams at bridges.

This bill's success is one example of how complex issues can be resolved when people share information, listen to each other and come together to shape mutually acceptable agreements. FWP is committed to this collaborative style—continuing it where we've used it in the past and building it into our future.

For example, wolf management planning began with the appointment of the state's wolf advisory committee in 2000. Through an extensive public involvement process, Montanans participated in shaping what is today an approved, highly regarded and science-based State Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. With this Montana-made plan and a standard of open communication, Montanans continue to navigate wolf-related issues and questions as they arise. Most recently, the state successfully completed its first wolf hunting season.

In another recent example, FWP invited the public to make suggestions for the 2010 hunting season—before developing regulation proposals as was the case in the past. From early indications, this new process appears to have worked well.

FWP Commission meetings are now available by live audio on the FWP Web site. We are also pursuing the ability to provide live Internet video access to the meetings.



FWP wardens, landowners and volunteers reconstructed 15 bridge access sites from April to October 2009 at a total cost of under \$3,000 for materials. Volunteers represented, among others, Flathead Wildlife Inc., Trout Unlimited, Montana Wildlife Federation, Montana Game Wardens Association, Hellgate Hunter's and Anglers, Magic City Flyfishermen, Billings Rod & Gun Club and 4-H members. Shown here: a bridge access project on the North Fork of the Blackfoot just east of Ovando.

In 2010, FWP will continue to seek ways to engage Montanans and sharpen our skills of collaborative problem solving. One of the most challenging projects may be how to simplify the Montana hunting regulations—something hunters and FWP staff mutually desire. Stay tuned. We invite you to participate in the exciting work ahead and to track our mutual progress on the FWP Web site at fwp.mt.gov.

Joe Maurier, FWP Director

Manuer

BRIAN SCHWEITZER, Governor

# In 2009 lawmakers and the courts made decisions on key issues.

#### **Grizzly bears**

Grizzly bears in the greater Yellowstone Ecosystem were declared recovered in March 2007 and then, upon appeal, the delisting was overturned in federal district court and the species was returned to threatened status in September 2009. The district court's decision is under appeal to the 9th Circuit Court.

#### **Wolves**

The gray wolf was delisted from the federal Endangered Species Act on May 4, 2009. Montana's state laws, reg-

ulations and management plan replace federal regulations. Today, gray wolves are classified as a Montana species in need of management. Montana's first hunting season for wolves successfully concluded in November



2009. Legal challenges to the federal decision to delist continue, and a decision is likely in early to mid-2010.

#### **Game Farms**

Game farm operators appealed a Montana Supreme Court ruling that said Montana Initiative 143, prohibiting the shooting of captive deer or elk, does not constitute an unlawful taking of private property. By declining to hear the appeal in October 2009, the U.S. Supreme Court left Initiative 143, approved in 2000 by a majority of Montana citizens, in effect.

### OTHER FWP RELATED 2009 LEGISLATION

Of the many bills that passed in the 2009 legislative session, here is a review of some that relate to FWP and its responsibilities to Montanans.

- Beginning in 2012, funding for the Fort Peck Fish Hatchery will come from general fishing licenses and federal funds (Senate Bill 425). Though rearing walleyes and other warmwater species is the facility's top priority, FWP may raise up to 750,000 trout and other coldwater fish at the hatchery.
- Anyone convicted of criminal mischief on FWP property, such as damaging signs or tipping latrines, could lose their hunting, fishing and trapping privileges (HB 223).
- It is now unlawful to purposefully use feed to attract big game such as deer, elk, bears or mountain lions. (SB 202)

- Up to 500 nonresident elk-deer combination hunting licenses and 500 nonresident deer combination licenses will be available to adult nonresident family members of Montana residents. HB 585 goes into effect March 1, 2010.
- Nonresidents attending college in Montana, and former Montana residents attending college in another state, may buy a big game license at the resident price beginning Sept. 14, 2009 (SB 185).
- SB 164 requires FWP to develop a site-specific noxious weed management plan before purchasing a site. Twenty percent of the purchase price, up to \$300,000, must go into an account for operations and maintenance of FWP lands such as fishing access sites, wildlife management areas, and state parks.

FWPMT.GOV 2009 ANNUAL REPORT | 3

# Aquatic life and fishing

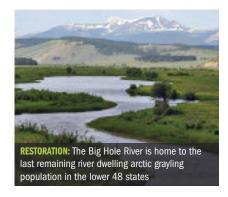
#### **Fishing news**

In FWP's annual "Fishing Newsletter," local biologists report on the state's premier fisheries. These first-hand accounts take readers behind the scenes and show what it takes to maintain Montana's enviable fishing opportunities. The 2009 Fishing Newsletter, with color photos and a fresh new on-line format, was a hit with anglers.

#### **Big Hole River**

Cooperative restoration work on the Big Hole River near Wisdom and Jackson is taking hold under the federal Candidate Conservation Agreement With Assurances Program. Approved by FWP and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006, the Big Hole River CCAA involves 39 local landowners and it has provided more than \$1.5 million in grant dollars and restoration work along 32 river miles.





#### **Future fisheries improvement**

The Future Fisheries Improvement Program contributed about \$400,000 to projects on the Big Hole River and has supported similar work on lakes, streams, and ponds across Montana. For a detailed photo tour of FFIP projects, go to the FWP Web site at fwp.mt.gov on the Habitat page under Future Fisheries.

#### **Restoration for bull trout**

A cooperative interagency project in Swan Lake to reduce predatory lake trout is moving ahead. Fish surveys, population estimates and an environmental study are part of the plan to improve this important bull trout fishery. Swan Lake is one of the few places in the nation where anglers can catch and keep (one per day) bull trout.





# Wildlife and hunting

#### **Wolves**

With the removal of the wolf from the federal endangered species list, Montana began managing the large carnivores under a state plan and in balance with habitat, other species, and the people who live here. Montana's first fair-chase wolf hunting season occurred in 2009. Under a statewide quota of 75 wolves across three wolf management units, hunters harvested 72 wolves.

#### **Hunter numbers**

Archery license sales statewide have dramatically increased—from more than 26,000 in 1998 to more than 40,000 in 2008. While general hunter numbers are decreasing in other states, Montana's remain steady at 240,000 hunters.

#### **Upland game birds**

This program puts about \$650,000 in hunter's dollars to work annually for habitat and pheasant release projects to improve hunting opportunities. A newly appointed 12-member citizen advisory council will advise FWP on a 10-year strategic plan for the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program, monitor program activities, and recommend rules. For more on the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program, go to FWP's Web

site at fwp.mt.gov and click on the wildlife habitat section.

#### **Bighorn sheep**

A newly crafted bighorn sheep conservation strategy aims to keep the state's bighorn sheep population on track. The bighorn sheep auction tag sold for \$245,000—90 percent of which goes to bighorn sheep management.

#### **Black bear study**

A study of the black bear population across the species' entire 8,000-square-mile Montana range has concluded that the state's bear harvest is sustainable. Only three percent of female black bears are taken by hunters each year. For more on the study and

its results, see the July-August 2009 issue of *Montana Outdoors* magazine online at fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors.

#### Nongame monitoring

FWP is completing surveys of nongame species including loons, bald eagles, shore and songbirds with funding from many different sources. When Montana taxpayers check Nongame Wildlife Checkoff on their tax form, they provide funding to match State Wildlife Grants and other federal funds and grants. Matching funds from private nonprofit organizations, universities and private businesses, and the time donated by volunteers, are also critical to the state's nongame species program.



BIG BUCKS: Montana hunters, residents and nonresidents combined, spend \$269.7 million annually on transportation, lodging, food, guide fees and other purchases, excluding license fees.

Montana elk hunters spent an estimated \$100 million in 2008 (the latest figures available) on transportation, lodging, food, guide fees and other purchases, excluding license fees.

Deer hunters spent an estimated \$85.5 million, black bear hunters spent \$3.8 million, and antelope hunters spent \$9.3 million in 2008.

6 | 2009 ANNUAL REPORT MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS





A summary of important 2009 wildlife habitat and public access activities\*

The Habitat Montana Program contributed about \$2 million to FWP's 2009 land acquisitions, and the Access Montana Program provided \$1.1 million.

- Purchased 110 acres along the Yellowstone River near Glendive for the new Stipek Fishing Access Site
- Purchased 400 acres of Milk River riparian habitat at historic Cree Crossing near Nelson Reservoir northeast of Malta, providing upland bird hunting, bird watching, and fishing opportunities
- Conserved crucial fisheries and wildlife conservation areas along Hay Creek on the North Fork of the Flathead River, Foy's Bend on the Flathead River and on the north shore of Flathead Lake
- Added 2,600 acres of important forest and wetland habitat around Little Doney Lake to the wildlife-rich Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area
- Acquired a mile-long section of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone near Bridger as a new fishing access site
- Added 75 acres of bighorn sheep habitat to the Stucky Ridge Wildlife Management Area near Anaconda
- Added 78-acres on the Bitterroot River south of Missoula as part of the Bitterroot North Fishing Access Site

8 | 2009 ANNUAL REPORT MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

<sup>\*</sup>Some of these and other land acquisitions were completed in partnership with public and private organizations, including the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, The Nature Conservancy in Montana, Montana Natural History Center, Bonneville Power Administration, American Land Conservancy, Montana Natural Resource Damage Program, and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

# Protecting Species' Health and Habitat

#### Wildlife friendly fencing

The first printing of FWP's new Landowner's Guide to Wildlife-Friendly Fencing was a popular success. Most of the copies went to private landowners and cooperating state and federal agencies. This full-color guide is also available on the FWP Web site at fwp.mt.gov on the Living With Wildlife tab under "Tips."

#### **Chronic Wasting Disease surveillance**

FWP expanded CWD testing in 2009-2010 to include deer, elk and moose in target areas of southern and north-central Montana. The 2,034 deer and elk samples submitted by hunters in 2008-2009 showed no evidence of the fatal disease in Montana's wild deer and elk populations.

#### **Living With Wildlife grants**

Ten Living With Wildlife projects, to-



taling \$65,000 in grants, addressed urban elk issues, human conflicts with black and grizzly bears and wildlife education needs.

Bear-resistant residential garbage bins, bear-proof dumpsters, bear-proof refuse transfer sites, aversive conditioning of problem bears using Karelian bear dogs, and public education helped reduce conflicts with bears.

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee for the first time identified bear-resistant coolers that will eliminate the need to suspend food out of bears' reach. These rugged containers have air-tight seals, special fittings and stainless steel latches or padlocks. The IGBC publishes an on-line list of products approved for use where food storage orders are in effect.

#### **Brucellosis surveillance**

FWP, hunters, state and federal agen-

cies and landowners continued to work together on expanded monitoring in hunting districts around Yellowstone National Park. This work is aimed at pro-

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY: Many property damage problems and wildlife injuries can be prevented with modifications on only a short section of fence.



TARGET ANS: Aquatic nuisance species of primary concern in Montana today are Eurasion watermilfoil, zebra and quagga mussels, New Zealand mudsnails, Asian carp, viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS virus) and whirling disease.

tecting Montana's brucellosis-free status and determining if wildlife or livestock management practices need adjustment.

### **Weed management**

Nearly 12,500 insect releases occurred on FWP properties statewide in addition to other noxious weed management efforts. The insects benefit FWP-managed lands and adjacent private property. The 2008-2009 legislative audit of FWP's weed management confirmed that FWP has a "weed management culture." The audit also identified ways to further the agency's effectiveness.

## Montana State Parks and Recreation

#### A new look

Pictograph Cave State Park's new 2,700 square-foot visitor center opened. It is an energy-efficient facility for yearround use and includes a community classroom. Construction is underway for a new visitor center at Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park near Three Forks.

Volunteers at state parks again made important contributions. More than 1,500 individuals volunteered for activities that improved visitors' experiences at parks—volunteers served as campground hosts, pulled weeds, helped with school field trips, and assisted in other ways.

Thirty major maintenance projects put more than \$250,000 into state parks, including sidewalk improvements at Spring Meadow Lake, road reclamation at Madison Buffalo Jump, and tree thinning in the Flathead Lake area parks.

### **Recreation management**

The new Smith River State Park and River Corridor Recreation Management Plan was adopted for implementation during the 2010 float season.

Five FWP grant programs filled outdoor recreation needs for communities, including park development, trails and more. One recent grant recipient, the Gallatin Valley Land Trust, won FWP's Montana Trail of the Year award

for its Main Street to the Mountains trail system in and near Bozeman. The trust has received \$300,000 in FWP-administered grants over the past 15 years.

The Parks Division, with help from the River Recreation Advisory for Tomorrow citizen advisory committee, drafted a plan for the Blackfoot River to guide recreation management decisions over the next 10 to 15 years. The public has commented on the plan, which deals with recreation topics such as overnight float camping, the visitor experience, and resource protection. The plan, which should be complete in 2010, calls for visitor data to be collected on river segments where heavy use is a concern.

#### **Funding**

The Parks Division stretched its funding by seeking grants to maintain lands and facilities. A \$195,000 Save America's Treasures grant from the National Park Service helped rehabilitate the Meade Hotel and other historic structures at Bannack State Park.

The Region 1 Parks team received grants totaling \$321,000 from Lincoln County, the U.S. Forest Service, Flathead National Forest Resource Advisory Committee and the Reinvestment and Recovery Act for noxious weed control and forest management.







in 2009, Montana's state parks hosted 2 million visitors, an increase of 14 percent over 2008.

IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCE: Clockwise from left: Sandstone landscape at Makoshika State Park; A grizzly display at Lone Pine State Park's new visitor center; A record 5,600 people participated in the annual Bannack Days celebration at Bannack State Park; Pictograph State Park's new visitor center enables the park to be staffed and open year round.



# Connecting Montanans to the outdoors

#### **FWP** news

Two of FWP's primary channels of communication—news releases and the bi-monthly Montana Outdoors magazine—are available 24/7 on the department's third communications tool—the FWP Web site at fwp.mt.gov. The department's Web site, which saw about 2.7 million visits in 2009, has evolved into "information central" for hunters, anglers, recreators and others. From public notices and management plans to online hunting and fishing guides, if it relates to FWP, it is now online.

FWP also uses its Web site as an educational tool to reach hunters, anglers, landowners and others.

- Montana hunters and landowners have a new education tool—the Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project—aimed at helping promote responsible hunter behavior and good hunter-landowner relations.
- A new mountain lion identification course will help hunters and houndsmen identify the sex of a lion and reduce the unintentional harvest of female lions. The voluntary free course is available on FWP's Web site at fwp.mt.gov. Click, "Mountain Lion ID."



### **Becoming an Outdoors-Woman**

FWP's Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program helped women gain new outdoor skills during 10 workshops focusing on fly fishing, horse packing, flower identification, ice fishing, snowshoeing, upland game bird hunting and other outdoor activities.

#### **FWP** education

Volunteer instructors offered 500 hunter and bowhunter education classes to 7,500 students 11 years old or older.

An adult on-line hunter education program enables adults to complete the classroom portion of the Montana hunter education course on-line. Par-

ticipants must still attend a practical field course to become certified.

Nearly 220 classrooms and 5,000 individual students across the state participated in the Hooked on Fishing Program. The program helps teachers integrate fish and fishing into the regular curriculum to help engage upper elementary and middle school students in learning.

FWP announced funding assistance for 16 new shooting range development projects. Projects include handicap-accessible bathrooms and warming shelters, fencing, signage, road construction and other improvements.

12 | 2009 ANNUAL REPORT MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

## Law enforcement

#### **Wardens**

Wardens' work in 2009 was varied and demanding—patrolling assigned districts, checking licenses in the field, verifying fee and regulation compliance, investigating suspected violations, issuing citations and making arrests, operating check stations, monitoring license vendor activities, assisting other law enforcement agencies and testifying in court.

#### **Annually, wardens:**

- make an average of 76,700 angler and hunter checks,
- make about 8,400 landowner contacts.
- issue an average of 8,163 verbal and written warnings,
- write more than 1,500 courtesy citations, and
- write 4,580 violation citations.

Wardens also participate in hunter education classes, inspect shooting preserves and private fish ponds and communicate with the Board of Outfitters, FWP license providers and make hundreds of other community contacts.

#### Crime in the outdoors costs Montana

Mule deer are the most frequently poached big game species. Between 2000 and 2009, poachers were successfully prosecuted for illegally killing:

- 1.753 mule deer.
- 983 whitetail deer,
- 1,478 elk, and
- 96 moose.

Vandalism, or criminal mischief, involving Montana's recreational resources is one of the chronic crimes FWP wardens see. The 126 incidents that occur at FWP-managed state parks and fishing access sites in an average year cost the department nearly \$37,000.

In 2009, the TIP-MONT telephone hot line handled nearly 2,000 calls—up from 1,384 calls two years ago. TIP-MONT, FWP's crimestopper program, annually awards \$16,000 to callers who provide information leading to the arrest and prosecution of poachers.

NEW FACE OF ENFORCEMENT: FWP recently hired four women wardens, a substantial increase from just a few years ago. "It's a sign of the times that we welcome," says Jim Kropp, Enforcement Division chief. Below, Investigations of organized poaching grew from about 20 in the 1990s to about 40 new cases a year today.





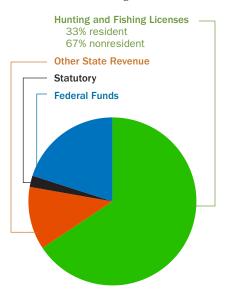
FWPMT.GOV 2009 ANNUAL REPORT | 13

# 2010 Department Revenue

#### **Department total: \$87,080,733**

■ Statutory \$1,895,500	2.2 %
Hunting and Fishing \$57,164,860	
■ Other State Revenue \$10,563,367	
Federal Funds \$17,457,006	20.0%

This illustration shows how FWP is funded in general. Actual annual revenues from these sources may fall above or below the figures used here:



## 2010 FISH AND WILDLIFE DIVISION REVENUE

The Fish and Wildlife Division includes five programs: wildlife, fish, law enforcement, communications and Education, and strategic planning and data services. the programs are funded by the following sources.

#### **Statutory Revenue**

Statutory revenue is revenue appropriated specifically by Montana law—for example, to support operations, maintenance and forest management on the state's wildlife management areas.

#### **Hunting And Fishing License Revenue**

 This license revenue source includes all license sales, interest earnings and miscellaneous revenues. About two-thirds of FWP's license revenue comes from nonresident license sales.

#### **Other State Revenue**

The Fish and Wildlife Division receives revenue from other state sources. For example, the nongame income tax check-off contributions made by taxpayers supports nongame species management and improving wildlife

viewing opportunities.

#### **Federal Funds**

- More than \$9 million comes from an excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition, handguns and certain archery equipment (Pittman-Robertson). About \$9.6 million in federal funding comes from an excise tax on fishing equipment and electric trolling motors, a federal fuel tax and import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats (Dingell-Johnson).
- Montana received \$1 million from the State Wildlife Grant Program to help fund research and management programs for species that have special conservation needs.

#### **2010 PARKS DIVISION REVENUE**

The Parks Division is composed of three programs: Montana State Parks, trails and community grants, and fishing access site management. The programs are funded by the following sources.

#### **Statutory Revenue**

 Accommodations Tax: Under state law, 6.5 percent of the 4 percent Lodging Facility Use Tax charged by lodging facilities is used to maintain state parks.

#### State Parks Earned Revenue

- Parks' earned revenues include entry fees, camping, special use fees and a light vehicle registration fee on passenger cars and light trucks. Of the \$4 light vehicle registration fee, \$3.50 goes to state parks, \$0.25 to fishing access sites and another \$0.25 to the Montana Department of Commerce.
- Sales of educational, commemorative and interpretive merchandise, as well as other goods and services at state parks and other designated locations provide this revenue.

#### **Hunting and Fishing License Revenue**

 A portion of hunting and fishing license sales goes to the operation, maintenance and development of fishing access sites statewide.



#### Other State Revenue

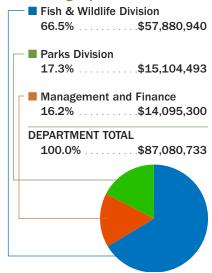
- Coal Tax Trust Earnings: A
   portion of the interest earned
   from the Coal Tax Trust account
   goes to develop, operate and
   maintain the state park system.
- Motorboat Fuel Tax: Revenue from the state gasoline dealers' license tax is used to create, improve and maintain state parks where motorboats are allowed.
- Off-highway vehicle and snowmobile registration and decal fees:
   These are used for the development and support of the OHV and snowmobile programs.
- Fuel Tax: A portion of the state gasoline dealers' license tax supports OHV and snowmobile safety, education and grants to local users' clubs for equipment and trail maintenance.

#### **Federal Revenue**

- Federal funding from the sale of fishing equipment and tackle (Wallop-Breaux) helps support fishing access sites and state parks where motorboats are allowed.
- Additional federal funding for state and local parks comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

# 2010 Planned Expenditures

#### **Total funding expenditures:**



## FWP spends its money two ways:

**Capital:** Major repair and maintenance of FWP properties, renovation and construction of facilities, and protection, enhancement and acquisition of critical habitats.

**Operations:** Day-to-day management of Montana's fish, wildlife and parks resources.

#### **FWP SPENDING TOTAL:**

Total	\$87.080.733
Operations	\$74,040,033
Capital	\$13,040,700

FWPMT.GOV 2009 ANNUAL REPORT | 15

## **FWP MISSION**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations.

#### **Governor of the State of Montana**

Brian Schweitzer

#### **FWP Director**

Joe Maurier

#### **FWP Commission**

Shane Colton, Chairman Southeastern Montana

Dan Vermillion
Southwestern Montana

Bob Ream Northwestern Montana

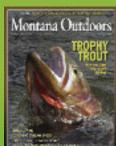
Willie Doll
Northeastern Montana

Ron Moody Northcentral Montana



**Cover:** In the past three years, more than 20 percent of bighorn rams harvested in Montana were Boone and Crockett caliber, according to FWP analysis. Photo by Tony Bynum

Montana Outdoors is FWP's full-color magazine



featuring the latest information on conservation issues, new management programs and fishing, hunting and parks recreation. A one-year subscription (six issues) is \$9. To order call toll-free (800) 678-6888, or subscribe on-line at fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors.

## For more information, visit: fwp.mt.gov

Photo credits (clockwise from top left). Cover: Tony Bynum; Page 2: Montana FWP, Page 3: George Lane; Page 4: MFWP; Page 5: Pat Clayton; Page 6: Linda Thompson/*Montana Outdoors*; Page 7: Ken Archer, Donald M. Jones, Alan G. Nelson; Page 8: Vic Schendel; Page 9: MFWP; Page 10: Kenton Rowe; Page 11: Kenton Rowe, MFWP; MFWP; Page 12: MFWP; Page 13: MFWP, Darrin Schreder; Page 15: Kenton Rowe.

Produced in-house at Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. This document was printed at state expense. Information on the cost of the publication can be obtained by contacting Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks at 406-444-3079. Copyright ©2010, by State of Montana. All rights reserved.