

2015 Montana Resident License Fee Proposal



CHOICES FOR THE FUTURE

Montana offers opportunities others only dream of. But will they be there for you?



*Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks*



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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is at the expected point in time where current funding won't sustain today's programs and services. Montana's fish and wildlife management budget faces a \$5.75 million shortfall.

The funding gap will be addressed by the 2015 Montana Legislature. Solutions will come down to three choices—in whole or in part:

- ▶ fishing and hunting license-fee adjustments;
- ▶ further cuts to fish and wildlife management programs;
- ▶ a shift of "earmarked" funds away from specific programs.

In 2013, to find simple fair and stable sources of revenue for fish and wildlife conservation, Governor Steve Bullock asked FWP Director Jeff Hagener to appoint an independent citizens' group to serve on a License and Funding Advisory Council.

Following review of the Council's recommendations by a legislative oversight committee, a \$3 fishing license increase and an \$8 hunting license increase are being proposed.

Those adjustments would solve most of the funding problem and maintain fish and wildlife opportunities at today's levels.

\$3 / \$8
Fishing / Hunting

Question & answer

Why is this necessary?

FWP has operated for more than a generation on a unique budget cycle that asks the Montana Legislature to consider new hunting and fishing license fees once per decade. The last general increase for residents was approved in 2005, which was predicted to keep FWP financially stable for 10 years—or until now.

What's been done so far?

Two years ago, FWP permanently cut \$1.2 million from its budget and shifted \$2 million more from state hunting and fishing license dollars to federal funding. Cuts were made to wildlife and fisheries programs, shooting range grants and administrative costs. Shifts to federal revenue were possible because of a spike in firearm and ammo sales, which is not expected to be a sustainable trend.

Where does FWP's fish and wildlife conservation revenue come from?

About 70 percent of the revenue needed to manage Montana's fish and wildlife comes from licenses purchased by hunters and anglers, nearly 70 percent of which comes from nonresidents. The other 30 percent comes from federal revenue generated by the sale of sporting arms and ammo and fishing and boating equipment. Fish and wildlife management receives general fund dollars only to carry out a portion of Montana's Aquatic Invasive Species prevention program.

Are there other proposed cost adjustments?

Yes. Seniors would receive a discounted license at age 67 versus the current age of 62, and the price of most free and discounted licenses would be standardized at 50 percent of the normal price.

Will nonresident fees be considered?

There would be some upward adjustments to nonresident fishing licenses and a cap on fees for nonresident deer and elk

combination licenses. Some nonresident fees were increased when “I-161” was approved by voters in 2011.

When would the new fees become effective?

If approved, new fees would go into effect March 1, 2016.

If approved, how much revenue would these adjustments generate?

Proposed legislation would generate \$5.75 million annually.

What would be lost if fees aren't adjusted?

The Legislature’s remaining choices, in whole or in part, will boil down to program cuts or shifting earmarked funds. If program cuts are chosen, FWP will have to consider closing some fish hatcheries, ending some upkeep at fishing access sites, cutting game damage response efforts, reducing enforcement efforts and more. If shifts of “earmarked” funds are favored by the Legislature, accounts used to run 19 programs

If budget cutbacks are forthcoming, core conservation and management work will be reduced or eliminated. Here is a sample of lost services that could make up about half of the \$5.75 million budget gap:

Program	Consequence
Enforcement	Reduced field and waterway presence; impacts to effective response times; diminished working relationships with landowners.
Traditional Operations, Hunter Harvest Surveys and Wildlife Research Public Season Setting	Fewer hunter check stations, scientific surveys, and direct contact with hunters; less information to set hunting seasons and more conservative regulations; diminished ability to respond to hunter/landowner wildlife conflicts; Impacts to Wildlife Management Areas maintenance; loss of public opportunity to obtain information and voice opinions at public venues
Fishing Access Sites	Reductions to routine upkeep, including weed control, road maintenance and fencing.
Game Damage	Impacts to ability to assist landowners, including fewer fencing materials and other assistance to deter game damage.
Information, Outreach and Video Production	Reductions in local community interactions in schools, the public, the media and to services provided via hunter-education volunteers.
Fish and Habitat Restoration	Reductions to Future Fisheries projects and to cutthroat trout restoration efforts.
Brucellosis Risk Management	Reduced risk-management assistance to landowners.
Instream Flows and Water Gauges	Diminished ability to monitor water flows, temperatures, and water rights necessary to protect stressed fisheries.
Hatcheries and Fish Health	Closure of two hatcheries; reduced stocks in Fort Peck, Canyon Ferry, Holter, and other lakes, reservoirs, and ponds; impacts to preventative fish-health surveys and testing.
Regional Support Staff	Diminished local customer service and effective response times related to wildlife conflicts.
Regional Supervisor	Loss of top-tier FWP official responsible for local issues; impacts to ability to interact with local officials and general public
Grizzly bear management	Loss of momentum for ESA delisting; default to continued federal management.

would need to be cut entirely or by at least 40 percent per program to include upland game bird habitat enhancement; Block Management, Habitat Montana, and wolf monitoring, to name a few.

Who will make the ultimate decision as to whether or not

fees will be adjusted?

The Montana Legislature sets hunting and fishing license fees.

How can I participate?


Reach out to your Montana state senator and representative to voice your choice for the future of wildlife and fish conservation and management.

FWP’s \$5.7 million funding gap will be addressed by Montana’s Legislature in 2015.

Solutions will come down to three choices—in whole or in part:


1. Fishing and hunting license fee adjustments
2. Further cuts in fish and wildlife management programs
3. Shifting “earmarked” funds

\$3 / \$8
Fishing / Hunting



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For more information and to comment, visit fwp.mt.gov/choices2015 or scan this code:



If \$5.75 million is shifted from earmarked activities, each of the following programs could lose about 40 percent of its funding.

Earmarked Fund	Consequences
Hunting Access—Block Management Areas	Fewer landowners and fewer acres of private land enrolled in the public hunting access program.
Habitat Montana Acquisition	Diminished ability to tend to critical habitat needs, including big game winter range, core sage grouse habitat, and wetlands.
Habitat Montana O&M and Habitat Montana Trust	Reductions to routine upkeep of FWP lands and infrastructure, like roads, fences and weed control.
Upland Game Bird Habitat	Loss of public access; fewer federal funds for sage-grouse conservation.
Fishing Access Sites	Reductions to routine upkeep at fishing access sites, including weed control, road maintenance, and fencing; diminished quality of Montana fishing experiences.
Fishing Access Site Acquisition	Diminished ability to obtain new or expand existing fishing access sites.
Waterfowl Stamp	Annual impacts to acres targeted for wetland improvements and conservation easements; impacts to leveraged wetland conservation funds.
Wolf Collaring	Diminished ability to comply with wolf collaring statutes and other legislative requirements.
Wolf Depredation	Impacts to Wildlife Services’ wolf predation control activities; diminished ability to comply with legislative requirements.
River Restoration	Annual loss of fish habitat improvement projects.
Search & Rescue	Impacts to emergency mission reimbursements associated with rescuing people missing or stranded outdoors.
Upland Game Bird Planting	Annual loss of released birds and public access for pheasant hunting.
Come Home to Hunt Access	Reduced ability to work with landowners to provide public access to public land.