



A **LANDOWNER'S GUIDE** TO MONTANA FWP PROGRAMS





With nearly 65 percent of the state's land held in private ownership, landowners are central to the work of managing and conserving Montana's wildlife, fish and important habitats.



Landowners help strengthen Montana's traditions through their legacy of land stewardship, by providing public hunting and fishing access to their lands, and by helping to preserve key recreational and historical sites. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is committed to working with Montana's landowners through a variety of programs that acknowledge and support their role in maintaining Montana's rich conservation legacy.

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS IS COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH MONTANA LANDOWNERS THROUGH A VARIETY OF PROGRAMS:

BLOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

- ▶ **Benefit:** Customizable hunter management assistance and other incentives to help landowners in managing public hunting access to lands under their control.
- ▶ **Details:** FWP negotiates cooperative agreements with landowners to identify how hunting will be managed on enrolled lands. Projects to obtain public access corridors to state and federal lands may also be an option. Hunter management assistance may include signs, maps, permission slips, and in some cases, seasonal staff to patrol the area and assist hunters. Incentives include compensation to offset public hunting access impacts (up to \$15,000 per year per cooperator); limited liability coverage; livestock loss reimbursement; a weed management bonus (up to five percent); and a complimentary, non-transferable resident sportsman's license or nonresident big game combination license.

These complimentary licenses may be issued to the landowner or designated employee or family member.

- ▶ **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612.

SPECIAL ACCESS PROJECTS

- ▶ **Goal:** Obtain hunting access to and through private lands that fall outside the limitations of Block Management.
- ▶ **Benefit:** Special access projects seek to create, protect or improve access to private lands.
- ▶ **Details:** These projects protect or improve existing access, create new access, or address landowner/sportsman conflicts associated with hunting access to private lands. Projects often include development of maps and planning documents; contractual agreements for access onto or across private lands; hunter management services as a condition of access onto or across private lands; or installation of cattle guards, water crossings, fence-

ing, or other materials that improve existing access or serve as incentives to help secure additional access to private lands.

- ▶ **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612.

ACCESS PUBLIC LAND PROGRAM

- ▶ **Goal:** Secure public access across private land to public lands.
- ▶ **Benefit:** Obtains and maintains legal public hunting access to public lands.
- ▶ **Details:** Seeks to secure 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 consist of simple signing projects to rights-of-way acquisitions and easements on term lengths or in perpetuity.
- ▶ **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612.

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MANAGED ACCESS PROJECT SITES

- **Goal:** Strategic public access to achieve a species-specific level of harvest.
- **Benefit:** Uses a specified strategy to maximize the potential for public hunters to harvest a single species of game animal.
- **Details:** 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 agreements may not be the best tool or incentive to affect the situation. Landowner incentives for these access agreements may utilize a hunt coordinator and may compensate landowners through payment.

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612.

UNLOCKING PUBLIC LANDS PROGRAM

- **Goal:** Allow public access to public lands across private land through a state of Montana tax credit.
- **Benefit:** Obtains and maintains legal public access across private lands for all outdoor recreation in compliance with public land uses.
- **Details:** 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. As long as access is open for a continuous period of at least six months, the cooperator is entitled to receive a State tax credit of \$750 (maximum of four contracts or \$3,000 total tax credits per tax year).

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612.

LIVESTOCK LOSS REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

- **Goal:** Maintain public hunting access to private land.
- **Benefit:** A landowner may be reimbursed for livestock killed or injured as a result of allowing public hunting on private lands under the landowner's control.
- **Details:** Eligible landowners who suffer livestock loss or injury as a result of allowing public hunting on private property during legal hunting seasons may be reimbursed for their losses, depending upon the circumstances. Upon discovery of dead or injured livestock, a landowner must contact the local Department of Livestock inspector who will then investigate the incident and submit a completed livestock loss reimbursement claim form to

the Helena Wildlife office for consideration of potential reimbursement.

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612.

WILDLIFE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

- **Goal:** Conserve and restore important wildlife habitat through noxious weed control.
- **Benefit:** FWP offers 75 percent cost share to landowners for treating weeds and restoring native vegetation.
- **Details:** WHIP funds are intended for watershed-scale projects on priority wildlife habitats. The program typically funds coordinated efforts over multiple landownerships, working together to control noxious weeds for lasting results. Private, state, and federal lands qualify for funding. Funding preference is given to projects that provide access for public hunting and involve multiple partners and landowners.

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612.

UPLAND GAME BIRD ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

- **Goal:** Improve upland game bird populations on lands open to public hunting.
- **Benefit:** Landowners can receive financial and technical assistance for enhancing or conserving upland game bird habitat on their land.
- **Details:** Landowners partner with FWP to establish habitat enhancements such as nesting cover, shelterbelts, food plots, or grazing management systems. UGBEP pays up to 75 percent of improvement costs. FWP and the landowner work together to determine the appropriate amount of public access for habitat enhancements. Short-term leases to idle highly productive game bird habitats are also available with annual payments based on quality of cover.

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612.

HABITAT MONTANA

- **Goal:** Conserve and restore important habitat for wildlife.
- **Benefit:** FWP offers incentives to landowners to conserve habitat through the purchase of a conservation easement.
- **Details:** Landowners interested in using a conservation easement to preserve traditional farm and ranch land and to conserve natural resources, such as wildlife habitat, may partner

with FWP. A variety of funding sources enable FWP to conserve important wildlife habitats and provide recreational opportunities through purchased or donated conservation easements and purchases of land. Annually, about \$5 million goes to fund projects selected by the Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission from among those recommended by FWP staff. In addition to monetary compensation, landowners may realize tax benefits from a conservation easement, gain help in pursuing habitat-friendly agricultural practices and ensure the protection of scenic and open spaces.

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612, or regional FWP office.

SPECIAL HABITAT INITIATIVES

- **Goal:** Conserve native wildlife habitats.
- **Benefit:** FWP works to find grant funding to support ongoing private land stewardship of native habitats.
- **Details:** Landowners can work with FWP to receive cost-share assistance to implement actions that help provide wildlife habitat. Special initiatives are developed to address needs that are not already covered by existing FWP programs. Assistance is dependent on grant funding availability and details may vary. FWP currently has funding for a working grasslands initiative to support restoration and conservation of native grasslands as wildlife habitat.

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612, or regional FWP office.

MONTANA MIGRATORY BIRD WETLAND PROGRAM

- **Goal:** Restore, create, enhance, and protect wetlands and riparian areas.
- **Benefit:** FWP assists landowners with technical and financial assistance for conserving wetlands and riparian areas.



- **Details:** Landowners may develop projects to protect, conserve, and create wetlands on their property in cooperation with FWP. Projects can increase the land's value while keeping water on the landscape and creating healthy, functional wetlands. Landowners may receive direct funding or cost-share for the project, materials, or construction work. Projects often include some negotiated public recreational access. The program was established by Montana's legislature in 1985.

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612, or regional FWP office.

FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

- **Goal:** Improve habitat for wild fish.
- **Benefit:** FWP assists landowners in financing projects that improve habitat for native and non-native wild fish.
- **Details:** FWP biologists, landowners and other partners develop project proposals that, for example, improve streamside vegetation with fencing, restore stream banks and stream channels, improve stream flow, prevent loss of fish into diversions, or improve fish passage. Projects demonstrate that healthy streams can be compatible with agricultural and livestock operations. About \$650,000 is available annually to fund these projects. Landowners and other project partners usually share in the project costs. A 14-member citizen panel recommends project proposals to the Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission for final approval twice a year.

► **Contact:** FWP Fisheries Division, 406-444-2449, or regional FWP office.

MONTANA PRIVATE LAND FISH ACCESS PROGRAM

- **Goal:** Maintain existing public access on private land and create new opportunities for angler access to Montana waters.
- **Benefit:** Landowners with suitably located lands may be compensated for impacts to their land when they provide public fishing access.
- **Details:** Landowners with land in suitable locations may receive compensation for working with FWP to provide public fishing access. The landowner maintains control of his or her property and is compensated for impacts to their property that result from allowing the public fishing access. Terms and compensation are negotiated through a contractual agreement.

► **Contact:** FWP Fisheries Division, 406-444-7885, or the regional FWP office.

PUBLIC ACCESS LAND AGREEMENT

- **Goal:** Allow public access to inaccessible public lands across private land or roads or trails through a payment
- **Benefit:** Obtains and maintains legal public access across private land, roads or trails for outdoor recreation in compliance with public land uses.
- **Details:** A program whereby a landowner enters into a contractual agreement with FWP to allow public access across a parcel of private land to reach otherwise inaccessible state or federal land. Negotiable terms include, amount of compensation (up to \$15,000 per year), duration of the agreement, improvements made to facilitate access, location and transportation mode by which public may use the access, and time periods when access may or may not be used.

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612

GAME DAMAGE PROGRAM

- **Goal:** Assist landowners experiencing game damage.
- **Benefit:** FWP assists landowners in preventing or reducing damage caused to crops or property by game animals.
- **Details:** Landowners may be eligible for game-damage assistance if they allow public hunting during established hunting seasons. Assistance may include hazing, repellants, temporary or permanent stackyard fencing, damage hunts, kill permits, or supplemental game damage licenses. Landowners may report game damage to the local game warden, FWP biologist or FWP regional office.

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612.

LANDOWNER PERMITS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS

- **Goal:** Encourage public hunting opportunity on private lands in exchange for an either-sex or antlerless elk permit and license at no cost.
- **Benefit:** Landowners are able to obtain one permit and license for every four public hunters they allow. Landowners must allow additional hunters for elk management.
- **Details:** A landowner must: own occupied elk habitat that is large enough, in the department's determination, to accommodate successful public hunting; not have been issued an A-7 landowner license during the license year; not receive cash payments from FWP for hunter access; not charge a fee or authorize a person to charge a fee for hunting access on the landowner's property; enter into a con-



tractual public elk hunting access agreement that defines:

- the areas that will be open to public elk hunting;
- the number of public hunting days that will be allowed on the property;
- any other factors that the department and the landowner consider necessary for the proper management of elk on the landowner's property.

► **Contact:** FWP Wildlife Division, 406-444-2612

SPECIAL LANDOWNER LICENSE AND PERMIT PROVISIONS

- **Goal:** Recognize landowners for their role in conserving Montana's fish and wildlife resources.
- **Benefit:** Landowners have opportunities to receive licenses or permits and to sponsor deer hunters to hunt on their deeded land.
- **Details:** The following landowner license and permit provisions exist under state law:
- **Landowner Preferences:** Fifteen percent of each hunting district quota for deer B and antelope licenses, and for deer permits, is set aside for landowners owning, or contracting to purchase, 160 acres or more of land used primarily for agriculture and located in that hunting district. Fifteen percent of each hunting district quota for elk permits and elk B licenses are set aside for landowners owning, or contracting to purchase, 640 or more acres of land used by elk in that hunting district.
- **Landowner Sponsored:** Two thousand nonresident deer combination licenses are set aside for deer hunters sponsored by resident Montana landowners to hunt deer on the sponsor's deeded land. Licenses are distributed equally to landowners who own 640 or more contiguous acres, with up to two sponsored hunters per landowner, before the remaining licenses are issued in a random drawing.

► **Contact:** FWP Licensing Bureau, 406-444-2950, or the regional FWP office.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Headquarters-Helena	Region 8.....(406) 444-2535

Cover photo: Sunset over Crazy Mountains near Big Timber, by Jeff Handlin;
Family photo: Henry Gordon and his daughter Trish, manage the family ranch,
at the Gordon Cattle Company Conservation Easement near Chinook.
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Produced in-house by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. This document printed at state expense in 2018.
Information on the cost of the publication can be obtained by writing to the Department of Administration or to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.