

**Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
Citizen Advisory Council
Charter**

Need

Montana citizens are vitally interested in their fish, wildlife, parks, and outdoor recreation, and their interests vary greatly across these resources. As FWP works to perpetuate opportunity outside, strives toward balance, focuses on integrity, and brings people together, it has a continuing need to more fully involve citizens and provide a forum for diverse interests to come together. A Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) in each FWP region ideally provides a forum for good communication, sharing of information, mutual respect, and building trust.

Purpose

A CAC comprised of engaged citizens helps FWP by serving two central functions: providing information, ideas, and identification of emerging trends in a welcoming forum of diverse interests; and providing a means to better inform CAC members, who in turn are ambassadors who help to inform the broader public. This exchange of information, ideas, and opinions should identify opportunities, potential conflicts, management choices, and tradeoffs involving public trust resources.

CACs in each region help FWP to be responsive and transparent public trust managers. Citizen advisors help the department operate efficiently and effectively within the constraints of state law, FWP Commission rules, and department policy. FWP employees benefit from having a better understanding of public priorities and expectations, and from having a trusted “sounding board” for ideas and initiatives. CAC members and others benefit from a better understanding of FWP programs, priorities, processes, and limitations.

Authorities and Roles

FWP is a public agency of state government under the direction of the governor of Montana, as chief executive of the state. As such, FWP has the public trust responsibility to implement and enforce laws passed by the Montana legislature, including making rules and regulations as necessary. Similarly, the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Montana Parks and Recreation Board are assigned regulation decisions and rulemaking authorities under state law.

Because these authorities cannot legally be delegated to others, CAC members serve in an advisory capacity. Whenever possible, CACs are encouraged to help build community consensus and make informed recommendations to the department, board, and commission. Members can also help to communicate with commission members, board members, and legislators about issues discussed by CACs, although FWP itself takes no role in members’ individual contacts with legislators.

Membership

CAC candidates may be identified by any interested party, and the net should be cast to a wide variety of interests. Appointments are made by the regional supervisor, including designation of the chair of the CAC, with the concurrence of the FWP director's office. CACs will typically consist of no more than 20 members who volunteer to serve terms of 2 years, with memberships staggered to help ensure continuity. Multiple terms are acceptable and encouraged. While there are no formal qualifications to serve, members will be sought who are active in their communities, are willing to work collaboratively, have a general understanding of resource issues and public processes, and represent a variety of interests and geographic communities in a region.

Expectations

The CAC will typically meet 2-4 times per year, either in person or online as appropriate, with the possibility of calling special or working group meetings as may be necessary. Members should make a commitment to attend meetings, offer thoughts and ideas, communicate with others in a respectful manner, and share information about the work of the CAC within their communities.

CACs will be utilized more formally than they have been in the past, in order to help FWP gather information and public input. A primary example includes serving as the forum in which regional season-setting presentations and discussions take place, before recommendations are passed on to the Commission (or to the Parks Board, as an issue may dictate). This function will require that the timing of certain CAC meetings is well-coordinated with Commission and Board meetings, and with other regions to ensure meetings do not fall on the same day.

FWP provides logistical and administrative support to the CAC and gathers information to present to members. Regional supervisors will serve as facilitators for CAC meetings, unless other arrangements are made for facilitation, and will collaborate with the CAC chair to develop meeting agendas. FWP also reimburses members for expenses incurred to attend meetings. Finally, like all FWP meetings, CAC meetings are open to the public, and all interested parties are encouraged to attend.