



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: February 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Temporary Closure on Gallatin River

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: The U.S. Forest Service is working with a contractor to replace the Markley Bridge over the Gallatin River near Big Sky. The contractor needs to build a temporary work bridge alongside the existing bridge to conduct the work. This will require placing pipe piles in the middle of the river to support the center of the temporary bridge. The U.S. Forest Service was initially planning to complete the work in the fall of 2026. However, completing the work during the fall has greater risk of negatively impacting spawning brown trout, riverbanks, riparian vegetation, and recreationists. Instead, the U.S. Forest Service is proposing to start the work on March 2, 2026, and anticipates it will be completed by May 18, 2026. During this time, it would not be safe for boating on this section of river.

In the interest of public safety, FWP is proposing to temporarily close the Gallatin River from the Upper Deer Creek boat launch, which is located just above Markley Bridge, to the Portal Creek boat launch until the bridge replacement has been completed. This section of river would be closed to boating. Boaters would still be able to put in at the Portal Creek boat launch and float downstream. Wade angling and other walk-in use would continue to be allowed, except in the immediate area of bridge construction.

Public Involvement Process & Results: FWP will solicit public comment for a four-week period prior to the February commission meeting. Public comments will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the February commission meeting.

Alternatives & Analysis:

- A. No action. The Gallatin River would remain open during construction, increasing risks to public safety.
- B. Adopt a temporary boating closure on the Gallatin River from the Upper Deer Creek boat launch to the Portal Creek boat launch starting March 2, through May 18. This section of river would remain open to wade angling and other walk-in use, except in the immediate area of bridge construction.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission adopt a temporary closure to boating on the Gallatin River from the Upper Deer Creek boat launch to the Portal Creek boat launch starting March 2 through May 18. This section of river would remain open to wade angling and other walk-in use, except in the immediate area of bridge construction. Boaters would still be able to put in at the Portal Creek boat launch and float downstream. The closure would keep the recreating public safe while minimizing impacts to recreation by conducting the work during a less popular time for boating. By conducting the work during the winter and early spring, it would minimize impacts to spawning brown trout, riverbanks, and riparian vegetation.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt a temporary closure to boating on the Gallatin River from the Upper Deer Creek boat launch to the Portal Creek boat launch starting March 2, 2026, through May 18, 2026. This section of river would remain open to wade angling and other walk-in use, except in the immediate area of bridge construction.