



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: June 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Temporary Closure on Blackfoot River Across Multiple Years

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) will conduct bridge and pier work in the Milltown Area on a section of the Blackfoot River adjacent to Milltown State Park over the next two years. BNSF will begin bridge stabilization work in 2026 while MDT is planning pier removal under their structures once BNSF mitigation work is complete. This reach is a popular floating section, with most users putting in at the Weigh Station Fishing Access Site (FAS) immediately above Bonner and taking out either at Milltown State Park or Sha-Ron FAS in East Missoula. Public safety is a concern while this work is ongoing due to in-river construction equipment, debris, and variable flows around bridge piers. BNSF and MDT have requested that FWP temporarily close this river section when necessary over the course of the next two years to allow for the construction activities to be conducted safely.

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

Alternatives & Analysis:

- A. No action. The Blackfoot River would remain open during construction, increasing risks to public safety.
- B. Adopt a biannual rule authorizing FWP to temporarily close the Blackfoot River from Weigh Station FAS downstream to the point where the river crosses under Interstate 90 when deemed unsafe at any time during 2026 and 2027 due to BNSF and MDT construction. This section of river would be closed to floating during those times but remain open to wade angling and other walk-in use, except in the immediate area of the bridge construction activities when occurring. The river would remain open when conditions are safe.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission adopt a biannual rule allowing FWP to temporarily close the Blackfoot River from Weigh Station FAS downstream to the point where the river crosses under Interstate 90 when deemed unsafe at any time during 2026 and 2027 for BNSF and MDT construction. The river would remain open when conditions are safe (Alternative B).

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the proposed biannual rule authorizing Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to temporarily close the Blackfoot River from Weigh Station Fishing Access Site downstream to the point where the river crosses under Interstate 90 in 2026 and 2027, as needed for public safety. FWP may reopen this section when conditions are deemed safe.