



# 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

- ▶ **Goal:** Assist landowners to manage hunting activities in exchange for providing the public with free hunting access to private land and, sometimes, to adjacent or isolated public lands.
- ▶ **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. Incentives include compensation to offset public hunting access impacts (up to \$50,000 per year per cooperator); limited liability coverage; livestock loss reimbursement; a weed management bonus (up to 5 percent); and a complimentary, nontransferable

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:** Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, 406-444-3750

## ACCESS PUBLIC LAND PROGRAM

- ▶ **Goal:** Secure public access across private lands 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:** Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, 406-444-3750

## 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:** Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, 406-444-3750



## 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:** The landowner maintains control of his or her property. Terms and compensation are negotiated through a contractual agreement.
- ▶ **Contact:** Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, 406-444-3750

## 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 or long-term habitat conservation lease.
- ▶ **Details:** Landowners interested in preserving traditional farm and ranch land and conserving 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 and 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

## MIGRATORY BIRD WETLAND PROGRAM

- ▶ **Goal:** Protect, conserve, enhance, and create high-quality wetland habitat to benefit wildlife, especially migratory birds, and the residents and visitors of Montana.
- ▶ **Benefit:** FWP assists landowners with technical and financial assistance for conserving wetlands, wetland associated uplands, and riparian areas.
- ▶ **Details:** FWP will work with landowners to develop projects that protect, conserve, enhance, and/or create wetlands and wetland-associated upland habitat on their

property. Projects can increase the land's value while keeping water on the landscape and sustaining 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 the Montana 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 stream side vegetation with fencing, improve stream flow, prevent loss of fish into diversions, or improve fish passage. Projects demonstrate that healthy streams can be compatible with agricultural operations. About \$1 million 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 and Wildlife Commission for approval twice a year.
- ▶ **Contact:** FWP Fisheries Division, 406-444-2449, or regional FWP office

## UPLAND GAME BIRD HABITAT 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 CRP and other nesting cover, shelter belts, 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



## WILDLIFE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

- ▶ **Goal:** Conserve and restore important wildlife habitat through noxious weed control.
- ▶ **Benefit:** FWP offers a 75 percent cost share to landowners to treat weeds and restore native vegetation for up to five years.
- ▶ **Details:** WHIP funds are intended for watershed-scale projects on ecologically important wildlife habitats. The program typically funds coordinated efforts across multiple land ownerships, where neighbors are 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

## REGIONAL ACCESS PROJECTS

- ▶ **Goal:** Obtain hunting access to and through private lands that fall outside the limitations of Block Management.
- ▶ **Benefit:** Regional access projects seek to create, protect, or improve access to private lands or address landowner/sportsman conflicts associated with hunting access to private lands.
- ▶ **Details:** 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, fencing, or other materials that improve existing access or serve as incentives to help secure additional access to private lands.
- ▶ **Contact:** Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, 406-444-3750

## UNLOCKING PUBLIC LANDS PROGRAM

- ▶ **Goal:** Allow members of the public to cross parcels of enrolled private land to gain access to otherwise inaccessible parcels of state or federal (Bureau of Land Management or United States Forest Service) land for the purpose of fishing, hunting, trapping, hiking, bird-watching, and other forms of outdoor recreation compatible with the use of public lands.
- ▶ **Benefit:** Obtain and maintain legal public access across private lands for outdoor recreation in compliance with public land uses.
- ▶ **Details:** As long as access is open for a continuous period of at least six months, the cooperators are entitled to receive a state tax credit of \$750 (maximum of four contracts or \$3,000 total tax credits per tax year).
- ▶ **Contact:** Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, 406-444-3750

## LIVESTOCK LOSS REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

- ▶ **Goal:** Maintain public hunting access to private land.
- ▶ **Benefit:** A landowner may be reimbursed for livestock killed or injured because of allowing public hunting on private lands under the landowner's control.
- ▶ **Details:** 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 FWP Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division office for consideration of potential reimbursement.

- ▶ **Contact:** Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, 406-444-3750

## ELK HUNTING ACCESS AGREEMENTS

- ▶ **Goal:** Improve elk management on private land.
- ▶ **Benefit:** Landowners or their designees in the program are provided a complimentary either-sex or antlerless elk license, permit, or combination of the two as required in that hunting district for free public access to a minimum of three public hunters to be used on the enrolled property.
- ▶ **Details:** To be eligible, private landowners must own at least 640 acres of occupied elk habitat that can accommodate successful public hunting; enter into an access agreement that allows for free public elk hunting on the landowner's property throughout the regular season; not charge a fee or authorize a person to charge a fee for hunting access on the landowner's property; and agree to obtain evaluation data including hunter use data, elk harvest data, and hunter/landowner satisfaction data. Eligibility for future participation is dependent on submission of complete data from landowners and hunters.
- ▶ **Contact:** Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, 406-444-3750

## PUBLIC ACCESS LAND AGREEMENT

- ▶ **Goal:** Create public access to inaccessible public lands across private land, roads, or trails through a payment to the private landowner allowing access.
- ▶ **Benefit:** Obtains and maintains legal public access across private land, roads, or trails for outdoor recreation in compliance with public land uses.
- ▶ **Details:** Negotiable terms include amount of compensation (up to \$15,000 per agreement per year); duration of the agreement; reimbursement for 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:** Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, 406-444-3750

## FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

- ▶ **Goal:** Conserve working forest lands important for wildlife, timber, and watersheds.
- ▶ **Benefit:** FWP offers conservation easements to retain forest habitats in parts of western and west-central Montana.
- ▶ **Details:** Conservation easements serve to retain the current forestland values into the future. These perpetual agreements are only eligible on lands that are at least 75 percent forestland, operate in a sustainable forest management system, and provide a negotiated level of public recreation access.
- ▶ **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, repellents, temporary or permanent stockyard 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



## 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 draw 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 for Deer, Elk and Antelope Licenses and Permits:** Fifteen percent of each hunting district quota for Deer B Licenses and Deer Permits, and antelope licenses, are set aside for landowners owning 160 acres or more of land used primarily for agriculture

and located within that hunting district. Fifteen percent of each hunting district quota for Elk B Licenses and Elk Permits are set aside for landowners owning or contracting to purchase 640 contiguous acres or more used by elk within that hunting district.

- **Landowner preference for Nonresident Big Game Combination Licenses:** Fifteen percent of quota for Nonresident Big Game and Elk Combination Licenses is set aside for nonresident landowners to hunt only on property the landowner owns or leases for crop production. To qualify, the landowner must own 2,500 contiguous acres in fee title. For each additional 2,500 contiguous acres owned by the landowner, FWP may issue the landowner or their immediate

family member an additional Big Game or Elk Combination License, up to a maximum of five per qualifying landowner. Landowners enrolled in a department-administered private land hunting access program in the previous license year may purchase an additional bonus point for elk or deer license or permit.

- **Landowner Sponsored Nonresident Deer Combination License:** Two thousand Nonresident Deer Combination Licenses are set aside for deer hunters sponsored by resident Montana landowners who own 640 contiguous acres or more of land to hunt deer only on the sponsor’s deeded land.
- ▶ **Contact:** FWP Licensing Bureau, 406-444-2950, or regional FWP office



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### FWP REGIONAL OFFICES

- ▶ Northwest-Kalispell
- ▶ West-central-Missoula
- ▶ Southwest-Bozeman
- ▶ North-central-Great Falls
- ▶ South-central-Billings
- ▶ Northeast-Glasgow
- ▶ Southeast-Miles City
- ▶ Headquarters-Helena

Region 1.....	(406) 752-5501
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Region 3.....	(406) 577-7900
Region 4.....	(406) 454-5840
Region 5.....	(406) 247-2940
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