

How we unite

In my last “Our Point of View” column (November–December 2018), I wrote about how Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks exists to protect the integrity of the Montana outdoor experience—camping, hunting, hiking, fishing, mountain biking, backpacking, boating, and other nature-based recreation. I explained that, at FWP, the word “integrity” encompasses healthy habitat, sound science, and the personal honor and professionalism of the biologists, state park crews, game wardens, and those behind the scenes who help manage and conserve the state’s fish, wildlife, and state parks.

Now I want to explain how and why FWP unites people outside

questions, and state their opinions. We conduct public surveys, where we ask people what they think about elk population levels, grizzly conflicts, walleye management, and other issues, then combine that input to help guide our work.

We bring people together through our hunter, bowhunter, fishing, grizzly awareness, and Becoming an Outdoors-Woman education programs. Across Montana, we’ve built a “community of knowledge” through public information and outreach work, such as press releases, “FWP Outdoor Report” TV episodes, the FWP website, and *Montana Outdoors*.

Through FWP programs like Habitat Montana and Future Fisheries, landowners, conservation groups, and communities come together to work with us and other public agencies to reinvigorate grasslands, acquire and enhance critical forest habitat, improve trout streams, and keep working ranches and farms intact.

When people pay camping fees at state parks or the surcharge on their light vehicle registration renewals, they’re collectively helping fund Montana’s state parks system. When they buy hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses, they join together in supporting management and conservation of fish and wildlife populations and habitat.

Many people who love Montana’s outdoors—both residents and visitors—don’t hunt or fish. But they still want to be part of the state’s conservation community and contribute to protecting the Montana outdoor experience. FWP is working with conservation groups to find additional ways for people to help fund fish and wildlife management, especially work that conserves nongame species and reduces conflicts between people and large carnivores.

The people who FWP brings together to protect the integrity of Montana’s outdoors often hold widely divergent views. We respect that. But again and again we find that those who care about Montana’s natural world share deeply held values: healthy habitat, clean water, abundant wildlife, and ample outdoor recreation opportunities.

Montanans have always stood side by side to maintain the state’s high quality of life, based on a healthy, economically sustainable, and accessible natural environment. At FWP, we’re proud to bring people together to help us preserve this outdoors-based lifestyle, one that most people in this country can only dream of living.

—Martha Williams, Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks



Projects such as conservation easements and stream restorations bring together citizens, business and community leaders, and others to help FWP protect vital fish and wildlife habitat. Shown here working on the Haskill Basin Conservation Easement are (left to right) Whitefish mayor John Muhlfeld, F.H. Stoltz Land & Lumber Company vice president and general manager Chuck Roady, and FWP wildlife habitat biologist Alan Wood.

the agency to help us do that work.

Montana is a big state with extensive wildlife habitat, trails, fishing waters, and state parks. FWP can’t manage all those resources on its own. We need help—from landowners, communities, conservation groups, businesses, and individuals.

FWP brings people together to discuss, debate, fund, and learn about outdoor resources and experiences. We hold inclusive processes like season-setting meetings where people can gather, ask