



To steward the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources for the public, now and into the future.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

ANNUAL PLAN

FY2025

Since 1901, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has served the public by stewarding resources that are central to our identity as Montanans. The department accomplishes this stewardship by balancing various and often competing interests, through inclusion of all points of view, with a foundation of scientific integrity, and a close eye to the values we all share for wildlife and outdoor recreation.

Administrative Regions

For administrative purposes, FWP splits the state into seven geographic regions. These regions have offices in Kalispell, Missoula, Bozeman, Great Falls, Glasgow, Miles City, and Billings. Additionally, the regions contain other administrative offices around the state to provide convenience for the public. Each region is led by a regional supervisor and program managers who manage the area's fish, wildlife, and parks resources. Regional supervisors report to the chief of operations in Helena and provide a key conduit for feedback from the public around the state. Each region has a citizen advisory committee, which generally meets quarterly to discuss issues facing the department and those of interest to FWP's customers. Regional supervisors are members of the FWP statewide leadership team and work closely with division administrators to implement programs.

Operations and Financial Services

The Operations and Financial Services Division is responsible for centralized business functions. The division includes design and construction, accounting, purchasing, asset/property management, internal audit support, federal aid administration, and the licensing of all hunters, anglers, and recreational users. It also includes FWP's administrative staff, who are responsible for selling hunting and fishing licenses, coordinating administrative needs, and responding to inquiries from the public.

Wildlife

The Wildlife Division is responsible for the conservation and management of more than 600 Montana birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians and their habitats—legislatively categorized as game animal, nongame wildlife, migratory game bird, upland game bird, furbearers, and threatened and endangered species. The work of the division falls within three major themes: species management (game and nongame), habitat conservation, and wildlife conflict management.

Activities include coordinating, developing, and maintaining management plans; conducting wildlife research activities; monitoring wildlife populations and recommending season structures; conserving and enhancing wildlife habitat; working with landowners; and addressing wildlife conflict through game damage activities and public safety efforts.

Technology Services

The Technology Services Division (TSD) is responsible for technology infrastructure and website frameworks; software development; technology-related oversight and guidance to ensure business alignment; collection, analysis, and dissemination of biological and geographical information via GIS technology; and user support, to ensure consistent and effective use of technology expenditures, products, and services. TSD uses industry best practices, well-trained staff, and in-depth understanding of the agency's business processes to deliver solutions in the most cost-effective and efficient manner possible. FWP's technology program is designed with the state's enterprise principles, sustainable and achievable service levels, and the department's mission in mind.

Parks and Outdoor Recreation

The Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division is responsible for visitor use, recreation management, maintenance, and heritage preservation at state parks, fishing access sites, and wildlife management areas; river recreation management; enhancing access for hunting, fishing, and other types of recreation on public and private lands; shooting range development; and administration of trail and shooting range grant programs. Primary objectives include keeping sites and access open, clean, and safe; balancing recreational opportunity with conservation and preservation of resources; providing landowners with the help needed to manage public use on their lands; and enhancing local recreation opportunities and infrastructure.

Enforcement

The Enforcement Division is responsible for ensuring compliance with state laws and department and commission regulations aimed at the conservation and protection of game animals, fur-bearing animals, fish, game birds, and other wildlife species. It engages in complex inter- and intrastate fish and wildlife investigations targeting the unlawful taking and unlawful possession of these resources. It enforces the laws and regulations on lands and waters under the jurisdiction of FWP, such as state parks, fishing access sites, and wildlife management areas, as well as those pertaining to outfitters/guides, boating, snowmobiling, off-highway vehicle safety and registration, and aquatic invasive species (AIS) rules and regulations. Other duties include patrol of and enforcement on state school trust lands, block management area law enforcement patrols, stream access enforcement, commercial wildlife permitting, hunter education, game damage response, urban wildlife conflict, and assisting other law enforcement agencies.

Communication and Education

FWP's Communication and Education Division, through its Helena office and seven regional communication and education program managers, is responsible for FWP's information and education efforts.

Communication and Education Division staff manage FWP's website, social media platforms, and targeted email delivery systems. They produce and distribute electronic, print, audio, and visual media materials; promote department products, programs, and customer opportunities through targeted marketing campaigns; produce Montana Outdoors magazine; coordinate hunter, bowhunter, boat education and safety, and the Becoming an Outdoor Woman programs; coordinate and deliver outdoor recreation and conservation education related to archery, angling, aquatic species, and other programs in schools and with partner organizations around the state; coordinate activities at the Montana WILD Education Center, including hosting external groups who use the meeting facilities, hosting educational programs and tours for students statewide, and providing high-quality conservation education displays.

Montana Wild staff also operate FWP's wild animal rehabilitation center, with particular attention to raptors, working with numerous volunteers and conducting a variety of educational programs.

Fisheries

The Fisheries Division manages the state's fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems to meet the public's demand for recreational opportunities and stewardship of aquatic wildlife. Montana's reputation for providing excellent fishing continues to make it a national and international angling destination. The division has a strong focus on habitat protection and enhancement to maintain quality wild and sport fish angling opportunities and protection and enhancement of native species. Quality hatchery-raised fish are raised to provide a diversity of angling opportunities where natural reproduction alone cannot sustain a fishery. Central to the division are the AIS and Fish Health programs, where the focus is prevention of the spread of existing AIS or pathogens.

Legal Unit


The Legal Unit provides legal services and representation to the department, the Fish and Wildlife Commission, and the Parks and Recreation Board. The unit litigates civil cases in state and federal court; writes and reviews rules, regulations, and legislation; supports the department's land transactions and water rights; assists in human resource matters; engages with the Montana Environmental Protection Act (MEPA) processes; reviews fulfillment of public record requests; and provides legal advice and policy support to the Director's Office. The unit is made up of six attorneys and two paralegals, each of which is assigned to support a region (or regions) as well as maintain areas of expertise. The unit's mission is "to provide customer service and inclusive collaboration while exercising independent judgment, competence, and integrity.


Land and Water Unit


The Lands Program provides services for transactions involving fish and wildlife habitat, parks, fishing access sites, public access rights, and other real property interests; conducts land exchanges, grants of right-of-way and property disposals; provides stewardship of FWP's conservation easements; provides administration of leases and property tax payment programs; provides information services for FWP's land interests and archival management of the department's real estate records; and oversees production of maps and reports for the public, legislature, and other interested parties.

The Water Resources Program works to protect, restore, and enhance water flow in streams and water levels in lakes and reservoirs to support fish, wildlife, and recreational resources, and to coordinate activities related to these resources in water development projects and water allocation proceedings. Tools employed include water leasing, acquiring, and holding water rights and reservations, participating in statewide water rights adjudication, and providing information about Montana's water resources to other governmental agencies and the public.

 Strategic Outcome #1	Improve citizen services through strengthening community partnerships	
	<p>Local grassroots relationships are integral to conservation and support sustainability of fish, wildlife, parks, and recreation resources. Partnerships will be strengthened by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing proactive local community engagement and direct customer communication/outreach • Expanding efforts to increase awareness of the unique services provided to communities • Identifying and prioritizing local cooperative projects 	
	Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold between 1 and 5 informational seminars for SPA124 and 310 Permitting partnership from December 2024 to May 2025. • Complete Fish Creek recreation strategy and initiate implementation of Phase 1 of the plan by December 2024. • Finalize site plans including location, design, and budget for a minimum to two shooting ranges

 Strategic Outcome #2	Accountability in stewarding the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources for the public, now and into the future.	
	<p>Credibility is essential when it comes to accountability. Credibility will be increased by delivering timely well-informed products (regulations, management plans) to the public, implementing reliable processes that are supported by modern technology, and focusing on continuous improvement.</p>	
	Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver fishing regulation package to printer by Jan. 15, 2025, to ensure timely distribution to consumers. • Complete draft mule deer management plan, accompanying MEPA analysis, and decision notice by the end of calendar year 2025. • Kick-off the transition to the new Explore MT system with a database refactoring to be completed by Spring 2025. • Improve hunter/bow hunter education program delivery by certifying and training 40 new instructors by Feb 1, 2025 and expanding field day offerings to accommodate 100% of online students by Oct. 1, 2025. • Recalibrate the Yellowstone River fisheries by generating publicly accepted, consumable and enforceable paddlefish and pallid sturgeon regulations that sustain and help the species thrive in the Yellowstone River with measurable process stability by 2026.

 Strategic Outcome #3	Protect Montana way of life by making Montana friendlier to recreation	
	Making Montana friendlier to recreation can be achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing landowner relationships through increasing support efforts by FWP staff • Promoting the suite of access options available to landowners to attract new landowners/access • Elevate FWP’s commitment to recreation through public engagement • Continually seek opportunities to expand recreation opportunities 	
	Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously improve regional access programs by maintaining participants and acreage, properly training staff, having zero empty sign-in boxes, responding to landowner needs within 24 hours, providing effective signage all with a goal of +85% customer satisfaction. • Add a new region 4 state park to FWP’s state park offerings by the close of 2024. • Delivery of a consensus driven set of recommendations from the River Recreation Advisory Committee to FWP’s Director’s Office by Dec. 15, 2024.

 Strategic Outcome #4	Improve workforce by improving culture	
	Improving agency culture is achieved through commitment from leadership and staff to work together to make “A Better FWP” as demonstrated by the FWP’s culture work group.	
	Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work group will establish key goals that will drive an agency action plan by December 2024. • Solicit staff input to create initiatives that support the established goals and inform the action plan by Summer 2025