

# WHAT IS A HABITAT CONSERVATION LEASE?

A Habitat Conservation Lease is a voluntary, incentive-based agreement between FWP and private landowners in which the landowner commits to specific land management practices that protect priority wildlife habitat. In turn, FWP pays landowners a one-time per-acre fee. These agreements have a term length of 30 or 40 years.

# WHAT LAND USES ARE ALLOWED?

FWP recognizes traditional ranching operations have retained vast tracts of native prairie habitat in the state. Livestock grazing and related management activities are not affected by the conservation lease agreements. Haying and farming activities, operating within existing hay and cropland units that make up 25% or less of lease acreage, can be enrolled.\*

To learn more about the program and download an application, visit the HCL website.

<https://fwp.mt.gov/habitatlease>

# HABITAT CONSERVATION LEASE PROGRAM



## CONTACT YOUR REGIONAL HABITAT SPECIALIST

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*Partnerships to Protect Wildlife Habitat*

# The Habitat Conservation Lease Program could help conserve up to **500,000** acres in the next five years.

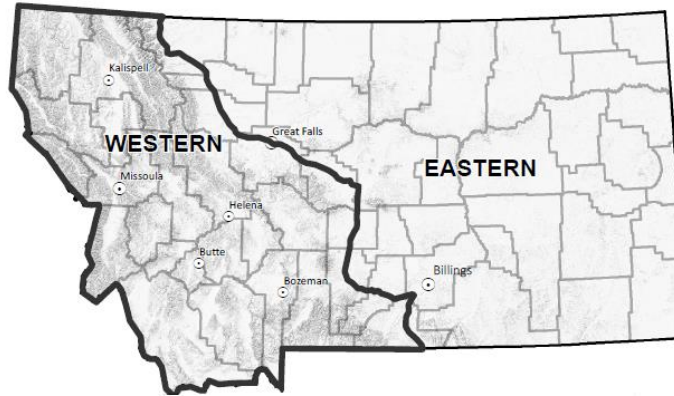
## PRESERVING PRAIRIE HABITATS

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is offering a lease program designed to help private landowners maintain working rangelands that also serve as priority habitat for wildlife. This program focuses on protecting sagebrush grasslands, mixed-grass prairie, and glaciated prairie-pothole wetland habitats from conversion.

Montana's vibrant wildlife habitats are among the state's greatest assets, with working ranches playing a crucial role in their long-term conservation. FWP's incentive program aims to retain substantial blocks of these high priority prairie habitats while allowing landowners to continue their operations. The program supports wildlife species such as sage-grouse, grassland songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds, and others that benefit from these ecosystems.

## WHAT'S THE PAY OUT?

The lease payments are one-time fixed per acre and calculated as a percentage of the fee simple value. These rates are averaged separately for the eastern and western portions of Montana.



Area and Habitat	30 Year	40 Year
Eastern Rangeland	\$85	\$119
Eastern Major River Riparian Floodplain	\$349	\$489
Western Rangeland	\$218	\$305
Western Major River Riparian Floodplain	\$729	\$1021

\*Where farmed fields are intermingled with priority native habitats, FWP would pay 50% and 70% of the above per acre value for cropland or hay land, respectively.

## WHERE DOES FUNDING COME FROM?

Funding for the conservation lease program includes earmarked Habitat Montana funds, Pittman- Robertson funds and other sources dedicated to specific habitat types (e.g., wetlands). The Habitat Montana funds will be matched by federal funds at a 25/75 ratio, meaning every dollar of Habitat Montana money would be matched by \$3 of federal money.

## WHAT ABOUT PUBLIC ACCESS?

Habitat conservation leases require wildlife-related public access including hunting and wildlife-viewing, which the landowner retains the right to control. The landowner can specify how the public would acquire permission for accessing enrolled property. Habitat leases and other public access opportunities would be posted on-line, including through FWP's Hunt Planner.