



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

# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

ANNUAL PLAN

FY2024

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.

  <b>Strategic Outcome</b>  <b>#1</b>	<b>Improve citizen services through strengthening agricultural partnerships</b>	
	<p>Agricultural efforts 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"> <li>• Increasing proactive local Ag community engagement and landowner communication/outreach</li> <li>• Expanding efforts to engage Ag leaders/organizations</li> <li>• Identifying and prioritizing cooperative projects</li> </ul>	
	<b>Key Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify fall/winter 2023 events for staff to attend to increase engagement.</li> <li>• Establish “constituent” meetings during legislative interim – meet regularly in conjunction with EQC through 2025 biennium.</li> <li>• Create a “working landscape” definition and scope 2-3 sites for potential pilot projects during calendar year 2024.</li> </ul>

  <b>Strategic Outcome</b>  <b>#2</b>	<b>Accountability in stewarding the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources for the public, now and into the future.</b>	
	<p>Credibility is essential when it comes to accountability. Credibility will be increased by reducing unspent budget authority by providing quality offerings, implementing reliable processes that are supported by modern technology, trust building through transparency, and telling FWP’s story.</p>	
	<b>Key Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of projects completed and prior years’ funding obligated.</li> <li>• Link regulations database to the Automated Licensing System for quotas for new license year, March 2024.</li> <li>• Stand-up 1-2 information dashboards during calendar year 2024.</li> <li>• Percent increase of opportunities for public input.</li> <li>• Onboard Strategic Communications Manager to tell FWP’s story during FY2024.</li> </ul>

 <p>Strategic Outcome</p> <p>#3</p>	<p><b>Protect MT way of life by making MT friendlier to recreation</b></p>	
	<p><b>Making MT friendlier to recreation can be achieved through:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing landowner relationships where there are known resource issues</li> <li>• Promoting the suite of access options available to landowners to attract new landowners/access</li> <li>• Engaging technology to identify access opportunities</li> <li>• Establishing/maintaining state authority over wildlife</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Key Measures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent increase in number of new landowner enrollments into access programs.</li> <li>• Design landowner catalog to showcase suite of access options by December 2023.</li> <li>• Establish a base tool that staff, public, and partners can use in planning for areas to focus on access efforts during FY2024.</li> <li>• Establish grizzly bear ARM during FY2024.</li> </ul>

 <p>Strategic Outcome</p> <p>#4</p>	<p><b>Improve workforce by improving culture</b></p>	
	<p><b>Training—Provide professional effectiveness and leadership training by leveraging the Department of Administration enterprise offerings and supplement with internal training where needed.</b></p> <p><b>Engagement—Support communication within the agency with a focus on regions to headquarters and director’s office to all staff</b></p> <p><b>Wellness—Identify successes/needs for employee support (wellness) and provide targeted solutions.</b></p>	
	<p><b>Key Measures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer two supervisory trainings for new and existing supervisors during FY2024.</li> <li>• Percent increase of Director’s Office attendance at regional/division wide all staff meetings during FY2024.</li> <li>• Onboard consultant and complete agencywide cultural survey by December 2023.</li> </ul>

