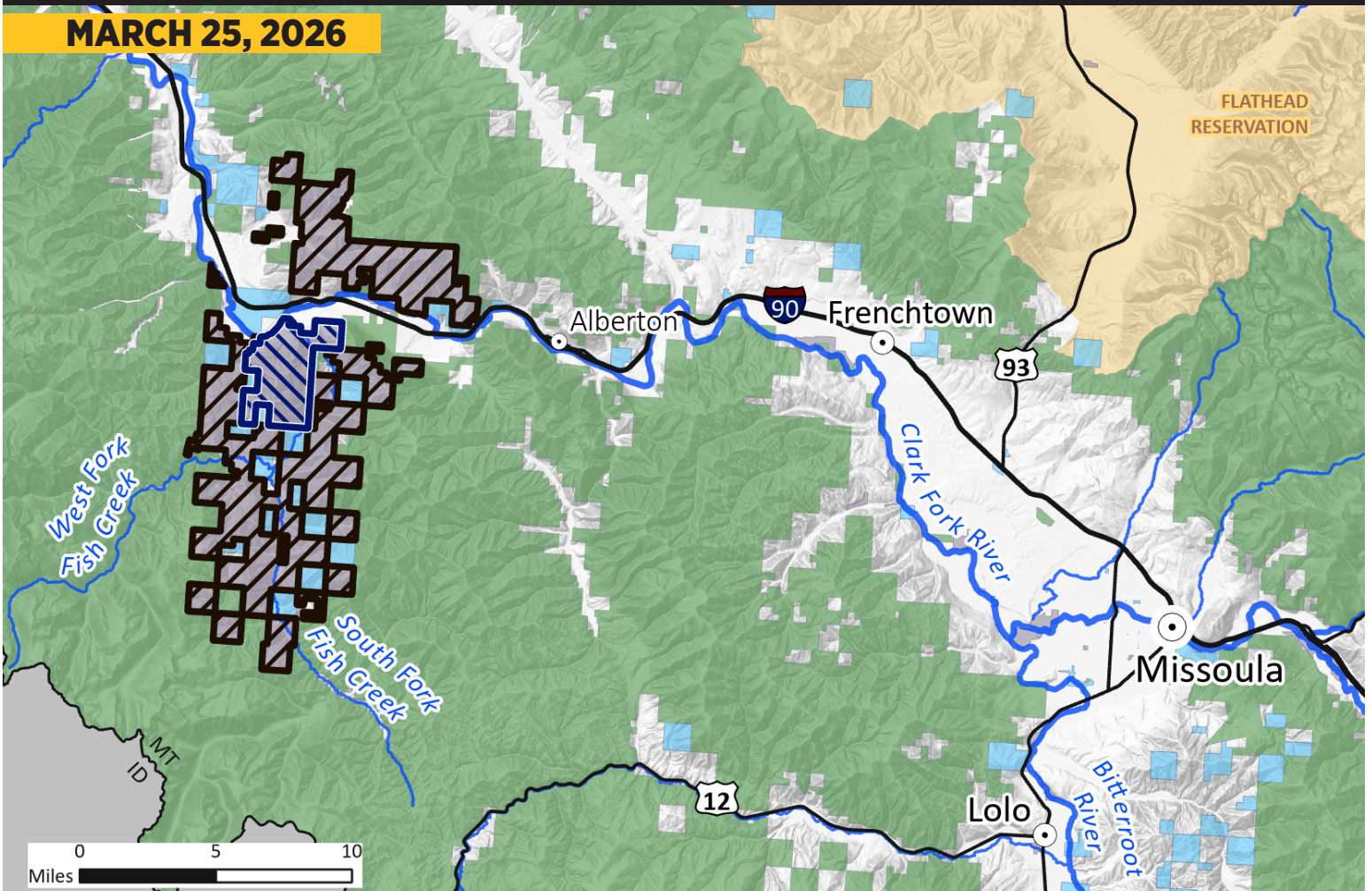


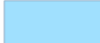





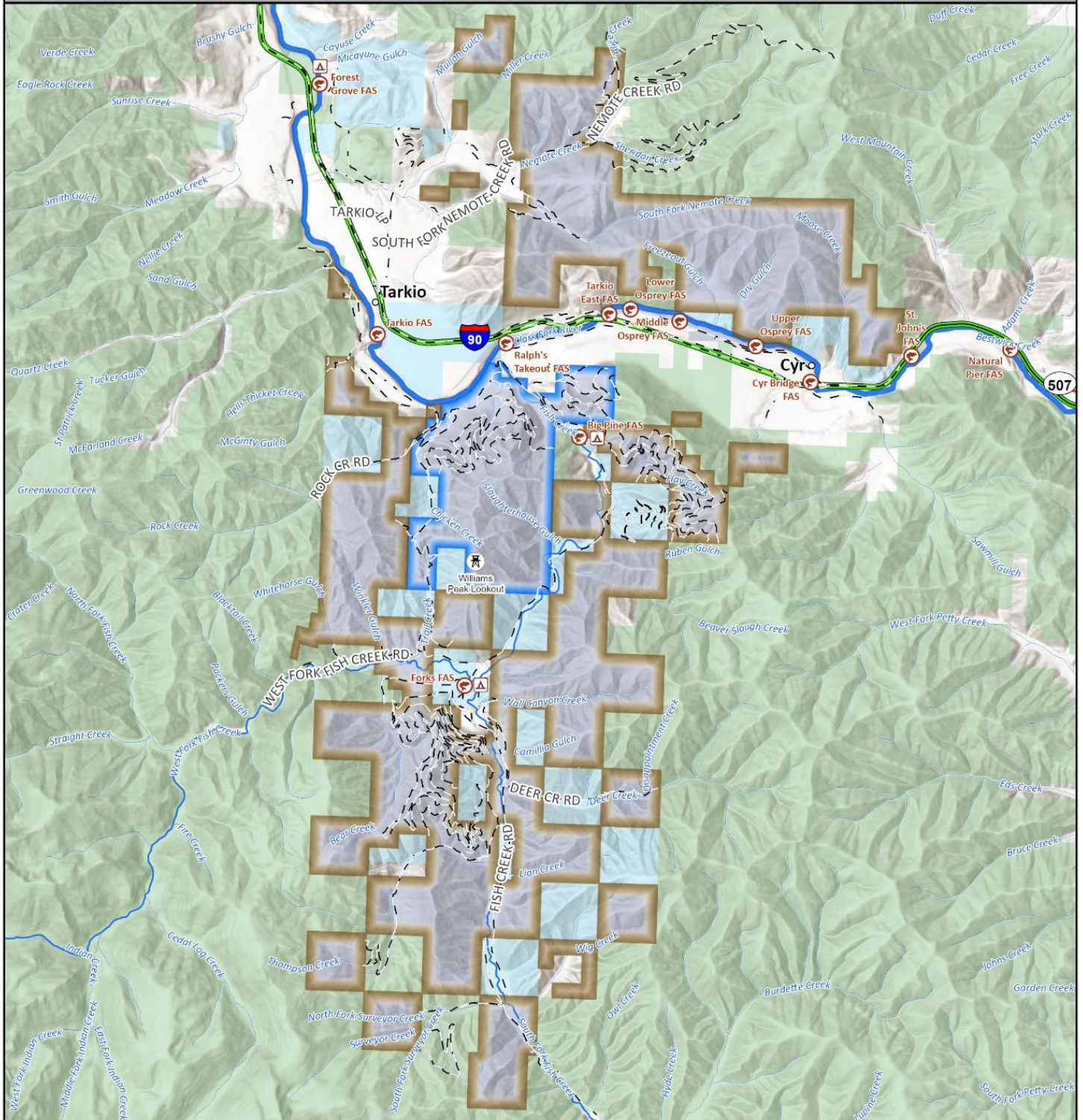


FISH CREEK COMPLEX RECREATION STRATEGY UPDATE for Environmental Quality Council

MARCH 25, 2026



- | | | |
|--|--|--|
|  Fish Creek State Park |  US Forest Service |  Montana State Trust Land |
|  Fish Creek WMA |  Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks |  Tribal Lands |



- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| — — OPEN Roads Year-Round | US Forest Service | FWP Fishing Access Site |
| Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area | MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks | Campground |
| Fish Creek State Park | State Trust Lands | Williams Peak Outlook |
| | Other State Lands | |

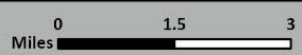


Area of Interest



Map Produced by: Kara Clarke - Regional Access Program
9/26/2024

Service Layer Credits: World Hillshade: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS If this credit box is removed, credits for service layers will be shown on the map frame. Credits should be in the disclaimer/credit area in the footer of the page.



RECREATION STRATEGY

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

published the Fish Creek Complex Recreation Strategy in September 2024. The strategy was shaped by public input, interagency coordination, and site-specific analysis. It provides a 10-year roadmap to balance recreational access, habitat protection, and operational capacity across the Fish Creek Complex including the state park, wildlife management area, two fishing access sites, and surrounding public lands. The strategy lists management directives for camping, Williams Peak Lookout, angling, motorized and nonmotorized recreational opportunities, signs, accessibility, regulations, and safety and enforcement. This update describes implementation efforts of the Recreation Strategy.





IMPLEMENTATION

1

FISH CREEK COLLABORATIVE TRAIL PLANNING EFFORT

Implements Motorized and Nonmotorized Management Directives from the Recreation Strategy

Given the diverse stakeholder interests in trails for the Fish Creek Complex, FWP convened a citizen advisory group called the Fish Creek Collaborative (FCC). The group was tasked with making recommendations for a multi-use trails plan that supports diverse recreational uses while protecting fish and wildlife habitat and minimizing user conflict.



FISH CREEK COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

Ben Deeble
Missoula, MT

John Kittelson
Missoula, MT

Hayley Newman
Missoula, MT

John Stegmaier
Missoula, MT

Jane Whetzel
Alberton, MT

Ken Brown
Missoula, MT

Jerry Hatcher
St. Regis, MT

Paige Boyer
Stevensville, MT

Jim Merifield
Missoula, MT

Sharon Sweeney
Huson, MT

ADVISORY TEAM MEMBERS

Amy Helena and Sierra Farmer
DNRC REPRESENTATIVES
Missoula, MT

Jody Loomis
STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD REPRESENTATIVE
Helena, MT

Christopher Gauger and Laura Johnson
USFS REPRESENTATIVES
Huson, MT

Willy Peck
COUNTY REPRESENTATIVE
St. Regis, MT

Denley Loge
STATE LEGISLATURE REPRESENTATIVE
St. Regis, MT

2025

JULY

FWP appointed members to serve on the **FCC**. Members were a diverse group of local citizens and stakeholders representing both motorized and nonmotorized recreation use. An **advisory team** of local, state, and federal officials provided technical support.

AUGUST

FWP contracted a meeting facilitator and trail mapping consultant. The consultant inventoried and mapped 300 miles of trails across the state park and wildlife management area. The result was a GIS database with locations and conditions of trails organized by trail segment.

SEPTEMBER

FWP hosted a meet and greet for FCC members to get to know each other and understand their charge.

OCTOBER

The FCC met at the Fish Creek Complex to tour points of interest. Also, the contracted facilitator hosted the first FCC workshop with the following agenda:

- **Identify goals**
- **Review Recreation Strategy**
- **Present trail inventory**
- **Discuss desired conditions and experiences**
- **Start mapping known and potential trails**

The public was invited to watch the two workshops live or via recording and submit written comments through the project webpage.

NOVEMBER

The contracted facilitator hosted the second workshop with the following agenda:

- **Share top three ideas (from each member)**
- **Identify areas of alignment**
- **Discuss next steps**

DECEMBER

The facilitator and mapping consultant drafted the FCC's recommendations. The FCC recommendations reflect the independent input of a citizen advisory group and have not been edited or adopted by FWP.

2026

JANUARY-FEBRUARY

The facilitator and mapping consultant finalized the FCC's recommendations and submitted them to FWP for further public comment.

MARCH

FWP posted the FCC recommendations for public comment on March 17.

NEXT STEPS:

- **Public Comment:** The public comment period will be open through April 17. Instructions for commenting are at fwp.mt.gov/stateparks/fish-creek.
- **Public Comment Summary:** FWP will summarize public comments received on the FCC recommendations.
- **Department Review:** FWP will develop a trail plan based on the FCC's recommendations and public comment, as well as agency policy, statute, and management objectives for the Fish Creek Complex.



3

ADDITIONAL STAFFING CAPACITY

Implements Safety Management Directive from the Recreation Strategy

FWP has established a Recreation Ranger position for the Lower Clark Fork District in Region 2, which encompasses Fish Creek State Park and WMA. This will provide for increased patrols managing camping, latrine cleaning, and minor maintenance. As a result, FWP staff will have more contact with visitors allowing for better education of the rules and regulations of the area, safety concerns, natural and cultural history of the area, responsible recreation, and leave no trace principles.

2

UPDATED KIOSKS AND SIGNS

Implements Sign Management Directive from the Recreation Strategy

In the fall of 2025, FWP installed two new kiosks on the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA). One is in the portion of the WMA located south of Interstate 90 along the main thoroughfare, FS Road 343. The second was installed in the portion of the WMA located north of Interstate 90 along FS Road 9915, one of two access roads into this portion of the WMA. Additionally, staff are designing a kiosk for the state park area known as Whitetail Flats, which is a popular dispersed camping area and serves as a de-facto trailhead.





4

FLOATER CAMERA MONITORING AND WOODY DEBRIS MONITORING

Implements Angling Experience and Fish Habitat Management

Directive from Recreation Strategy

One of the management directives in the Recreation Strategy is to provide a high-quality wade fishing experience and protect fish habitat. The Recreation Strategy calls for assessing public use as there is an increasing interest in floating and alteration of woody debris in Fish Creek, which is important habitat for fish species including bull trout. In response to the Strategy, staff identified and monitored four large woody debris accumulations to monitor throughout the 2025 season. Staff have also implemented a camera monitoring program to capture the amount of floater use on Fish Creek. Staff installed three trail cameras along the mainstem of Fish Creek above Big Pine FAS, below Big Pine FAS, and above the entrance to Fish Creek Gorge. The data collected from this monitoring program is currently being analyzed by staff.



5

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Required to Implement All Directives from the Recreation Strategy

FWP has continued to coordinate with the Lolo National Forest and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). Both FWP and DNRC are coordinating with the Lolo National Forest as cooperating agencies through the Forest Plan Amendment. In the summer of 2025, DNRC and FWP met to discuss coordination on dispersed campsites and protection of the riparian area from campsite creep. As a result, DNRC constructed barriers at two popular dispersed camping areas to prevent members of the public from driving onto streambanks while still maintaining camping opportunities at both sites. Both the Lolo National Forest and DNRC participated in the Fish Creek Collaborative Trail Planning Effort as members of an advisory team.





SCAN TO VISIT
Fish Creek Recreation Planning

fwp.mt.gov/conservation/fish-creek-watershed-recreation-planning

