



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

## Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

ANNUAL PLAN (HB-190)

FY2026

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 staff other administrative offices around the state to provide convenience for the public and FWP staff. The regions are all led by a regional supervisor and program managers who represent divisional interests within the regions. 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 constituents. Regional supervisors are members of FWP statewide leadership team and work closely with division administrators.

### 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, 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 programs to include 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 education programs and tours for students statewide, and providing high-quality conservation education displays.

Staff also operate FWP's wild animal rehabilitation center, with particular attention to raptors, working with numerous volunteers and conducting a variety of education 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 fish angling opportunities and protection and enhancement of native species. Quality hatchery-raised fish are used to provide a diversity of angling opportunities where wild fish alone cannot sustain the fisheries. Central to the division are the AIS and Fish Health programs where the focus is prevention and 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 particular areas of expertise. The unit's mission is "to provide customer service and inclusive collaboration while exercising independent judgment, competence, and integrity.

## Lands and Water Unit

The Lands Program provides services for transactions involving fish and wildlife habitat, park and recreation lands, 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 the 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 recreation 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 governmental resource agencies and the public.



Strategic  
Outcome  
#1

## Improve citizen services through strengthening community partnerships

**Use 7.35 additional recreation technicians to improve citizen service at our busiest sites with the greatest need for staffing.**

- Increase recreation technician staffing coverage at sites (to cover daily hours and expanding shoulder seasons).
- Reduce conflicts at sites (e.g., parking).

### Key Measures

- Identify the busiest sites with the greatest need for additional recreation technician capacity by end of 2025.
- Hire and train 7.35 additional recreation technician staff by start of the 2026 season.
- Report on visitor satisfaction at the identified sites at the end of each of the 2026 and 2027 seasons using a combination of manager observations and surveys (e.g., campsite reservation surveys, comment cards).
- Report on conflicts at the identified sites at the end of each of the 2026 and 2027 seasons using a combination of manager observations and incident reporting logs.





Strategic  
Outcome  
#2A

**Accountability in stewarding the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources for the public, now and into the future.**

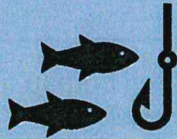
**Expand fish and wildlife research efforts for the agency through additional staff resources.**

- **Increase scientific capacity, accountability, rigor, and output to inform FWP, Commission, Board, and legislative decisions and policies.**
- **Provide scientific information directly to decision makers and decision-making processes.**

**Key  
Measures**

- By March of FY26, define, classify and fill the research bureau chief, fisheries research biologist, fisheries disease ecologist, wildlife conservation geneticist, and genetics lab technician positions.
- By the end of FY26, establish the new FWP wildlife genetics lab and transition up to 25% of wildlife genetics analyses to the new lab to provide a closer connection to wildlife management decisions in Montana, with an initial focus on high-profile monitoring and management programs (e.g., large carnivores, proposed or listed species).
- By the end of FY26, establish and implement direction for internal fisheries research and disease-related capacity to directly inform fisheries management issues and decisions.
- By the end of FY26, implement standardized process to prioritize management-oriented research needs in fisheries, wildlife, and parks & outdoor recreation divisions.
- By the end of FY26, implement standardized business oversight processes for research projects in fisheries, wildlife, and parks & outdoor recreation divisions.





## Strategic Outcome #2B

### Accountability in stewarding the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources for the public, now and into the future.

#### Expand nongame wildlife and habitat conservation to maintain agency authority to manage at-risk species.

- Increase survey and inventory capacity, strategic planning, outreach and habitat enhancement to advance nongame wildlife conservation.
- Improve conservation outcomes for nongame species of greatest conservation need.

#### Key Measures

- By October of FY26, complete 2025 revision of the Montana State Wildlife Action Plan (identifies species and habitats of greatest conservation need and recommended actions to address threats) and submit to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- By March of FY26, define, classify, and fill the nongame wildlife habitat biologist, nongame wildlife outreach coordinator, and 3 regional wildlife technician positions.
- Implement surveys for species of greatest conservation need to inform management actions and produce robust data for commenting on ESA listing proposals.
- By the end of FY26, establish a nongame wildlife habitat enhancement program. Program development will identify conservation objectives, priority habitats, and establish a process for project review.
- Collaborate with the Parks & Outdoor Recreation and Communication-Education Divisions to create new outreach messaging and education materials that will increase public support for nongame wildlife and improve conservation outcomes for species and habitats of greatest conservation need.
- By May of FY26 secure 5 interns to assist with implementation of the nongame program while gaining practical knowledge about FWP and wildlife management.



Strategic  
Outcome  
**#4**

**Modernize and centralize Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' digital infrastructure to deliver efficient, secure, and user-friendly technology services statewide.**

- Deploy an integrated, automated contract management system for all land access programs.
- Centralize volunteer management with unified background check and documentation workflows.
- Transition law enforcement body camera video management to a smartphone-enabled, cloud-based centralized solution.

**Key  
Measures**

- Introduce and implement three new technology systems by FY27.
- Track and manage volunteers in a centralized system for one program and one region.
- Manage all Elk Hunting Access agreements in a contract management system.
- 90% of body camera videos are uploaded to the central system within 48 hours of recording, starting from project go-live date.





Strategic  
Outcome  
**#3A**

## Protecting the Montana way of Life: Enhancing access to hunting and fishing.

Hire and train 7 new warden positions approved during the 2025 legislative session

- Improve customer service, accountability, and efficiency.
- Practice fiscal responsibility.
- Continue to prioritize landowner relationships.

### Key Measures

- Hire 7 new warden FTE before January 1, 2026
- Use data to strategically place new FTE in key positions to be more efficient
- Practice fiscal responsibility by reducing miles on fleet vehicles due to the 7 new FTE strategically placed
- 1 New access opportunity (hunting, fishing, PALA, easement, etc) in each of the 7 new FTE areas



Strategic  
Outcome  
**#3B**

## Protecting the Montana way of life: Enhancing access to hunting and fishing.

Enhance basic and advanced hunter/bowhunter education programs.

- Enhance training for hunter, bowhunter and trapper education instructors, through increased staff support.
- Provide more class evaluation for all programs.

### Key Measures

- Increase field day offerings for online students by 10% across the state.
- Increase the number of instructors who teach two or more classes per year by 50% and lead instructors by 15% through improved training.
- Increase staff evaluation of classes by 10%.
- Develop an advanced hunter education class by end of 2026.