

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS LANDOWNER PROGRAMS

With nearly 65 percent of the state's land held in private ownership, landowners are central to conserving Montana's wildlife, fish and habitats.

Block Management Program

Goal: Provide public hunting access to private lands.

Benefits: FWP offers incentives to encourage public hunting access to private land and assists landowners in managing public hunting activities on lands under their control.

Details: Incentives include compensation to offset public hunting access impacts (up to \$12,000 per cooperator), limited liability coverage, livestock loss reimbursement, and a complimentary resident Sportsmans License or, for nonresidents, a Big Game Combination License in lieu of compensation. To assist landowners with hunter management, FWP may provide tools such as maps, signs, permission slips, and in some cases, seasonal staff to patrol and assist hunters. FWP negotiates cooperative agreements with landowners to identify how hunting will be managed and what sort of hunting will be allowed.

Contact: FWP Wildlife Bureau 406.444.2602 or your regional FWP office

Access Montana Program

Goal: Improve hunting access to public lands and resolve public land access conflicts.

Benefits: FWP works with landowners to address hunting access conflicts involving state and federal lands, in some cases developing access agreements with willing landowners.

Details: FWP works with landowners, hunters, and land management agencies to attempt to resolve public land access conflicts. FWP also works with willing landowners to develop public land access agreements which may include incentives such as fencing, cattle guards, culverts, gates, signage or maps to identify land ownership boundaries, increased FWP enforcement, and in some cases, compensation.

Contact: FWP Wildlife Bureau 406.444.2602 or your regional FWP office

Montana Fishing Access Site Program

Goal: Increase public access to Montana waters.

Benefits: Landowners with suitably located lands may be compensated for providing public fishing access.

Details: Landowners with land in suitable locations may receive compensation for working with FWP to provide public fishing access. Lands may be purchased, or leased under a contractual agreement. Funds for the Fishing Access Site Program are generated by fishing license sales and through other means under Montana law. The programs aim is to acquire sites within a four-hour float distance of each other on Montana's larger rivers and to increase fishing access to smaller streams.

Contact: FWP Fisheries Division 406.444.2449 or your regional FWP office

Livestock Loss Reimbursement Program

Goal: Maintain public hunting access to private land.

Benefits: A landowner may be reimbursed for livestock killed or injured as a result of allowing public hunting on lands under the landowner's control.

Details: Eligible landowners who suffer livestock loss or injury as a result of allowing public hunting on private property during legal hunting seasons may be reimbursed for their losses, depending upon the circumstances.

Contact: FWP Field Services 406.444.2602 or your regional FWP office

Future Fisheries Improvement Program

Goal: Improve habitat for wild and native fish.

Benefits: FWP assists landowners in planning and financing projects that improve native and wild fish habitat.

Details: FWP biologists, landowners and other partners develop project proposals that, for example, restore stream banks and natural stream channels, improve stream flow, prevent loss of fish into diversions, improve fish passage, or enhance fish spawning. Projects demonstrate that healthy streams can be compatible with agricultural and livestock operations. About \$650,000 is available annually to fund these projects. Landowners and other project partners usually share in the project costs. A 14-member citizen panel recommends project proposals to the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission for final approval twice a year.

Contact: FWP Field Services 406.444.2602 or your regional FWP office

Montana Wetlands Legacy Program

Goal: Create and protect wetlands.

Benefits: Through the Wetlands Legacy Program, FWP helps link landowners who own wetlands and riparian areas with the experts who know how to preserve them and with potential project funding sources.

Details: Working with FWP and the Wetlands Legacy Program, landowners may develop projects to protect, conserve and develop wetlands on their property. The projects can increase the land's value, while creating healthy, functional wetlands. Landowners may also receive direct funding for the project, materials or construction work, or technical assistance in identifying funding sources, depending on the situation. The program is a partnership between FWP and national, state, and local conservation organizations and agencies, and interested landowners and land managers.

Contact: FWP Montana Wetlands Legacy Coordinator 406.994.7889 or your regional FWP office

Game Damage Program

Goal: Assist landowners experiencing game damage.

Benefits: FWP assists landowners in preventing or reducing damage caused to crops or property by game animals.

Details: Landowners may be eligible for game damage assistance if they allow public hunting during established hunting seasons. Assistance may include hazing, repellents, temporary or permanent stockyard fencing, damage hunts, kill permits, or supplemental game damage licenses. Landowners may report game damage to the local game warden, FWP biologist or FWP regional office.

Contact: FWP Field Services 406.444.2602 or your regional FWP office

Habitat Montana Program

Goal: Preserve and restore important habitat for fish and wildlife.

Benefits: FWP offers incentives to landowners to conserve habitat on private land, including, in some cases, the purchase of conservation easements.

Details: Landowners interested in using a conservation easement to protect traditional farm or ranch land, and preserve natural resources such as wildlife habitat, may partner with FWP. A variety of funding sources enable FWP to protect seriously threatened habitats and provide recreational opportunities through purchased or donated conservation easements and purchases of land. Annually, about \$4 million from several sources goes to fund projects selected by the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission from among those recommended by the FWP staff. In addition to monetary compensation, landowners may realize tax benefits from a conservation easement; gain assistance with pursuing habitat-friendly agricultural practices; and ensure the protection of scenic and open spaces.

Contact: FWP Wildlife Division 406.444.2612 or your regional FWP office

Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program

Goal: Increase upland game bird habitat and hunting access.

Benefits: Landowners can reap the rewards of a cost-sharing program when they improve their land and make it more inviting for Montana's upland game birds. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks can work directly with landowners (and other individuals, groups and organizations) to improve private and public lands for Montana's native sharp-tailed grouse, sage grouse, and mountain grouse, as well as the state's adopted game birds, ring-necked pheasants, Hungarian Partridge, and wild turkeys.

Details: Landowners can apply to enroll in the updated cost-share program to develop, enhance, and conserve Montana's upland game bird habitats if the land in the project area remains open to reasonable public hunting. Up to 75 percent of the cost of the Landowner's Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement project can be reimbursed.

Contact: FWP Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program 406.444.2612 or your regional FWP office

Upland Game Bird Release Program

Goal: The intent of the program is to establish new pheasant and turkey populations for public hunting.

Benefits: Landowners may increase or establish pheasant and wild turkey populations on their lands.

Details: Landowners who allow some degree of public hunting on at least 100 contiguous acres may be reimbursed for raising and releasing pheasants. Or, FWP may fund the release of pheasants on suitable lands at no cost to the landowner. FWP may also release wild, free-ranging turkeys in suitable wild turkey habitat in cooperation with private landowners who agree to allow public hunting. Game bird release agreements are negotiated annually.

Contact: FWP Upland Game Bird Release Program 406.444.2612 or your regional FWP office

Special Landowner License and Permit Provisions

Goal: Recognize landowners for their role in conserving Montana’s fish and wildlife resources.

Benefits: Landowners have opportunities to receive licenses or permits, and to sponsor hunters to hunt on their deeded land.

Details: The following landowner license and permit provisions exist under state law:

- **Landowner Preference:** Fifteen percent of each hunting district quota for deer B and antelope licenses, and for deer permits is set aside for landowners owning, or contracting to purchase, 160 acres or more used primarily for agriculture and located in that hunting district. Fifteen percent of each hunting district quota for elk licenses and permits is set aside for landowners owning, or contracting to purchase, 640 or more acres of land used by elk in that hunting district.
- **Landowner Sponsor:** Two thousand nonresident Deer Combination Licenses are set aside for deer hunters sponsored by Montana landowners to hunt deer on the sponsor’s deeded land. Landowners who own 640 or more contiguous acres are eligible to sponsor hunters. Licenses are distributed equally, up to two sponsored hunters per landowner, before the remaining licenses are issued in a random drawing.

Contact: FWP Licensing Bureau 406.444.2950 or your regional FWP office

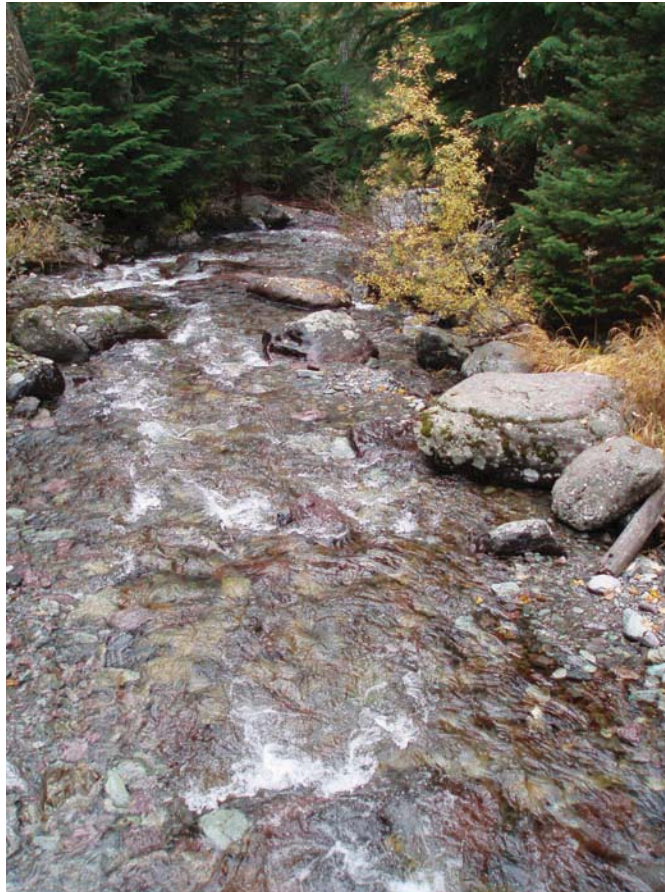


Figure 5.3: Fall on the river. *Source: Walt Curtis*