





Grizzly bear



First buck, Big Belt Mountains



Mountain lake cutthroat trout



Lake Elmo State Park



Watching grassland birds

Proud of the Past, Prepared for the Future

Looking back

What sets Montana apart from so much of the world is its wild and recreationally rich outdoors. Montana's accessible wildness, largely intact landscapes, rich historical and cultural heritage, and diverse and abundant fish and wildlife account for its identity and renowned high quality of life.

Montanans have long recognized that the fish, wildlife, and state parks resources necessary to maintain their treasured lifestyle require stewardship. So in 1901 they created an agency, known today as Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, responsible for managing and conserving those resources.

Throughout its history, FWP has faced

and overcome challenges and adjusted to changing conditions. Early on the agency worked to enforce game laws, restore elk and pronghorn populations, acquire key winter game range, and protect historical and cultural sites like Bannack. Later, the department and its conservation partners tackled threats to stream health, led the nation in wild trout management, expanded public access, protected additional historical and cultural sites including First Peoples Buffalo Jump, and restored grizzly bears, Arctic grayling, and other at-risk species. Yet the task is not done.

The case for action

FWP faces challenges that require action and commitment to continue its tradition of management excellence as stewards of the state's world-renowned fish, wildlife, and state parks resources. These challenges include:

- ▶ habitat loss and fragmentation;
- ▶ the spread of fish and wildlife diseases and invasive species;
- ▶ the effect of climate change on fish and wildlife populations and habitats;
- ▶ maintaining the conservation contribution of hunters and anglers;



Preparing elk for relocation in the 1940s

“For any organization to remain relevant and effective, it must regularly examine why it exists, where it is headed, and whether it has been fully achieving its mission.”

—Jeff Hagener, FWP Director

FOUNDATION

This document is the foundation on which FWP will turn vision into action and develop strategies and specific implementation plans for the next 10 years. FWP developed this *Vision and Guide* using employee and public input collected throughout 2015 as part of the '15 & Forward initiative. For more on the background of this document, see page 19.

- ▶ an increasingly diverse public interested in all fish and wildlife and new ways to engage with the outdoors;
- ▶ the need for better public recreational access to fish, wildlife, and state parks resources;
- ▶ a state parks program that has not met its potential;
- ▶ the rising cost of maintaining FWP facilities; and
- ▶ the need for funding to meet increasing public demands.

A guide for the years ahead

In response to these and other challenges (pages 13, 15, and 16), FWP developed this *Vision and Guide* with three main goals:

- Better understand and meet the public's values, needs, and expectations.
- Involve the public and our employees in deciding what we want to achieve in the next 10 years.

- Set a direction that we can put into action.

Responding to the public

Montanans have made it clear they want FWP to be responsive, collaborative, inclusive, and resourceful. They value our integrity, trustworthiness, and high professional standards. They urge us to lead and stand firm on public trust principles, be objective, and be consistent in policy. They want us to anticipate and address issues rather than react to them. They challenge us to offer the best and most effective public service we possibly can.

This document is a significant step toward meeting the public's expectations. It will help FWP ensure that Montana's fish, wildlife, and state parks resources are responsibly and sustainably managed and remain central to Montana's outdoor heritage, culture, and economy. ■



Family camping at Big Arm State Park, Flathead Lake





Yellowstone cutthroat trout, Shields River

What Guides FWP's Work

OUR MISSION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission and board, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks, and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations.

These eight values guide all of us in how we do business every day—with the public we serve, with the resources we manage, and in the capacity for effective management we build together.

OUR CORE VALUES

These eight values guide all of us in how we do business every day—with the public we serve, with the resources we manage, and in the capacity for effective management we build together.

■ SERVE THE PUBLIC

We strive to meet public expectations for fish, wildlife, and state parks resource conservation, access, opportunity, services, fiscal responsibility, and involvement in transparent decision-making processes.

■ EMBRACE THE PUBLIC TRUST

We recognize that Montana's fish and wildlife are the public's resources and are held in trust by the state to be managed for the benefit of present and future generations. The opportunity to enjoy and harvest these resources is allocated equitably.

■ HONOR TRADITION AND HERITAGE

We value the continued importance of hunting, fishing, trapping, and other outdoor recreation to Montana's culture and conservation ethic. We honor the cultures of native peoples and value Montana's vibrant history.

■ WORK WITH LANDOWNERS

We respect property rights and work collaboratively with landowners to manage fish, wildlife, and state parks resources and the public's opportunity to enjoy them.

■ USE SCIENCE

We use the best biological and social sciences to inform and make management decisions.

■ PROVIDE LEADERSHIP

We provide expertise and direction in fish, wildlife, and state parks outdoor recreation, resource management, and conservation to enhance Montana's outdoor heritage, economic future, and quality of life.

■ PROVIDE STEWARDSHIP

We manage for healthy and abundant fish and wildlife populations, improve and protect habitat, and protect and restore cultural and historical resources.

■ VALUE OUR WORKFORCE

We are all Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. We operate as *one* agency, which values and supports all employees. All employees work as a team; value, respect, and support each other; and exemplify high standards of ethics, professionalism, objectivity, accountability, and integrity.



Bull elk





Black bear sow and cub

THE PUBLIC'S VOICE

In the summer of 2015 a total of 306 Montanans participated in 10 public listening sessions held statewide. They were asked to answer a series of questions on their views of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Their opinions and input have helped guide the creation of this *FWP Vision and Guide*. One key question and a cross section of answers is listed here. Page 10 lists another question and a cross section of answers.

We asked: "What words or attributes should FWP represent?"





Sun Butte Overlook



Young pheasant hunter with his dad



Angler with walleye



Mountain biking on public trails

VISION AND COMMITMENTS

Our Vision:

Montana is a place where people have abundant opportunities to connect with the world-renowned fish, wildlife, and state parks resources that define our state, and where a responsive and relevant FWP has the resiliency and public support it needs to lead the way in making sure these resources remain an essential part of Montana's culture, economy, and high quality of life.

OUR COMMITMENTS

As we chart our course, we commit to the responsible stewardship of the public's fish, wildlife, and state parks resources. This means committing ourselves to serving the public, managing the resources under our responsibility, and cooperatively building capacity for effective management. Only by fulfilling the interrelated commitments listed at right can FWP meet its public responsibilities as defined in the department's mission and vision and continue its long tradition of management excellence.

PUBLIC SERVICE

- Provide diverse opportunities and services.
- Increase participation in recreational opportunities provided by fish, wildlife, and state parks resources.
- Understand and respond to public expectations and improve participation in public processes.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife populations, their habitats, and the public's opportunity to enjoy them.
- Conserve, manage, and enhance state parks as cultural and historical resources.
- Build awareness of, interest in, and support for Montana's fish, wildlife, and state parks resources.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

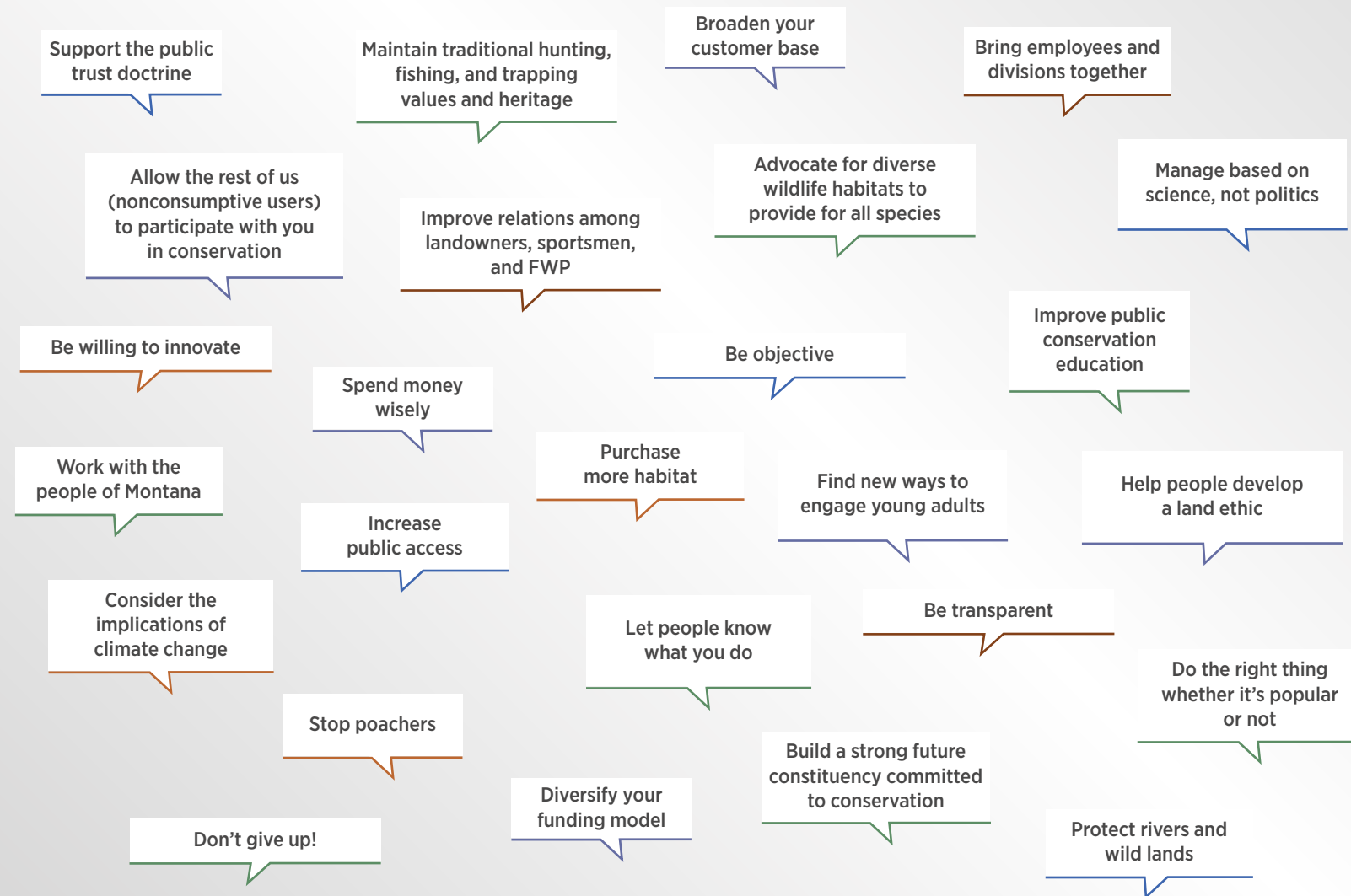
- Foster a safe work environment where people are valued, inspired, and supported.
- Accomplish more through partnerships.
- Ensure financial responsibility and sustainability.

THE FWP VISION AND GUIDE

This document sets the direction for what FWP wants to achieve over the next 10 years and provides a framework the department will use to develop more specific actions and targeted strategies.

THE PUBLIC'S VOICE

We asked: "What is the most important thing FWP should do going into the future?"





Helping a customer at the FWP regional office in Bozeman

RES-



Captivating kids at Bannack State Park

Connecting people to Montana’s unique outdoor resources and FWP in ways that inspire

Public service

Provide diverse opportunities and services.

Actions

- ▶ Provide diverse opportunities for people to connect with Montana’s outdoors to meet the needs of those who use and value the resources we manage.
- ▶ Maintain and improve FWP facilities, infrastructure, and resources to sustain quality places and experiences.
- ▶ Work with landowners to sustain and enhance access to public waters and private and public lands.
- ▶ Provide landowner services that improve habitat and mitigate conflicts.
- ▶ Help prevent and respond to wildlife threats to human safety and other conflicts.
- ▶ Enrich state parks visitor experiences by providing interpretive programs and innovative services.
- ▶ Provide timely and tailored information using a variety of effective outreach tools to communicate more meaningfully with the public.

Increase participation in recreational opportunities provided by fish, wildlife, and state parks resources.

Actions

- ▶ Retain, recruit, and reactivate participants in hunting, angling, trapping, state parks visitation, and other outdoor recreation by providing relevant and meaningful opportunities and services.
- ▶ Teach outdoor skills that help people enjoy and appreciate Montana’s fish, wildlife, and state parks resources.
- ▶ Improve access to recreational opportunities by removing barriers to participation.

Understand and respond to public expectations and improve participation in public processes.

Actions

- ▶ Expand our understanding of the interests of the public we serve and use what we learn to better meet the public’s expectations.
- ▶ Improve public involvement by providing clear access to information, notification of public processes, timely responses, and rationale for decisions.

- ▶ Provide user-friendly access to information and enhance communications with fresh and innovative strategies.
- ▶ Anticipate needs and develop technology to provide easy access to FWP services such as recreational opportunities, resource information, licensing, reservations, data, regulations, and enforcement support.
- ▶ Keep requirements and regulations as simple and streamlined as possible.

PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE OUR WORK

- We, as state employees, are accountable to the public.
- We provide meaningful opportunities for public participation and transparency in the work we do.
- We equitably allocate public opportunities to use and enjoy the limited resources we manage in trust for the public.
- We recognize the importance of hunting, angling, trapping, and other traditional outdoor recreation to Montana’s culture and conservation ethic.
- We embrace maintaining healthy and diverse fish, wildlife, and state parks resources that can accommodate increasingly diverse outdoor recreational activities and interests.
- We acknowledge that changing conditions, public expectations, and new information affect the management of fish, wildlife, and state parks resources, and we adapt our management accordingly.

The challenge, and why responding matters

Wild places, fish, wildlife, and historical and cultural treasures—and the opportunity to experience these outdoor resources—are integral to what makes Montana so valuable to its residents and guests. But the way people relate to and recreate in the outdoors is changing, due in part to changing values, urbanization, competition from other leisure activities, and rapid developments in technology. We need to recruit the next generation of hunters, trappers, and anglers. We also need to build an engaged constituency of supporters who appreciate state parks and non-game fish and wildlife as interest related to these resources increases. Demand for easily accessible information is growing due to widespread use of rapidly evolving technologies. People expect transparency, more opportunities for engagement, and greater accountability.

Providing a variety of ways for the public to connect with and access the outdoors, as well as improving the ways we serve our longtime outdoor enthusiasts, is essential to keeping people involved in and committed to the outdoor recreation and conservation legacy that supports the Montana experience.



Fish population survey on Fresno Reservoir



Releasing a common loon on a northwestern Montana lake



Welding at a state parks maintenance shop



Checking ice anglers for licenses at Georgetown Lake

Conserving and enhancing the qualities that define Montana

Resource management

Conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife populations, their habitats, and the public's opportunity to enjoy them.

Actions

- ▶ Restore, maintain, and protect native species and their habitats.
- ▶ Proactively manage fish and wildlife populations in a transparent and science-based manner.
- ▶ Manage game species in a way that provides recreational and sustainable harvest opportunities while minimizing conflicts.
- ▶ Improve and protect fish and wildlife habitat so that high-priority areas are conserved and connected at a landscape level.
- ▶ Secure sufficient public access to fish and wildlife so that populations are effectively managed and conflicts are minimized.
- ▶ Invest in and use research, monitoring, and emerging technology so that management decisions are well informed.
- ▶ Anticipate and respond to emerging issues that will affect fish and wildlife.
- ▶ Provide adequate law enforcement to conserve fish and wildlife.

Conserve, manage, and enhance state parks as cultural and historical resources.

Actions

- ▶ Provide significant, relevant, and accessible places and experiences in state parks.
- ▶ Manage for exceptional outdoor recreation, camping, and trails experiences.



Mule deer

Build awareness of, interest in, and support for Montana's fish, wildlife, and state parks resources.

Actions

- ▶ Foster interest and involvement in the resources we manage through public outreach and education so that people increasingly value these resources and the experiences they provide.
- ▶ Model and encourage responsible, safe, and ethical behavior so that resource and recreational conflicts are minimized.

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PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE OUR WORK

- We manage Montana's fish, wildlife, and state parks resources effectively by collaborating with landowners, tribes, and other partners.
- We use science and monitoring data as foundations to inform and make resource management decisions.
- We conserve native species for their ecological, recreational, and intrinsic values.
- We use regulated harvest to manage game species populations in balance with their habitats and social tolerance.
- We recommend hunting and fishing regulations to the Fish and Wildlife Commission that create opportunities for the public and enhance access to public resources.

The challenge, and why responding matters

FWP recognizes a growing number of challenges to its mission to conserve and manage Montana's unique and world-renowned fish, wildlife, and state parks resources. These challenges include invasive species; the need for public access to fish, wildlife, and state parks resources; pressure to privatize the public's fish and wildlife; illegal fish introductions; maintenance backlogs and infrastructure needs at FWP properties; unwanted barriers to fish and wildlife movement; changing land ownership; sometimes-strained relations among outdoor recreationists, landowners, and FWP; habitat loss and degradation; management of large carnivores; and a changing climate.

By responding to these challenges, FWP can continue to conserve and enhance the Montana experience. If not addressed, these and other issues threaten to undermine past conservation achievements and jeopardize our ability to carry out our mission and vision.

The challenge, and why responding matters

The work of managing and conserving Montana's fish, wildlife, and state parks resources has never been easy. The future brings new dynamics that reinforce the need to build greater capacity for effective management through our employees and volunteers, partnerships, and funding sources.

In FWP's work environment, we need to recruit and retain a professional, invigorated, well-trained, fairly compensated, and valued workforce. Retirements require developing and recruiting new leaders, developing skill sets, and maintaining continuity of expertise. Diverse work locations, responsibilities, and pressures challenge FWP cohesiveness.

Building trusting relationships and partnerships will be even more integral to finding creative management solutions and leveraging resources in the years ahead. As hunting and fishing license sales—the agency's main funding source for fish and wildlife management—increasingly become insufficient to fully meet the demand on FWP for more opportunities and services, additional revenue sources and funding models will be needed. Meanwhile, state parks visitation has nearly doubled in the last decade while funding has stayed flat, creating a challenge for delivering high-quality experiences and maintaining aging infrastructure.



Rancher and fisheries biologist surveying the upper Big Hole Valley

Creating a strong foundation of people, partnerships, and funding solutions

Capacity building for effective management

Foster a safe work environment where people are valued, inspired, and supported.

Actions

- ▶ Cultivate an open, collaborative, safe, and respectful team work environment.
- ▶ Improve communications across the agency and within disciplines.
- ▶ Recruit and develop outstanding employees who are most able to meet current and future challenges.
- ▶ Value the diversity of each employee's unique skills, perspectives, and contributions.
- ▶ Cultivate and support an engaged team of valued, highly skilled employees throughout the agency.
- ▶ Cultivate an innovative work environment and culture that encourages creativity and idea sharing to build new solutions.
- ▶ Fairly compensate and retain employees.
- ▶ Recognize and reward employee accomplishments and service.
- ▶ Provide training to new, existing, and promoted employees.

- ▶ Ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and that the rationale for decisions is clearly communicated.

Accomplish more through partnerships.

Actions

- ▶ Manage fish, wildlife, and state parks resources in collaboration with private, public, and tribal stakeholders, as well as university partners.
- ▶ Pursue opportunities in which diverse partnerships attract and leverage new and existing funding sources.
- ▶ Build advocacy, interest in, and support for fish, wildlife, and state parks resources.
- ▶ Encourage collaboration and coordination with counties, state and federal agencies, and the tourism industry to provide cohesive management for unsurpassed state parks and recreational experiences.
- ▶ Foster open communication and positive working relationships with our governing commission and board and the Montana Legislature.

Ensure financial responsibility and sustainability.

Actions

- ▶ Use financial resources responsibly, and use them strategically in alignment with agency priorities.
- ▶ Responsibly manage FWP-owned lands and facilities.
- ▶ Seek out diverse solutions for sufficient and sustainable funding.
- ▶ Develop connections between beneficiaries of FWP services and new funding mechanisms.
- ▶ Leverage technology and innovation to reduce costs and improve services.
- ▶ Retain and enhance current sources of funding and user participation through research, marketing, and innovation.
- ▶ Provide timely, accurate information on FWP's fiscal condition and financial practices to the Montana Legislature and the public.

PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE OUR WORK

- We are a professional, engaged, motivated, responsive, and unified workforce.
- We work in a team environment that is open, collaborative, and respectful of employees' diversity and their unique contributions.
- We recognize the integral roles of landowners and other partners and respect their interests, while we bring technical expertise and information to advance the values we share with them.
- We are fiscally efficient and transparent. We manage diverse resources and programs, each with distinct funding sources and unique constraints.
- While revenue from current sources will continue to be essential, we must find new funding sources to build a sustainable future.



Preparing for an aerial winter deer survey



Kayaking whitewater on the Gallatin River



Inspecting kokanee fingerlings at Flathead Lake Salmon Hatchery



Elk calf research in the Bitterroot Mountains



Ranching family with healthy sagebrush, Roundup

The foundations of this document

Bedrock

Conservation and recreation heritage

This *FWP Vision and Guide* is built upon a legacy of courageous and visionary action by FWP’s employees and the agency’s conservation, recreation, and historic preservation partners over the past century. Also supporting this document are decades of established public expectations about where the department needs improvement and the changes FWP can make to improve customer service and management.

The ’15 & Forward process

In late 2014, FWP director Jeff Hagener called on employees to participate in a process that would help guide the agency’s future. That process became known as the ’15 & Forward initiative and resulted in this *FWP Vision and Guide*.

The ’15 & Forward Planning Team—a group of 27 employees representing every division and level within the agency—met throughout 2015 to assess FWP’s existing vision and update it to meet future challenges. A larger group of FWP staff (85 members) known as the Sounding Board helped the Planning Team by providing key feedback on process and content. FWP’s Management Team reviewed this

document and provided comments before approval by the director’s office.

Public involvement

In 2015, FWP held 10 public and eight employee “listening sessions” around the state to gather input about the agency’s value to the public and identify issues and challenges facing FWP. A total of 306 Montana citizens and 371 FWP employees participated in the sessions.* FWP also received over 200 comments by mail and email. Using this information along with previous public and staff input, the Planning Team updated FWP’s vision and created this document.

A foundation for the future

Planning Team members wanted this *FWP Vision and Guide* to be more than just words on a page. Their work was based on the understanding that the vision, core values, commitments, and actions in this document would direct how FWP manages resources, develops department priorities, and collaborates both internally and externally toward better solutions for Montana’s fish, wildlife, and state parks resources. ■



2015 public listening session in Kalispell

ONLINE:

*The information gathered from all 18 sessions is available to the public at the FWP website. Visit: <http://fwp.mt.gov/doingBusiness/insideFwp/15AndFoward/default.html>



House chamber, Montana state capitol



Snowmobiling on public trails

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