



• Bull trout restoration efforts hit full stride in 1995 with a major increase in efforts by FWP wardens to enforce regulations protecting bull trout and a public education effort to inform people about the issue. The Flathead River bull trout spawning run increased moderately and the spawning run in the Swan River reached another record high.

• FWP and the Forest Service crafted the nation's first framework for jointly managing fish, wildlife and habitat in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. This unique agreement sets up shared responsibility for law enforcement, fish stocking, fire management, public education and other functions.

• In 1995, information received from concerned citizens through TIP-MONT, FWP's toll-free violation report line, resulted in over 500 subsequent investigations by Montana game wardens. These investigations led to prosecution in nearly 20 percent of the cases.

• FWP spent approximately \$266,000 in 1995 in response to requests for game damage assistance from private landowners or in efforts to ward off anticipated game damage problems. Hunters realized the benefits of these efforts through increased access to private lands and accessibility to game animals that might otherwise not be available.

managing our Wild resources

• FWP completed an Environmental Impact Statement on the management of mountain lions in Montana. The document will guide future management of these large predators in the state.

• FWP increased its education efforts and enforcement patrols in areas inhabited by species of special concern, especially bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, grayling and paddlefish. The effort is intended to minimize unlawful and unintentional taking of these species to ensure viable and sustainable populations of native species.

• In an attempt to help recover the only remaining stream-dwelling grayling population in the lower 48 states, biologists reintroduced them into the Gallatin and East Gallatin rivers to determine if those waters are still suitable grayling habitat.

• FWP spent approximately \$110,000 on weed control efforts on department-owned properties, or 42 cents per acre, which represents more dollars spent per acre owned than any other state or federal land manager in Montana.

• In 1994, the latest year for which complete fish stocking information is available, FWP fish hatcheries produced over 7 million salmonid fish for stocking in lakes and reservoirs. In addition, the Miles City warm-water hatchery produced approximately 35 million walleye fry, 300,000 largemouth bass and hundreds of thousands of other warm-water fish.



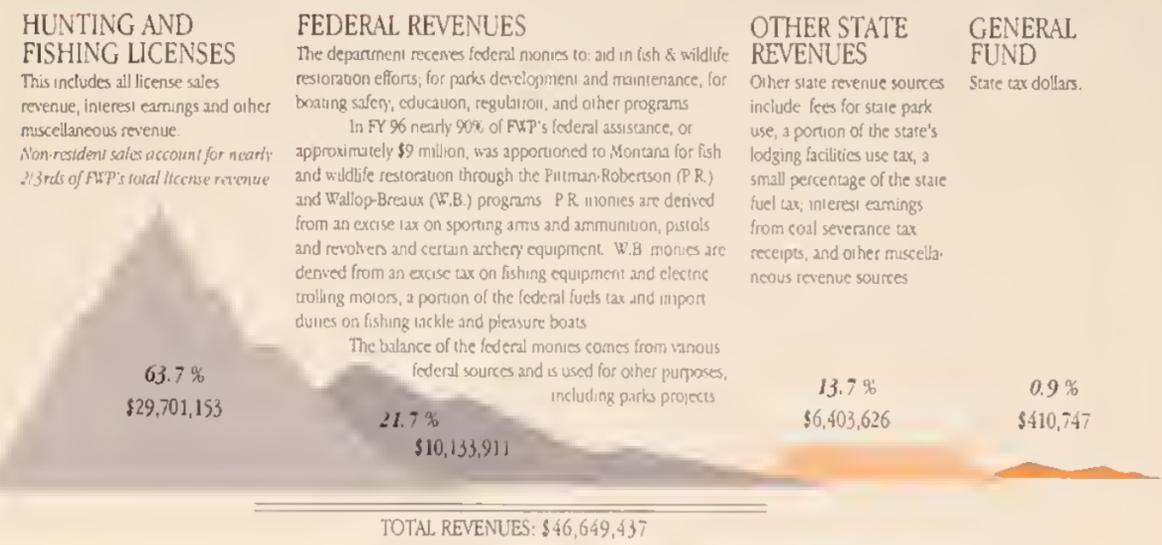
WHIRLING DISEASE - an update:

In December 1994, whirling disease was confirmed as the cause of a 90 percent decline of the rainbow trout population in the upper Madison River in southwestern Montana. In the spring of 1995, after a year of study, the Governor's Whirling Disease Task Force told Governor Marc Racicot that "whirling disease is the most significant threat to the survival of wild, naturally reproducing trout populations in Montana." So far, the disease has been discovered in trout in 23 Montana locations, including streams in the Madison, Jefferson, Clark Fork, Beaverhead and Swan River drainages. The disease has been found in wild populations of rainbow, brook and brown trout, Arctic grayling and westslope cutthroat trout also have been infected in field experiments. The task force believes that whirling disease is likely, over time, to spread to every major river drainage in Montana where both trout and the parasite's alternative host - small, stream-dwelling worms - are found. The task force has recommended that all actions to address whirling disease be consistent with protecting, preserving and restoring self-sustaining populations of wild, native and non-native trout.

where the money comes from

budgeted, fiscal year
REVENUES 1996

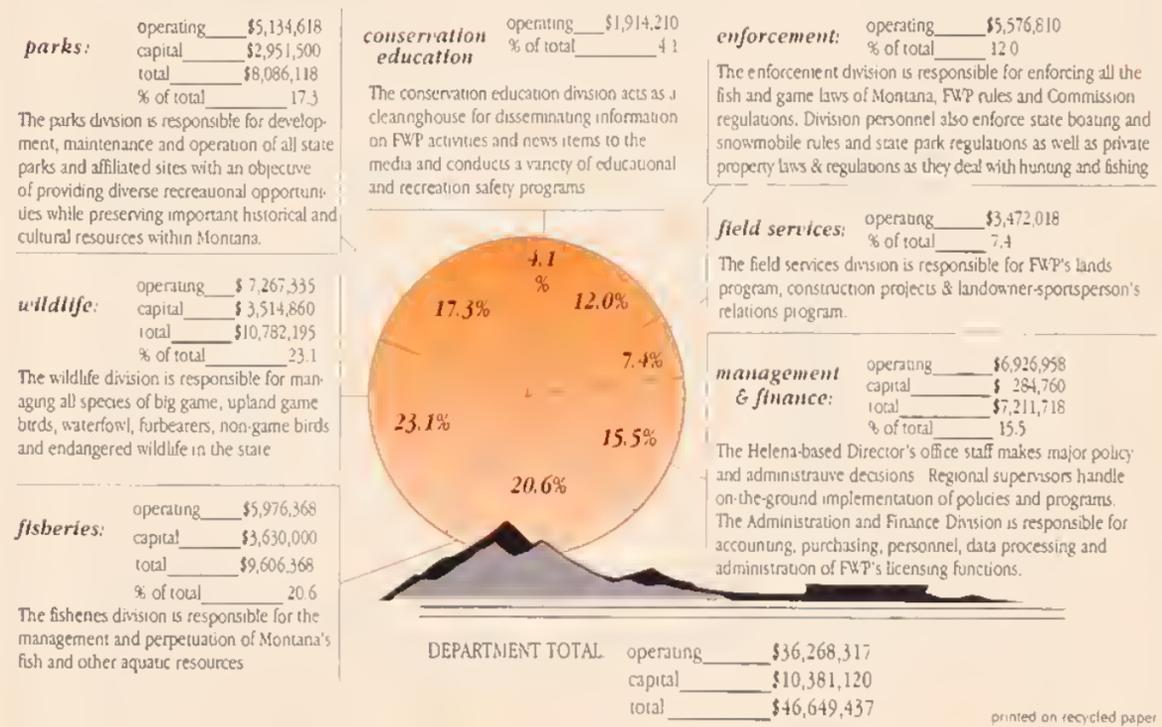
• FWP IS FUNDED PRIMARILY BY USER FEES.
• LESS THAN 1% OF FWP'S TOTAL BUDGET COMES FROM THE STATE GENERAL FUND



where the money goes

budgeted, fiscal year
EXPENDITURES 1996

• FWP SPENDS ITS MONEY TWO WAYS:
• OPERATIONS for day-to-day management of fish, wildlife & park resources.
• CAPITAL for major repair & maintenance of FWP properties, for renovation & construction of facilities and to protect and enhance critical habitats.



elk cover photo Mike Lygum; junco photo Michelle; photo: Michael & Patsy Foubler; Big Timber, MT

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1995

was a year of challenges, marked achievements and significant events for Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and for you, our partners, in working to fulfill our mission. Among numerous noteworthy accomplishments over the course of those 12 eventful months, we undertook a no-holds-barred assault on whirling disease to learn all we could about the impacts its presence may

have on the state's world-class fisheries and important angling-related economy; we celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the FWP Commission; FWP played host to some of today's most influential leaders in fish & wildlife conservation at the annual meeting of the Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies; and we worked with many Montanans to develop and implement a program endorsed by the legislature that will ensure improved public hunting access to private

lands in the future. What follows in this Annual Report for 1995 is a brief overview of important progress toward the long-term goals we developed in conjunction with you, our partners. I hope you will take a few moments to look this information over and then share it with your family, friends and others who care about the resources and recreational opportunities entrusted to our care. Montana's fish,

wildlife, parks and recreational resources are a tremendous asset to the state and are of enormous value to Montanans and our many guests. Effective use and conservation of these resources relies on cooperation among FWP, landowners, hunters and anglers, state park users - all of those who care of us at FWP thank you for your help and hope that we have served you well. We look forward to continuing successful partnerships in the future.

Pat Graham

PATRICK J. GRAHAM
Director



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

A N N U A L
R E P O R T

fish and wildlife are products of Habitat

FWP continues to employ conservation easements as an innovative means to protect wildlife habitats while keeping private land in private ownership, preserving Montana's agricultural heritage and maintaining the local tax base. For example,

In a cooperative effort with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, FWP obtained a conservation easement on 318 acres of land between the Sun River Wildlife Management Area and the Bob Marshall Wilderness. This land was potentially subdividable and is a corridor for wildlife, particularly elk, moving between the wilderness and the wildlife management area.

FWP obtained a conservation easement of approximately 1,800 acres on the Brown Valley Ranch in the Bitterroot Valley adjacent to the Threemile Wildlife Management Area. The easement will help buffer important elk winter range from homesites expected in the future.

A 680-acre easement was purchased from the Nature Conservancy to preserve key prairie habitat at its Dancing Prairie Preserve in northwestern Montana. The land is important habitat for dwindling populations of the Colombian sharp-tailed grouse.

FWP provided \$1.7 million as a partner in the vast Gallatin Land Exchange, a landmark project centered around the U.S. Forest Service and private

lumber companies trading land to block up ownership in the Gallatin River drainage north of Yellowstone National Park. FWP participated by obtaining land in the Porcupine drainage that is critical elk winter range and important habitat for grizzly bears, moose and bighorn sheep. The Forest Service has identified the Gallatin project as its number one acquisition priority nationally.

Since the inception of the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program in 1989, FWP has entered into over 600 contracts with agricultural operators, private landowners and other land managers to improve habitat for upland game birds. In 1995, over \$330,000 was spent as a part of this effort. To date, approximately \$2.7 million has been committed to range management (107,000 acres); nesting cover (77,600 acres); winter food/cover plots (11,400 acres); shelterbelt tree/shrub planting (10,300 acres), and wetland restoration (100 acres).

In 1995, FWP cooperated with private landowners, Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners to enhance 820 acres of wetlands and 10,500 acres of uplands on 74 individual sites in the state through the Montana Waterfowl Stamp Program.

Fourteen River Restoration projects totalling just over \$265,000 were approved for funding. FWP has initiated 67 stream restoration projects since the inception of the program in 1989. Forty-two projects have been completed to date. These projects enhance spawning conditions, improve riparian vegetation and bank cover, reduce loss of fish into irrigation diversions, provide fish passage into spawning grounds, restore essential habitats and naturally functioning stream channels, or protect genetically pure native fish populations.

A selective withdrawal system was installed and began operation at Hungry Horse Dam. The system returns the South Fork Flathead River water temperature to natural levels after 40 years of frigid releases in the summer and relatively warm releases in the winter. The improvement in water temperature will lead to better growth rates for fish, better angling and a more natural environment for aquatic insects in the South Fork and the main stem Flathead River.

FWP completed water leases on two tributaries of the Yellowstone River for the benefit of Yellowstone cutthroat trout and a tributary of the Jefferson River to aid spawning and survival of brown and rainbow trout. Another lease on Tin Cup Creek in the Bitterroot River drainage was acquired to help maintain rainbow trout spawning habitat.



leadership through education

Montana now has its own hunter education manual thanks to the efforts of volunteer instructors and FWP staff. In 1995, volunteer hunter and bowhunter education instructors taught and certified 6,641 and 2,538 students respectively.

Three half-hour "Montana Outdoors Video" reports were produced and sent to 120 different natural resource and sportsperson's groups in the state. The videos were aired on community access television and the cable channel "Outdoor Life," which has a viewing audience of 10 million nationwide. The videos are also available through a subscription.

The second annual "Becoming an Outdoors-Woman" workshop provided 60 women from six different states with the opportunity to try new outdoor activities. Over 25 volunteer instructors taught classes in wildlife conservation and hunting, fishing, canoeing, survival, stream ecology, shotgun and rifle safety and plant identification.

A total of 1,200 students attended Youth Angler Education courses at 22 sites across the state. They received hands-on experience in angling skills, aquatic ecology, water safety, ethics, etc.

The first Billings Fishing Fair was conducted last summer.

One of the "Outdoor Reports" produced by FWP's video production unit for broadcast each week on every television station in the state was selected as the best video news feature produced among all the states in 1995 by the national Association for Conservation Information.

Four issues of the award-winning youth magazine, *Falcon*, were distributed to Montana's approximately 13,000 fourth graders with financial assistance from the Northern Region U.S. Forest Service and the Boone and Crockett Club.



State parks preparing for the future



During 1995, several major improvement projects were completed at state parks. The visitor center at Lewis and Clark Caverns was remodeled and the interpretive displays were updated; Lake Elmo State Park in Billings received a new restroom and shower facility and a paved parking lot, among other improvements; an entrance road and boating improvements were completed at Wayfarers State Park near Big Fork; and improvements at Black Sandy State Park on Hauser Reservoir near Helena included construction of a new boat ramp, a new dock and restrooms and camping pads accessible to those with disabilities.

"2020 Vision for Montana State Parks," a process to plan for the long-term future of the State Park System, was initiated during 1995. The plan will make broad recommendations for the system through the year 2020. In 1995, the primary intent was to identify key issues to be addressed in the plan. Toward that end, public workshops were held in nine locations throughout the state.

The Parks Division began the process of coordinating an inter-agency effort to produce Montana's first state trails plan. In addition to the plan, a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) is being completed on FWP's trail grant programs.

public involvement is essential

The achievements of FWP's Parks Division were enhanced by 745 volunteers contributing 29,105 hours of service during 1995. This represents a 64 percent increase over the 1994 total of 454 volunteers.



After four years of public involvement, focus groups and discussion, a Citizen Advisory Committee was formed in Region 1 to improve communications between FWP and the public. The peer-selected committee of 11 people from around the region began work in early December 1995. One of the first issues considered by the advisors and FWP will be the big game season setting process.

FWP formed and held annual meetings of the Missouri River Breaks Elk Working Group, a public advisory council charged with making recommendations to the agency about improving the management of the elk population utilizing the north side of the river.



servicing our publics

Area Resource Offices were created in Butte, Havre and Helena. Consolidating existing staff in these area resource offices will provide enhanced customer service without the need for more field personnel. Establishing area offices in several other communities is now under consideration.

The telephone systems in most FWP regional offices have been upgraded to better handle the growing number of incoming calls from the public and provide more timely assistance to callers.

Through redirection of funds, Conservation Specialist positions have been established within a number of FWP administrative regions to place more emphasis on personal contacts with landowners, hunters, anglers and other members of the public.

An internal study committee was formed to review FWP's Fishing Access Site program and to make recommendations to the director on how the program could be improved to better serve the public while continuing to protect the over 300 sites in the program. This review is scheduled for completion in 1996.

An increased emphasis was placed on game warden-landowner contacts to improve FWP-landowner relations as well as explain department programs and the enforcement division's private land patrol policy. Montana game wardens contacted more than 3,700 individual owners of private lands in 1995.

Montana game wardens contacted over 46,000 hunters, 48,000 anglers and 18,900 boaters in 1995.

EXPANDING opportunities

The 1995 Montana Legislature passed into law a bill implementing many of the recommendations of the Governor's Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council. House Bill 195 is expected to generate \$2 million per year to expand the Block Management Program to provide an incentive for landowners to further public hunting access on private lands. This program is expected to open up an additional two million acres of private land to public hunting while stabilizing the outfitting industry in Montana.

The new program builds on the Block Management Program, which plays a vital role in maintaining and improving public hunting access to private lands. During the 1995 hunting seasons, 470 landowners provided public hunting access to over five million acres. Block Management Areas provided a cumulative estimate of 212,000 days of recreation to Montana hunters in 1995.

In 1995, Plum Creek Timber Co. and FWP extended for five years the Block Management agreement for Plum Creek's 771,000 acres of land in north-west Montana. The agreement maintains free public access for hunters and represents the largest single Block Management agreement in Montana.

FWP's Shooting Range Development Program provided \$111,435 in matching grants in 1995 to fund shooting range activities and improvements at Billings, Bozeman, Colstrip and Missoula. These projects bring the total number of grants that have been awarded for the improvement of safe public ranges to 41.

A second annual "Fishing Without Barriers" day was sponsored by FWP and its "Crossing the Barriers" committee on Flathead Lake in June 1995. Twenty-four anglers with disabilities caught 30 lake trout. The Montana Charter Boat Association provided seven boats free of charge.