

1960-?

MONTANA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION POLICY
REGARDING WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Montana with two major watersheds, the Columbia River and the Missouri River, and a minor watershed, the St. Marys, draining into Hudson's Bay, is a state affording many types of outdoor recreation long since lost through land and water use changes in most of the states of the Union. Waters in Montana drainages are for the most part clean, clear and unpolluted.

The higher types of recreation such as angling for trout and hunting for native wildlife species is disappearing in the United States through various types of economic development. Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana have the majority of the trout habitat remaining. Montana probably has the greatest amount of trout water, and the state fishery program is managed for this type of production. In addition, game values of high quality are associated with these relatively undisturbed water systems.

In developing a watershed policy for this state, it is imperative that we consider two types of water recreational resource values. In making these evaluations both types have national importance.

1. Wilderness and semi-wilderness (Western Montana Policy)

a. The wilderness and semi-wilderness areas are regions within Montana where water resource and land use have not been materially changed, but are the same as they were created, used by the Indians, and found by Lewis and Clark in their expedition. In such areas the wild game and fish that require wilderness and semi-wilderness types of terrain for survival are one of the important recreational attractions of Montana. Without watersheds remaining unchanged many of the game herds, game animals, and native fishes would cease to exist due to the destruction of their native environment.

2. Accessible and Productive (Stream Rating Committee)

- a. Our accessible and productive fishing streams are of national, local and statewide importance. They are highly productive streams that stand a lot of fishing and are accessible by highways for use by not only Montana people, but people throughout the United States. These streams and rivers are valuable recreational resources because of their use by the public and their high potential for trout production.

We have the two qualification outlines, and in all fairness the Montana Fish and Game Commission realizes that river and stream development must be evaluated on the above two classifications. In determining development affecting fish and wildlife habitat, management consideration should be given to human needs and the general welfare of the state.

In exercising the powers and duties of the Fish and Game Commission as prescribed by the legislature of the State of Montana the following is Commission policy in regard to the development and operation of land and water use programs.

- A. It shall be the policy of the Commission in evaluating land and water use programs to:
 1. Currently review plans for water development projects and stress measures for preventing damage to fish and wildlife and recreational resources of the State of Montana.
 2. Protect and foster the wildlife resources in the State of Montana.
 3. Cooperate with other agencies, public and private, in the protection and fostering of these resources.
- B. In carrying out this policy the Fish and Game Commission shall:
 1. Submit pertinent information to and receive recommendations from official agencies of the governments or agencies having jurisdiction or otherwise affected with respect to projects and programs.

2. After reviewing construction proposals of government agencies and/or private corporations responsible for water development projects which are within the legal responsibility of the Fish and Game Commission, said Commission shall propose effective fish and wildlife protective facilities or compensatory measures as required by the laws of the State of Montana to be incorporated into water use developments. The cost thereof including operation and maintenance should be included as a part of the cost of said project; and that the responsibility for the provision of such effective fish and wildlife protective facilities or compensatory measures as are recommended as part of the initial project plan shall continue beyond completion of the construction of the individual projects. The fish and wildlife facilities and mitigating measures in this article may include installations located elsewhere than at the actual site of the project. However, in cases where a proposed water development project presents elements seriously detrimental to fish and wildlife values in the area, the Commission shall vigorously oppose such a project.
3. The Commission shall within its powers promulgate rules and regulations to promote recreational fish and wildlife uses of water by recommending such steps as may be necessary to constructing agencies in land and water use management programs: - to protect or develop recreational resources; to assure maintenance of necessary minimum stream flows, reliable and adequate pool levels and allocation of water for fish and wildlife protective or compensatory facilities,

and for the regulation of such stream flows, pool levels, and land use programs so as to conform to sound fish and wildlife management practices.

4. That the Commission shall prescribe as guide lines the information contained within The Policy for Water Use and Conservation for Western Montana as adopted by the Western Montana Fish and Game Association, and Classification of Montana's Fishing Streams, 1959, by the stream classification committee.