



# MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

## Future Fisheries Improvement Program Fact Sheet

(Updated 7/2023)

### Background and history

In 1995, Montana Legislature created the Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP), to restore essential habitats for the growth and propagation of wild fish populations in lakes, rivers, and streams. In 1999, the Legislature expanded the FFIP by adding funding from the Resource Indemnity Trust Fund (RIT) and directing a portion of the funding to projects that specifically enhance bull trout and cutthroat trout, with emphasis on mineral reclamation projects. In 2013, the RIT funding was expanded to all cover of Montana's native fish species.

### Funding

Funds used to implement the FFIP originate from the sale of Montana fishing licenses and Montana's Resource Indemnity Trust (RIT) fund.

### Eligibility

All habitat projects benefiting Montana's wild fish will be considered for funding. This includes (but is not limited to) landowners, anglers, civic groups, conservation districts, or governmental agencies.

### Use of funds

Program funding may be provided for costs of design/build, construction, and maintenance of projects that restore, enhance, or protect habitat for wild fishes. Funding cannot be used for administration, coordination, overhead, monitoring, watershed assessments, design alone, or contingency costs. Maintenance funding requests cannot exceed 10% of the total project cost.

### How do I apply?

#### Application forms

Application forms are available on FWP's webpage at: <https://fwp.mt.gov/ffip>. They are also available by request from FWP. To obtain an application form, for help completing the application, or for assistance developing a project, contact the Future Fisheries Coordinator (444-2432, [FWPFFIP@mt.gov](mailto:FWPFFIP@mt.gov)).

#### Procedures

There is no limit to individual grant requests but grants are awarded based on available funding, which is in the range of \$500,000 per grant cycle. Cost sharing is not mandatory but *strongly* encouraged and makes a project more competitive.

#### Project eligibility

Applicants must demonstrate that the project will have public benefits and accomplish one or more of these items:

- Improve or maintain fish passage
- Restore or protect naturally functioning stream channels or banks
- Restore or protect naturally functioning riparian areas
- Prevent loss of fish into diversions
- Restore or protect essential habitats for spawning
- Enhance stream flow to improve fisheries

- Restore or protect native fish populations
- Improve fishing in a lake or reservoir
- Other types of projects that restore or protect habitat for wild fish populations

Projects must also be conducted with approval of the landowner on whose property the project is being completed, and they may not interfere with water or property rights of adjacent landowners. Permits must be obtained by the applicant prior to construction.

### **Submittal**

Applications may be submitted at any time but must be received **on or before May 15 or November 15** of each year to be considered for the subsequent funding period. Applications must be sent to FWP at the address below. Electronic applications are preferred but must be signed. If submitting a hard copy application, we request that applicants to include a copy of the application in electronic copy format. All of the applications we receive are posted on the FFIP webpage to provide the opportunity for public review and comment.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Fisheries Division

1420 E. Sixth Ave.

P.O. Box 200701

Helena, MT 59620-0701

[FWPFFIP@mt.gov](mailto:FWPFFIP@mt.gov), (406) 444-2432

Large files can be sent via [transfer.mt.gov](mailto:transfer.mt.gov) (using [mmcgree@mt.gov](mailto:mmcgree@mt.gov))

### ***What next?***

After each application deadline, the FFIP review panel will meet and evaluate eligible projects. Criteria include:

- Public benefits to wild fisheries
- Long-term effectiveness
- Benefits to native fish species
- Expected benefits relative to cost
- In-kind services or cost-sharing
- Importance of the lake or stream
- Local support and participation
- Addressing the cause of degradation rather than the symptoms
- Sensitivity to needs of other wildlife species (e.g., wildlife friendly fencing)

If you would like to attend the FFIP review panel meeting, please contact the Future Fisheries Coordinator (contact information above) to determine the location and time. The review panel and FWP will then submit a list of recommended projects to the Fish & Wildlife Commission for consideration. Final project approval is the responsibility of the Commission.

### **Project Administration**

Each approved project sponsor must enter into a written agreement with FWP. Grant funds must be used only for purposes described in the final project agreement. The FFIP functions as a reimbursement program, where project sponsors submit invoices to FWP for payment. Itemized invoices of expenses and receipts approved by the applicant are required.

### **Evaluating project success**

Completed projects will be monitored over time to ensure compliance and evaluate the public benefits to wild fisheries.