



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Reference Guide: Commercial Use Permits for Outfitters, Guides, and Water-based Service Providers

This reference guide provides information on permits required to conduct outfitting or guiding using Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks land (FWP). This includes outfitters and guides licensed by the Montana Board of Outfitters and non-licensed outfitters and guides (e.g. whitewater rafting, canoe tours, etc.). There are two types of commercial use permits for water-based outfitters and guides: 1) Commercial Use Permit and 2) Fishing Access Site Permit.

Commercial Use Permit

- All licensed outfitters and water-based service providers must obtain a Commercial Use Permit to conduct commercial use on FWP lands, including Fishing Access Sites on Restricted Rivers **and at all Montana State Parks**.
- There are six restricted rivers in the state: Beaverhead, Big Hole, Bitterroot, Blackfoot, Madison, Smith, and the Alberton Gorge of the Clark Fork. With the exception of the Blackfoot and Madison Rivers, opportunities to conduct commercial use on these rivers are limited.
- The Commercial Use Permit is referred to as a Special Recreation Permit on the Madison and Blackfoot Rivers due to the joint permit system with the Bureau of Land Management.
- Please contact an FWP Regional Office and/or the specific State Park for information on obtaining a Commercial Use Permit.

Fishing Access Site (FAS) Permit

- All licensed outfitters and water-based service providers must obtain a FAS Permit to conduct commercial use at FWP fishing access sites. Exception: An outfitter or water-based commercial service provider who has a FWP Commercial Use Permit to operate on a Restricted River and does not use any FWP sites on other rivers does not have to obtain the FAS Permit.
- All guides (licensed or non-licensed) and support staff must have a FAS Permit to use a FWP Fishing Access site **or State Park**. This includes gear boat operators and other employees or contractors providing services to an outfitter or water-based service provider using FWP lands.
- See the Commercial Use Permit Fee Rule for the current fee schedule.
- The FAS Permit is available at any FWP regional office, external license provider, on the FWP web site: fwp.mt.gov (Online Services – Licenses and Applications) or you may request a paper application.
- An ALS Number is required to obtain a FAS Permit. You will need to obtain the permit at a FWP regional office or external license provider if you do not have an ALS Number.
- Fishing outfitters and guides will need to provide their Board of Outfitters License #.
- The FAS Permit does not authorize a guide to serve as a licensed outfitter. The FAS Permit does not negate or replace Montana Board of Outfitters licensing requirements.
- The FAS Permit is only available to fishing outfitters and guides, whitewater outfitters and guides, and canoe or kayak outfitters and guides (including gear boat operators). All other types of commercial use at fishing access sites must obtain a Commercial Use Permit (e.g. dive lessons, kayak lessons, boat rentals or demos, commercial photography, commercial dock builders, etc.)

Prohibited Activities/Locations

- Commercial hunting outfitting is prohibited on all FWP land and waters located entirely within the boundaries of FWP land. Fishing outfitting is prohibited on all wildlife management areas. Some exceptions apply: Consult FWP Commercial Use Rules or contact the department for more information.

For questions regarding commercial use, please contact the following:

- **Fishing Access Sites:** Don Skaar, (406) 444-7409, dskaar@mt.gov
- **Montana State Parks:** Pat Doyle, (406) 444-3818, PDoyle@mt.gov
- **Wildlife Management Areas:** Rick Northrup, (406) 444-5633, rnorthrup@mt.gov