

# FWP FORESTRY PROGRAM

## REPORT TO THE 67<sup>TH</sup> MONTANA LEGISLATURE

DECEMBER 2020



Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area. Photo Credit: J. Parke



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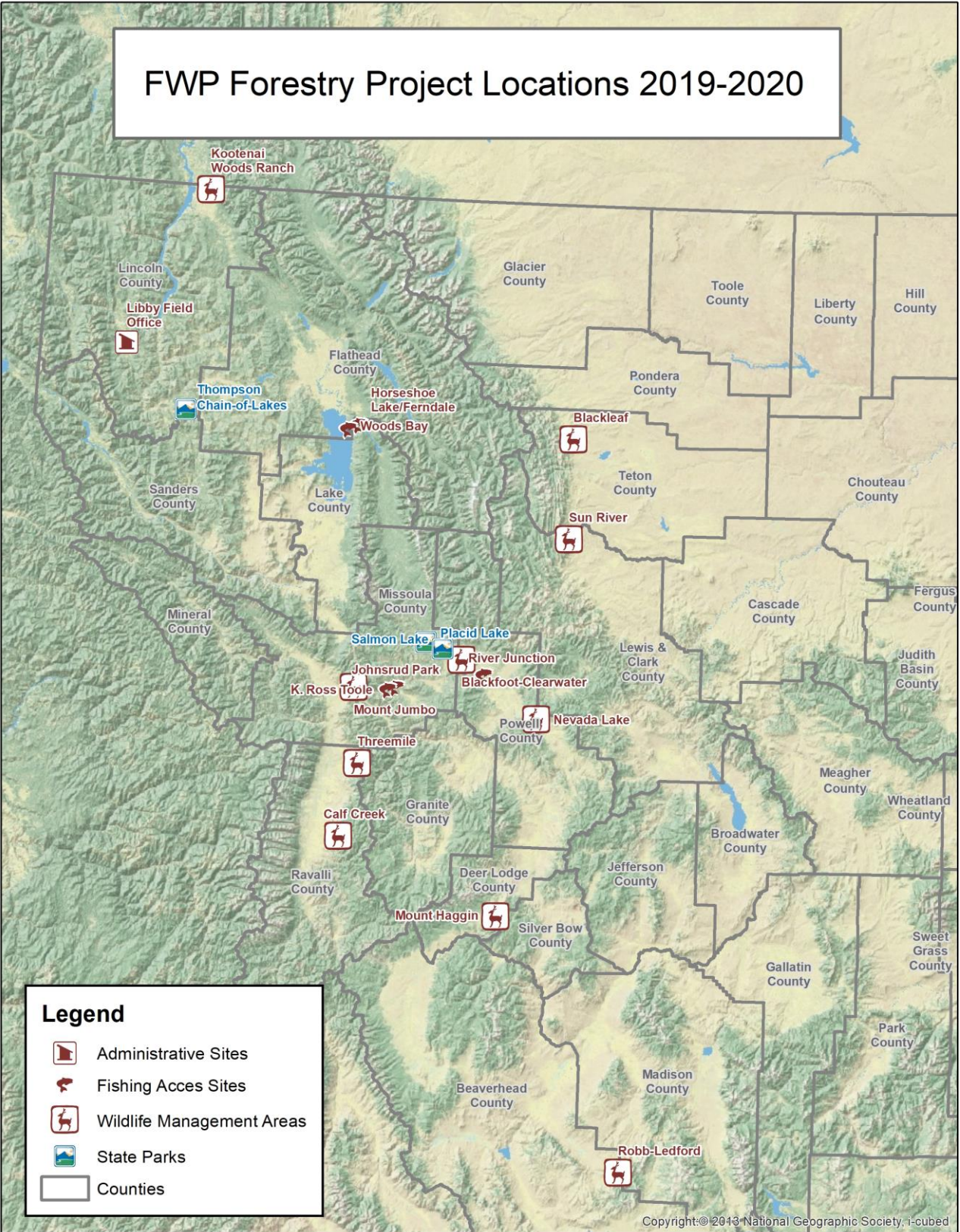


Figure 1 - FWP Forestry Project Locations 2019-2020

## OVERVIEW

This report summarizes Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' (FWP) forestry work, project activities between January 1, 2019 and December 2020, and the status of Forest Management Account balances for fiscal years (FY) 2019 and 2020. The forestry program was legislatively mandated in 2009 with House Bill 42. The bill required FWP to implement programs to address fire mitigation, pine beetle infestation, and wildlife habitat enhancement with a priority placed on forested Wildlife Management Areas, Fishing Access Sites, and State Parks greater than 50 acres [§ 87-1-201(9)(a)(iv), Montana Code Annotated (MCA)]. The legislature also established the Forest Management Account to implement forestry projects using revenue generated from timber sales (§ 87-1-621, MCA).

In 2011, the Legislature added a provision with House Bill 619 requiring FWP to calculate an annual sustainable yield on its forested lands and adopt forest management plans based on that yield. The annual timber sale requirement for the timber sale program administered by FWP may not exceed the annual sustained yield [§ 87-1-622(3), MCA]. FWP contracted with Mason, Bruce & Girard, Inc., a forestry consulting company, to conduct an independent sustained yield calculation which was completed on December 31, 2013. The legislature also required the Fish and Wildlife Commission and Parks and Recreation Board to "review and redetermine the annual sustainable yield" every 5 years [§ 87-1-622(4), MCA]. The 2018 report found that 158,195 acres were commercially viable for timber production with 58,922 acres (37.2%) available for timber harvest. Of the acres available for harvest, 519 are on Fishing Access Sites (FAS), 6,121 are on State Parks (SP), and 52,282 are on Wildlife Management Areas. The report calculated that over the next 50 years, an annual sustained yield of 4.2 million board feet (MMBF) could be harvested on FWP lands.

In 2017, the 65<sup>th</sup> Legislature authorized a permanent base forester position to continue development of the forestry program, to develop and implement forest management plans and projects, and to keep forestry projects on schedule.

The State Parks and Recreation Board and Fish and Wildlife Commission are required by law to adopt forest management plans for lands under their jurisdiction [§ 87-1-622(1), MCA]. FWP completed a statewide programmatic forest management plan in 2018. The plan was adopted by the State Parks and Recreation Board in February 2018 and the Fish and Wildlife Commission in April 2018. This is a strategic plan that provides FWP with a framework for developing property-specific forest management plans and guidelines for implementing forest management projects. The plan defines a forest management approach for evaluating current conditions, developing desired future conditions, determining actions that can be implemented to achieve desired future conditions, and monitoring that will be done to track progress towards achieving desired future conditions.

Based on the forest management plan and site-specific objectives, the FWP forester works with the site manager (FAS manager, Park manager, area wildlife biologist) to design a project. The project approval process involves going through Montana Environmental Policy Act (§75-1-101 *et seq.*, MCA) (MEPA)



requirements and, if the project involves sale of commercial timber, going through the Fish and Wildlife Commission or State Parks and Recreation Board approval process. Once the project is through MEPA and the Fish and Wildlife Commission or State Parks and Recreation Board (if required), then a draft contract is prepared specifying project requirements and deliverables. FWP bids out these projects through its procurement office following state contracting laws (§18-4-101 *et seq.*, MCA).

FWP primarily uses two contract formats, a timber sale contract and a service contract. A timber sale contract is used when value of commercial timber exceeds the cost of the service work performed. The “purchaser” pays FWP for the timber based on stumpage (e.g. \$/ton). Revenue generated from timber sales is deposited in FWP’s Forest Management Account as required by law (§ 87-1-621, MCA). Service contracts are used for all other work in which FWP pays a contractor to perform the services necessary to complete the project. These projects are typically funded using the FWP Forest Management Account and grants from various sources. The FWP forester typically conducts field inspections and performs contract administration duties for the duration of the contract.

## SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2009-2020

Since the establishment of the FWP forestry program in 2009, several forest management projects have been completed (see Table 1 below). These projects have treated 8,371 acres and generated 111,469 tons of forest products (approximately 4,130 log truck loads).

**Table 1 - Forestry Projects Summary, 2009-2020**

Project	Region	Acres	Harvest Volume (Tons)	Completion Year	Description
Thompson Chain of Lakes SP	1	748	8,056	2010	Fuels reduction, hazard tree mitigation and habitat improvement.
Flathead Lake SP – Wayfarers	1	15	0	2010	Dwarf mistletoe mitigation.
Flathead Lake SP – Wild Horse Island	1	215	0	2011	Pine beetle suppression and ponderosa pine, grassland habitat restoration.
Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA (Ovando Mountain)	2	365	10,028	2012	Treatments included improve forage, restore desirable forest structure, aspen enhancement, lodgepole pine salvage, and fuels reduction.
River Junction FAS	2	5	175	2012	Mountain pine beetle salvage of ponderosa pine.
Marshall Creek WMA Blowdown Salvage	2	8	406	2013	Blowdown salvage, cleared public roadway.
Stuart Mill Bay FAS	2	80	6,432	2014	Lodgepole pine salvage and thinning, slash disposal, tree planting, and fence removal.

Project	Region	Acres	Harvest Volume (Tons)	Completion Year	Description
Mount Haggin WMA 1	3	400	12,163	2014	Lodgepole pine salvage, aspen enhancement.
Mount Haggin/Fleecer WMA Habitat Projects	3	289	0	2015	Elk and mule deer winter range enhancement, conifer removal to promote grass, sagebrush, bitterbrush, and aspen.
Mount Haggin WMA 2	3	732	19,529	2016	Elk and mule deer winter range enhancement, salvage, fuels reduction.
West Kootenai WMA	1	251	6,988	2016	White-tailed deer winter range enhancement, fuels reduction.
Threemile WMA	2	342	4,864	2016	Elk and deer winter range enhancement, aspen restoration, fuels reduction, pine beetle risk reduction.
Lone Pine SP	1	20	0	2016	Reduce bark beetle risk, improve tree vigor, remove mistletoe infected trees.
Milltown SP	2	17	0	2016	Reduce bark beetle risk, improve public safety, aesthetics, and wildlife habitat.
Flathead Lake SP/Finley Point	1	14	234	2017	Campsite and road development.
Libby Field Station	1	1	39	2018	Parking area expansion.
Mount Silcox WMA Forest Habitat Project	1	88	2,471	2018	Elk, bighorn sheep, and mule deer winter range; fuels reduction; bark beetle risk reduction; habitat diversity.
West Kootenai WMA Fire Salvage	1	506	16,378	2018	Elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer winter range; natural regeneration; salvage.
Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA Forest Restoration Project	2	354	4,837	2018	Elk and white-tailed deer winter and spring range, aspen enhancement, restore historic forest structure, fuels reduction, and pine beetle risk reduction.
Elk Basin Restoration 1 (Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA)	2	420	9,402	2019	Elk winter range, aspen enhancement, restore historic forest structure, fuels reduction, and pine beetle risk reduction.
Nevada Lake WMA Forest Habitat Restoration	2	444	5,455	2019	Elk and mule deer winter range, aspen enhancement, restore historic forest structure, fuels reduction, and pine beetle risk reduction.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Harvest Volume (Tons)</b>	<b>Completion Year</b>	<b>Description</b>
Libby Field Station	1	2	0	2019	Fuels reduction and hazard tree removal.
Placid Lake State Park	2	15	98	2019	Hazard tree removal.
Johnsrud Park FAS	2	6	52	2019	Fuels reduction, forest health, and hazard tree removal.
Mt. Haggin 4/Phase 1	3	845	0	2020	Big game winter and transitional range and aspen enhancement.
Robb-Ledford/ Blacktail WMA Conifer Removal	3	1,550	0	2020	Year-round big-game habitat, ruffed and sage-grouse habitat.
Threemile 2	2	80	1,546	On-going	Right-of-way clearing associated with road improvements.
Wood's Ranch WMA Blowdown Salvage	1	65	853	On-going	Elk and deer winter range, fuels reduction, bark beetle risk reduction.
Elk Basin Restoration 2 (Blackfoot Clearwater WMA)	2	115	1,463	On-going	Elk winter range, aspen enhancement, restore historic forest structure, fuels reduction, and pine beetle risk reduction.
Sun River WMA Habitat Project	4	349	0	On-going	Elk winter range.
Blackleaf WMA Conifer Removal	4	30	0	On-going	Elk and mule deer winter and transitional range, aspen enhancement.



## FOREST MANAGEMENT ACCOUNT

The following tables summarize Forest Management Account activities within each FWP division for fiscal years (FY) 2019-2020.

### FISHING ACCESS SITES

Table 2 - Fishing Access Site Forest Management Account Balance, FY 19-20

STARTING BALANCE (JULY 1, 2018)	\$ 69,256.00	
FWP SITE/TRANSACTION	EXPENSE	INCOME
Interest		\$2,446.00
ENDING BALANCE (JUNE 30, 2020)	\$ 71,702.00	

### STATE PARKS

Table 3 - State Parks Forest Management Account Balance, FY 19-20

STARTING BALANCE (JULY 1, 2018)	\$ 7,664.40	
FWP SITE/TRANSACTION	EXPENSE	INCOME
Interest		\$311.00
ENDING BALANCE (JUNE 30, 2020)	\$ 7,975.40	

### WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

Table 4 - Wildlife Management Areas Forest Management Account Balance, FY 19-20

STARTING BALANCE (JULY 1, 2018)	\$ 1,073,974.00	
FWP SITE/TRANSACTION	EXPENSE	INCOME
Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA	\$ 25,686.03	\$ 1,089.29
Marshall WMA	\$ 6,109.59	
Mt. Haggin WMA	\$ 13,078.22	
Nevada Lake WMA	\$ 19,340.77	
Robb Ledford WMA	\$ 1,845.13	
Sun River WMA	\$ 12,680.64	
Threemile WMA	\$ 52,447.80	
West Kootenai WMA	\$ 22,562.07	
Wood's Ranch WMA	\$ 2,677.50	
Overhead (indirect costs)	\$55,023.00	
Base (salary, operating costs)	\$ 228,831.00	
Interest		\$35,331.00
ENDING BALANCE (JUNE 30, 2020)	\$ 670,112.54	

## PROJECTS

### **ADMINISTRATIVE SITES**

For calendar years 2019 through 2020, FWP completed one forest management project on administrative sites at the Libby Field Station.

#### **Libby Field Station Hazard Tree Removal**

FWP implemented a 2-acre hazard tree and fuels reduction treatment around the Libby Field Station office complex in December 2019. The objectives of the project were to remove hazard trees and create defensible space around office buildings. FWP contracted with Forest Management Specialists, LLC to complete the project. The project cost \$23,168.00 and was funded by FWP maintenance funds and a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Forest Service (USFS) Western States Wildland Urban Interface Grant administered by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC).

### **FISHING ACCESS SITES**

For calendar years 2019 through 2020, one forest management projects was completed, one is under contract, and three are in planning stages.

#### **Johnsrud Park FAS Forestry Project**



**Figure 2 - Rory Zarling, FWP Region 2 Fishing Access Site Program Manager, standing in a recently completed forestry treatment unit at Johnsrud Park FAS. Photo Credit: R. Zarling**

FWP entered into an interagency cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – Missoula Field Office in August 2019 which allowed BLM to assist FWP with implementation of the 6-acre project. The objectives of the project were to remove hazard trees within the developed recreation site, improve resilience to insects and diseases, reduce susceptibility to crown fire, and maintain/enhance aesthetics.

BLM incorporated the project into their Whisky Gulch Stewardship Contract, which included larger-scale forestry treatments in the Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor. BLM contracted with Blackfoot Forestry, Inc. to implement the treatments. Timber harvesting and precommercial thinning were conducted in December 2019 through March 2020. Slash pile burning was conducted in November 2020. The project generated 52 tons of non-sawlog timber (2 log-truck loads) which was sold to Willis Enterprises in Bonner, MT and the project was completed at no cost to FWP.

### **Wood's Bay FAS Forestry Project**

In October 2019, the Fish and Wildlife Commission approved FWP's proposal to implement forest treatments on approximately 10 acres of the Wood's Bay FAS near Bigfork, MT. The objectives of the treatment are to mitigate hazard trees in the developed recreation site, reduce hazardous fuels in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), and increase resiliency to insects and diseases.

FWP awarded a contract to LTL Enterprises, LLC and project implementation is expected to start in January 2021 and would be completed by December 31, 2021. The project will generate an estimated 140 tons of forest products (equating to approximately 5 log-truck loads) for local forest products manufacturing facilities. The estimated cost of the project is \$14,100 which will be covered out of FWP's FAS maintenance account and a USDA-USFS Forest Health Western Bark Beetle Grant administered by the Montana DNRC.

### **K. Ross Toole FAS Forestry Project**

In October 2019, the Fish and Wildlife Commission approved FWP's proposal to implement forest treatments on approximately 11 acres of the K. Ross Toole FAS near Bonner, MT. The objectives of the treatment are to mitigate hazard trees in the recreation site, reduce hazardous fuels in the WUI, increase resiliency to insects and diseases, and maintain/enhance aesthetics.

FWP collaborated with the University of Montana, W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation (FCFC) forestry capstone class to develop a forest management plan for the site. The student group, consisting of four senior-level forestry students, completed the management plan in December 2020. FWP intends to implement their plan in 2021. The project is projected to generate approximately 200 tons of forest products (equating to approximately 7 log-truck loads) for local forest products manufacturing facilities. The estimated cost of the project is \$6,000.00, which will be covered out of FWP's FAS maintenance account and a USDA-USFS Forest Health Western Bark Beetle Grant administered by the Montana DNRC.

### **River Junction FAS Forestry Project**

In October 2019, the Fish and Wildlife Commission approved FWP's proposal to implement forest treatments on approximately 66 acres of the River Junction FAS near Ovando, MT. The objectives of the treatment are to mitigate hazard trees within the developed recreation site, reduce susceptibility to crown fire, increase resiliency to insects and diseases, and maintain/enhance aesthetics.

FWP plans to implement the project beginning in November 2021. The treatment is projected to generate approximately 800 tons (equating to approximately 30 log-truck loads) of forest products for local forest products manufacturing facilities. The estimated cost of the project is \$25,000.00, which will be covered out of FWP's FAS forest management account and a USDA-USFS Forest Health Western Bark Beetle Grant administered by the Montana DNRC.

### **Horseshoe Lake FAS Forestry Project**

In October 2019, the Fish and Wildlife Commission approved FWP's proposal to implement forest treatments on approximately 12 acres of the Horseshoe Lake FAS near Ferndale, MT. The objectives of the treatment are to mitigate hazard trees within the developed recreation site, reduce hazardous fuels in the WUI, increase resiliency to insects and diseases, and maintain/enhance aesthetics.

FWP plans to implement the project beginning in October 2021. The treatments are non-commercial and not expected to generate commercial forest byproducts. The estimated cost of the project is \$12,000.00, and FWP is pursuing grant funding opportunities to defray the costs of the treatment.

## **STATE PARKS**

For calendar years 2019 through 2020, one forest management project was completed, one is under contract, and one is in planning stages.

### **Placid Lake State Park Forestry Project**

FWP contracted with J & E Contracting, LLC in November 2019 to implement hazard tree removal on approximately 15 acres of the Placid Lake State Park near Seeley



**Figure 3 - J & E Contracting operating in the highly developed Placid Lake State Park campground. Photo credit: J. Parke**



Lake, MT. The project generated approximately 98 tons of sawlogs (3 log-truck loads) which were sold to Weyerhaeuser in Evergreen, MT. The project cost \$5,000, which was funded through FWP's Parks maintenance account.

### **Thompson Chain of Lakes State Park Forestry Project**

In December 2019, FWP published a Decision Notice to proceed with implementation of the Thompson Chain of Lakes Forest Management Project near Happy's Inn, MT. The project would treat roughly 460 acres of forested lands in and around McGregor and Little McGregor Lakes, Lower Thompson Lake, Middle Thompson Lake, Upper Thompson Lake, Horseshoe Lake complex, and Loon and Little Loon Lakes. The objectives of the project are to remove hazard trees within the developed recreation site, reduce hazardous fuels in the WUI, increase resiliency to insects and diseases, and maintain/enhance aesthetics. The project would also involve planting ponderosa pine and western larch to replace trees removed around campsites.

FWP awarded a contract in December 2020 to implement the first phase of the project which includes treating 137 acres. The project is expected to produce approximately 2,000 tons (equating to approximately 74 log-truck loads) of forest products for local forest product manufacturing facilities. The project cost is estimated to be \$19,930 which will be covered out a USDA-USFS Forest Health Western Bark Beetle Grant administered by the Montana DNRC and FWP's Parks Division Forest Management Account.

### **Salmon Lake State Park Forestry Project**

In October 2020, FWP published a Decision Notice to proceed with implementation of the 30-acre Salmon Lake State Park Forest Health Improvement Project near Clearwater, MT. The objectives of the project are to remove hazard trees within the developed recreation site, reduce susceptibility to crown fire, increase resiliency to insects and diseases, and maintain/enhance aesthetics.

FWP plans to implement the project beginning in January 2021. The project is projected to generate approximately 300 tons (equating to approximately 11 log-truck loads) of forest products for local forest products manufacturing facilities. The estimated cost of the project is \$15,000, which will be covered out a USDA-USFS Forest Health Western Bark Beetle Grant administered by the Montana DNRC.

## **WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS**

For the calendar years 2019 through 2020, several forest management projects have been completed, are under contract, or are in a planning stage. Projects include both commercial timber harvest and non-commercial treatments such as hand-thinning and prescribed fire.

## Sun River WMA Habitat Project



**Figure 4 - Crews from the Rocky Mountain Ranger District burning slash piles on the Sun River WMA in September 2019. Photo Credit: B. Lonner**

burn 465 acres on the Sun River WMA approximately 12 miles west of Augusta, MT. Thinning and prescribed burning will focus on the removal of Douglas-fir with the objective of promoting native grass and forb production; improving aspen stands; and improving forest health and resilience to insects, disease, and wildfire. The USFS is contributing labor, equipment, and supplies and materials. The project is expected to be completed by December 2021.

In October 2016, FWP and the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest entered into an interagency cooperative agreement under the Wyden Amendment authority which allows the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to conduct work on state lands. USFS personnel from the Rocky Mountain Ranger District will thin and

Under the cooperative agreement, FWP has committed to pay the USFS \$65,530.00 using the Wildlife Division's Forest Management Account and grant funds. To-date, the USFS has completed 349 acres of thinning, piling, and pile burning on the project. FWP has received two grants from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) to help fund this project. The treatments are non-commercial and won't result in the sale of forest products. The Sun River WMA is critical elk winter range and up to 95 percent of the Sun River elk herd (as many as 2,700) can be found on the WMA during the peak of winter.

### **Blackleaf WMA Conifer Removal Project**

FWP initiated the Blackleaf WMA Conifer Removal project in August 2018. This project involves removing conifers, primarily Douglas-fir, from grasslands, shrublands, and aspen habitats. FWP is completing the work in-house with wildlife biologists, game wardens, and WMA maintenance staff. The treatment is noncommercial and includes hand-felling, girdling, lop and scatter, and pile and burn with the primary objective of improving elk habitat. The project area is approximately 30 acres with plans to expand the project to other areas of the WMA in coming years. In 2019 and 2020, FWP completed approximately 5 acres of cutting and piling and approximately 20 acres of pile burning.

## **Blacktail/Robb-Ledford WMA Conifer Removal Project**

FWP has been implementing conifer removal treatments on the Blacktail and Robb-Ledford WMAs east of Dillon, MT since 2017. The objectives of the project are to prevent loss of sagebrush and grassland habitat by removing competing conifers, increase sage-grouse nesting habitat, and increase year-round forage and browse available to elk, mule deer, moose, pronghorn, sage-grouse, and ruffed grouse by removing conifers that compete with forb, grass, and deciduous shrub species.



**Figure 5 - Snowslide Creek following completion of conifer removal treatments in 2019. Photo Credit: D. Waltee**

The project treated approximately 1,550 acres. The Blacktail WMA portion of the project was completed by FWP staff in July 2018. FWP completed the Robb-Ledford WMA portion in 2020 through contractors, volunteers, and with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy. This project was funded by grants from Mule Deer Foundation (MDF), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Ruby Watershed Conservation District, and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF).

## **Mt. Haggin WMA Habitat Project #4**

The Mt. Haggin WMA Habitat Project #4 was approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission in April 2018. The objectives of the project are to prevent loss of sagebrush, grassland, aspen, and riparian habitat by removing competing conifers and increase year-round forage and browse available to elk, mule deer, moose, pronghorn, and ruffed grouse by removing conifers that compete with forb, grass, and deciduous shrub and tree species.

FWP contracted with Northwest Management Inc. for the first phase of the project totaling 1,182 acres. The



**Figure 6 - Slash piles from conifers cut to restore grassland habitat on Mt. Haggin WMA near Ramsey, MT. Photo Credit: Northwest Management, Inc.**

contractor hired crews to conduct hand-cutting, girdling, and slash piling in the summer/fall of 2019. Slash pile burning is on-going through the winter of 2020-21. Phase 1 costs totaled \$263,554.00, with funding provided by the Wildlife Division's Forest Management Account (\$21,524) and grants from MDF (\$15,000), RMEF (\$30,125), and the Montana Natural Resource Damage Program (\$196,905). Phase 2 includes 208 acres and is under contract with Windswept Wildfire LLC out of Montana City, MT. The cost for Phase 2 is \$54,680 with funding provided by a grant from RMEF and the Wildlife Division's Forest Management Account. FWP is seeking additional grant funding opportunities for future work on this project.

### **Blackfoot-Clearwater/Threemile WMA Weeds 2019**

In the summer of 2019, FWP contracted with WMA Noxious Weed/Range Specialists LLC out of Missoula to perform weed spraying along haul roads and disturbed areas totaling 167 acres. The treatments were taken as a follow-up measure after the recently completed Threemile Timber Sale (2016) and Dreyer-Boyd Timber Sale (2018) in order to prevent weeds from spreading along roads and into the treatment units. The cost of the treatments totaled \$7,749.80 and funding was provided by the Wildlife Division's Forest Management Account and a USDA-USFS Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

### **Dreyer Boyd Prescribed Burn**



**Figure 7 - Jackpot burning operations in September 2019.**

**Photo Credit: J. Parke**

FWP conducted 354 acres of timber harvesting on the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA in 2017-2018. Follow-up treatments include jackpot burning and broadcast burning within the project area to reduce slash generated from the mechanical treatments, stimulate aspen regeneration, and reintroduce fire to ecological systems adapted to historically frequent/low intensity fire. FWP, with the assistance of DNRC-Clearwater Unit, completed 63 acres of

jackpot burning in September 2019. In the spring/summer of 2020, FWP, Montana Forest and Conservation Experiment Station, and DNRC completed a burn plan and burn prep on 85 acres in preparation for a broadcast burn scheduled for 2021.

### **Elk Basin Restoration 1 Project**

The Elk Basin Restoration 1 project is the first phase of the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA (BCWMA) Conifer Expansion and Native Grassland Restoration Project that was approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission in April 2017. The objectives of the project are to maintain and restore rough



fescue/Idaho fescue grassland, ponderosa pine savannah, aspen habitats, and mixed-conifer forest on elk winter range. The project will utilize a combination of commercial timber harvest and non-commercial treatments such as lop and scatter, pile and burn, and prescribed burning.

The Elk Basin Restoration 1 contract, totaling 404 acres, was awarded to Bull Creek Forestry, Inc. in July 2018 and work commenced in September 2018. The project was completed in October 2019 and generated 5,965 tons of sawlogs, equating to approximately 917

MBF, and 3,437 tons of non-sawlog material. Mills receiving timber from the project included Big Sky Sawmill (Vaughn, MT), Pyramid Mountain Lumber (Seeley Lake, MT), and Willis Enterprises (Bonner, MT). FWP is working with DNRC and contractors to implement prescribed burns in the mechanically treated areas as well as conducting follow-up noxious weed management treatments in 2021. Project costs totaled \$55,348 and funding was provided by a RMEF grant (\$20,000) and a USDA-USFS Landscape Scale Restoration Grant (\$75,692.54) administered by Montana DNRC.



**Figure 8 - A bull elk travels through active timber harvesting operations on the Elk Basin Restoration 1 Project. Photo Credit: J. Parke**

### **Nevada Lake WMA Forest Habitat Enhancement Project**



**Figure 9 - Processed logs waiting to be picked up by the forwarder on the Nevada Lake WMA. Photo Credit: J. Parke**

The project involved a combination of commercial timber harvest, understory thinning, road maintenance, and slash disposal. The project costs totaled \$100,923.39 and were funded by the Wildlife Division's

The Fish and Wildlife Commission approved this project in August 2018. The objectives of the project are to improve elk and deer winter forage, increase resilience to fire by restoring open stand conditions dominated by large diameter ponderosa pine, recruit ponderosa pine regeneration, and enhance aspen habitats.

In April 2019, FWP contracted with Bull Creek Forestry, Inc. out of Seeley Lake, MT to implement the 444-acre project located near Helmville, MT. The project

Forest Management Account (\$15,230.85), RMEF grant (\$10,000), and a USDA-USFS Western States Wildland Urban Interface Grant (\$75,692.54) administered by Montana DNRC. The project was completed in October of 2019 and generated 2,699 tons of sawlogs, equating to approximately 415 thousand board feet (MBF), and 2,757 tons of pulp logs. Mills receiving timber from the project included Sun Mountain Lumber (Deer Lodge, MT), Pyramid Mountain Lumber (Seeley Lake, MT), and Willis Enterprises (Bonner, MT). FWP is working with DNRC and contractors to implement prescribed burns in the mechanically treated areas as well as conducting follow-up noxious weed management treatments in 2021.

### **Threemile 2 Timber Sale**

The Fish and Wildlife Commission provided final approval of FWP's proposal to implement the 1,492-acre Threemile 2 Timber Sale project in April 2019. The objectives of the project are to improve native grass and woody browse forage production for elk and mule deer, restore a more desirable species composition and successional stage, reduce susceptibility of treated stands to bark beetle epidemics and uncharacteristic stand-replacement fire, and improve aspen habitats. FWP coordinated the project with DNRC and USFS-Bitterroot National Forest to treat an additional 164 acres of adjacent National Forest System Lands (NFSL) through the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) program.



**Figure 10 - Road improvements on the Threemile 2 Timber Sale included replacing an old wooden bridge across Spring Gulch with a steel bridge. Photo Credit: J. Parke**

In December 2019, FWP contracted with Pyramid Mountain Lumber (Seeley Lake, MT) to implement the project. The project involves commercial timber harvesting and approximately 24 miles of road improvements. An additional service contract was awarded to Hall Wood Processing, Inc (Potomac, MT) in November 2019 to remove non-commercial conifers from a 227-acre grassland meadow within the project area. Costs for the non-commercial tree removal are estimated to be \$25,000 and would be paid for with a RMEF grant. Pyramid Mountain Lumber hired Hall Wood Processing, Inc. to start road work in June 2020. Road construction and reconstruction required clearing of trees within the road right-of-way which produced 1,504 tons of sawlogs and 43 tons of non-sawlogs. Mills receiving timber from the right-of-way clearing included Pyramid Mountain Lumber and Willis Enterprises. Once completed, the project is projected to produce 19,800 tons of sawlogs, equating to 3.2 million board feet (MMBF) and generate approximately \$23,000 in stumpage for the

Wildlife Division's Forest Management Account. Commercial timber harvesting is expected to start in the winter of 2020/21. Road improvement costs were borne by FWP which totaled \$155,265. Funding for the road work was provided by the Wildlife Division's Forest Management Account (\$79,000), Habitat Montana (\$74,000), and the WMA Maintenance Account (\$2,265).

### **Wood's Ranch WMA Blowdown Salvage Timber Sale**



**Figure 11 - A severe windstorm in November 2019 resulted in significant blowdown along Burma Road north of Eureka, MT. Photo Credit: E. Lula**

In April 2020, the Fish and Wildlife Commission approved FWP's proposal to salvage blowdown timber on the Wood's Ranch WMA north of Eureka, MT. A windstorm on November 27, 2019 caused significant blowdown on approximately 86 acres of the WMA, which had the potential to negatively affect deer and elk movement and foraging, recreational use, bark beetle activity, and potential fire intensity and severity in the event of a wildfire.

In August 2020, FWP awarded a contract to Doble Enterprises, Inc (Fortine, MT). The project involves commercial timber harvest and minor road maintenance. The timber sale is expected to produce 1,800 tons, equating to approximately 275 MBF, and generate \$49,986.00 for the Wildlife Division's Forest Management Account. The project will be finished in January 2020.

### **Elk Basin Restoration 2 Project**

The Elk Basin Restoration 2 project is the second phase of the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA (BCWMA) Conifer Expansion and Native Grassland Restoration Project that was approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission in April 2017. The objectives of the project are to maintain and restore rough fescue/Idaho fescue grassland, ponderosa pine savannah, aspen habitats, and mixed-conifer forest on elk winter range. The project will utilize a combination of commercial timber harvest and non-commercial



**Figure 12 - The first load of timber off the Elk Basin Restoration 2 Project, headed to Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake, MT. Photo Credit: J. Parke**



treatments such as lop and scatter, pile and burn, and prescribed burning.

The Elk Basin Restoration 2 contract, totaling 1,633 acres, was awarded to Bull Creek Forestry, Inc. (Seeley Lake, MT) in October 2020. Work commenced in November 2020 and will continue through May 2023. The project involves a combination of commercial timber harvest, understory thinning, road maintenance, and slash disposal. The project is projected to produce 22,918 tons of sawlogs, equating to 3.3 MMBF and an estimated 9,800 tons of non-sawlog material. The project cost is estimated to be \$131,150. Funding for the project will be provided by the Wildlife Division's Forest Management Account (\$32,787.50) and a USDA-USFS Western States Wildland Urban Interface Grant (\$98,362.50) administered by Montana DNRC.

### **Nevada Lake WMA Prescribed Burn**

FWP, with the assistance of DNRC and TNC, prepared a burn plan for 44 acres within the Nevada Lake WMA Forest Habitat Enhancement Project area in the summer of 2020. The objectives of the prescribed burn are to reduce slash generated from the mechanical treatments, stimulate fire-adapted grasses and shrubs, and reintroduce fire to ecological systems adapted to historically frequent/low intensity fire. FWP contracted with Brushbull Forestry, Inc. out of Florence, MT to construct 4,090 feet of fireline in preparation for a broadcast burn at a cost of \$4,900. FWP plans to conduct a broadcast burn in 2021 with the assistance of DNRC fire crews from the Anaconda and Clearwater units.

### **Mount Jumbo WMA Forest Habitat Restoration Project**



**Figure 13 - Dense conifer regeneration will be thinned to promote forage for big game as well as reducing hazardous ladder fuels. Photo Credit: J. Parke**

In October 2020, The Fish and Wildlife Commission provided final approval of FWP's proposal to implement 100 acres of forest treatments on the Mount Jumbo WMA north of Missoula. The objectives of the project are to increase forage potential on elk and deer winter range, promote stand conditions that would allow fire to burn at a low severity appropriate for the habitat type, and reduce fuel loading in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). FWP is coordinating the project with City of Missoula Conservation Lands and the adjacent Marshall Woods Timber Sale on NFSL administered by the USFS-Lolo

National Forest. The project involves a combination of commercial timber harvest and non-commercial forest treatment such as cut, pile, and burn and broadcast burning. The estimated cost



for all treatments is \$50,000. FWP would provide funding for the project using the Wildlife Division's Forest Management Account, \$4,500 from the USDA-USFS Forest Health Western Bark Beetle Grant administered by the Montana DNRC, as well as pursuing other grant funding opportunities. The project is expected to produce approximately 270 tons (equating to approximately 10 log-truck loads) of forest products for local forest product manufacturing facilities. The project is expected to start in the winter of 2020/21.

### **Nevada Lake WMA Weed Management 2020**

FWP contracted with Western Weed Control out of Columbia Falls, MT to perform noxious weed management on 198 acres of the Nevada Lake WMA. The treatments are being taken as a follow-up measure after the recently completed Nevada Lake WMA Forest Habitat Restoration Project (2019) in order to prevent weeds from spreading along roads and into the treatment units. The work is planned to occur in the summer-fall of 2021. The cost of the weed treatment is \$16,083.40 and funding will be provided by the Wildlife Division's Forest Management Account and a WMA maintenance account.

### **Calf Creek WMA Habitat Restoration Project**



**Figure 14 - Over the past 60 years conifers have gradually expanded into grass/shrublands on the Calf Creek WMA, reducing forage availability on elk and deer winter range. Photo Credit: J. Parke**

The Fish and Wildlife Commission endorsed FWP's proposal to proceed with project development and analysis of this project in May 2020. FWP plans to release a Draft EA for public comment in January 2021. The objectives of the project are to improve elk and deer winter forage, restore grasslands through conifer removal, promote stand conditions that would allow fire to burn at a low severity appropriate for the habitat type, and promote aspen growth and regeneration. The project involves a combination of commercial timber harvest, noncommercial treatments, and prescribed burning across 1,116

acres of forests and grasslands. The estimated cost of all treatments is \$250,000. FWP would pursue grant funding opportunities for this project. The project could start as soon as the winter of 2021/22 if funding can be secured.

## FUTURE PROJECTS

The following table shows project areas that have been identified by FWP as priority areas for forestry treatments. The project areas were identified through the 2013 Sustained Yield Calculation process, 2018 Sustained Yield Review and Update, and statewide planning processes as well as site-specific priorities identified by FWP site managers. FWP completed a statewide forest management plan in 2018 which provides a framework for identifying, prioritizing, and implementing forest management projects. Additional priority areas may be identified in the event of unforeseen forest disturbances (e.g. wildfire, insect infestation), opportunity, or through the annual call for project proposals. The acreages and volumes listed are estimates and subject to change depending on issues identified during project development and input received during public participation.

**Table 5 - WMA Forestry Project List, 2021-2026**

Project Area	Region	Est. Acres	Est. Sawlog Volume (MBF)	Species	Implementation Date	Description
K. Ross Toole FAS	2	10	25	DF, PP	2021 - 2023	Hazard tree removal, fuels reduction, insects and diseases, aesthetics
Horseshoe Lake FAS	1	12	0	GF	2021 - 2023	Hazard tree removal, fuels reduction, insects and diseases, aesthetics
Salmon Lake SP	2	24	40	DF	2021 - 2023	Hazard tree removal, fuels reduction, insects and diseases, aesthetics
Mount Jumbo WMA	2	100	36	DF, PP	2021 - 2026	Elk and deer winter range enhancement, combination commercial and non-commercial
Mt. Haggin WMA	3	986	0	LP, DF	2021 - 2026	Big game winter/spring range (non-commercial)
Sun River WMA	4	116	0	DF	2021 - 2022	Elk winter range, aspen enhancement (non-commercial, U.S. Forest Service Cooperative Agreement)
Blackleaf WMA	4	500	0	DF, limber pine	2019 - 2024	Elk and mule deer winter/transitional range, aspen enhancement (non-commercial)
Gallatin WMA	3	400	0	DF	2021 - 2026	Taylor Fork, elk and mule deer winter/transitional range, aspen enhancement (non-commercial)

Project Area	Region	Est. Acres	Est. Sawlog Volume (MBF)	Species	Implementation Date	Description
River Junction FAS	2	66	100	DF, PP	2021 - 2023	Fuels reduction, hazard tree removal, aesthetics
Calf Creek WMA	2	1,116	2,500	PP, DF	2021 - 2024	Elk and mule deer winter range enhancement
Robb-Ledford WMA	3	22	100	DF	2021 - 2023	Year-round big-game habitat, ruffed and sage-grouse habitat, aspen enhancement
Marshall WMA	2	500-1,000	500-1,500	Mixed-conifer	2021 - 2026	Restore desirable forest structure, fuels reduction, lynx habitat, elk summer and fall range
Mt. Haggin WMA	3	500-1,000	1,500-3,000	LP	2022 - 2026	Elk spring/summer range, aspen enhancement
Bull River WMA	1	50-100	200	Mixed-conifer	2022 - 2026	Fuels reduction, restore desirable forest structure, big game winter range
Ray Kuhns WMA	1	30-150	100-1,000	Mixed-conifer	2022 - 2026	Whitetail deer winter range
Wayfarers SP	1	25	30	DF, WL	2022 - 2026	Hazard tree removal, fuels reduction, insects and diseases, aesthetics
Thompson Chain of Lakes SP	1	323	250-1,000	DF	2022 - 2026	Hazard tree removal, fuels reduction, insects and diseases, aesthetics
Fireman's Point FAS	5	20-150	0	PP, juniper	2023 - 2026	Fuels reduction
North Swan WMA	1	500-1,000	500-1,500	Mixed-conifer	2023 - 2026	Restore desirable forest structure
Fish Creek WMA	2	50-500	0-750	Mixed-conifer	2023 - 2026	Quartz-Rivulet area, potential precommercial/early commercial thin, moose and mule deer winter range
Garrity Mountain WMA	2	100-1,000	100-1,500	DF, LP	2023 - 2026	Elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep winter/spring range, fuels reduction, watershed protection

The next table (Table 6) shows project areas and approximate acres that may be proposed for commercial forest treatments over the next 30 years. Additional non-commercial treatments are expected. This table was developed based on information compiled for the 2013 Sustained Yield Calculation and statewide planning. It is subject to change in the event of unforeseen forest disturbances (e.g. wildfire, insect infestation), opportunity, or additional forest planning efforts. The acreage of State Park and Fishing Access Site forestry projects will vary based on funding availability.

**Table 6 - Long Range Planning of FWP Commercial Forest Treatments**

<b>Project Area</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>6-15 Years (acres)</b>	<b>16 -30 Years (acres)</b>	<b>Management Objectives/Regime</b>
Woods Ranch WMA	1	40	115	Elk and deer winter range. Uneven-aged; single-tree selection, promote multi-story development
Mount Silcox WMA	1	120	120	Elk and bighorn sheep winter/spring range. Uneven-aged; thin from below and group selection
Bull River WMA	1	250	70	Whitetail deer/multiple wildlife objectives. Uneven-aged; thin from below to promote mature forest cover
North Swan Valley WMA	1	-	500	Whitetail deer/multiple wildlife objectives. Uneven-aged; promote mixed conifer, multi-storied stand structure
West Kootenai WMA	1	-	500	Elk and deer winter range. Uneven-aged and even-aged – precommercial and early commercial thin in 2017 Caribou Fire area in approximately 30 years.
Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA	2	500	1,800	Elk and mule deer winter range. Uneven-aged; conifer expansion, thin from below, group selection
Threemile WMA	2	-	350	Elk and mule deer winter range. Uneven-aged, single tree and group selection
Nevada Lake WMA	2	-	100	Elk winter range. Uneven-aged management; conifer expansion and thin from below
Garrity Mountain WMA	2	-	200	Elk, mule deer, and bighorn sheep winter/spring range. Even and uneven-aged; lodgepole salvage, aspen enhancement, conifer expansion
Fish Creek WMA	2	-	-	Elk and deer winter/summer range with multiple other wildlife objectives. Even and uneven-aged; commercial harvest expected in approximately 30 years
Spotted Dog WMA	2	50	-	Elk winter range. Even-aged (lodgepole) and uneven-aged, aspen enhancement



Project Area	Region	6-15 Years (acres)	16 -30 Years (acres)	Management Objectives/Regime
Marshall WMA	2	270	900	Lynx habitat and summer/fall elk range. Even-aged and uneven aged; shelterwood and group selection
Mt. Haggin WMA	3	900	630	Year-round elk and mule deer habitat. Even and uneven-aged; salvage, commercial thin, group selection, and conifer expansion
Canyon Creek WMA	3	-	150	Elk summer range and fall security. Uneven-aged; single tree selection
Haymaker WMA	5	70	-	Elk winter range. Uneven-aged; group selection
Fishing Access Sites	All	20	20	Safety, aesthetics, insects and disease risk mitigation, hazardous fuels reduction, and riparian habitat enhancement
State Parks	All	300	300	Safety, aesthetics, insects and disease risk mitigation, hazardous fuels reduction

## GRANTS

Several projects did not produce merchantable byproducts and/or the cost of the treatment exceeded the value of the merchantable timber removed. The projects listed below received grant funding to help pay for the cost of the treatment. Funding from the FWP Forest Management Account provided matching funds for most of these projects.

**Table 7 – Active grants awarded to FWP**

GRANT	PROJECT	AMOUNT
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	Sun River WMA	\$ 15,000
	Threemile 2	\$ 25,000
	Mt. Haggin #4/Phase 1	\$ 35,000
	Mt. Haggin #4/Phase 2	\$ 35,000
Mule Deer Foundation	Mt. Haggin #4/Phase 1	\$ 15,000
Montana Natural Resource Damage Program	Mt. Haggin #4/Phase 1	\$ 196,905
	Mt. Haggin WMA Forest Inventory	\$ 35,800
	Garrity Mountain WMA Forest Inventory	\$ 14,300
Bitter Root Water Forum	Threemile WMA/Bolin Ranch Conservation Easement	\$ 52,000
Blackfoot Challenge	Nevada Lake WMA	\$ 5,500
USDA-USFS Western States Wildland Urban Interface Grant	Multiple sites	\$ 270,000
USDA-USFS Forest Health Western Bark Beetle Grant	Multiple sites	\$ 75,450
<b>TOTAL ACTIVE GRANT FUNDS AWARDED TO FWP</b>		<b>\$ 774,955</b>

## **PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION**

### **Montana DNRC**

#### **Ray Kuhns WMA Seedling Survival Study Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)**

In September 2017, FWP and DNRC entered into a MOA to cooperate on a seedling survival trial on state trust lands adjacent to the Ray Kuhns WMA. As many as 500 white-tailed deer per square mile may use the area during severe winter months. Due to heavy deer browse, conifer regeneration is not being established on previously harvested state trust lands which could jeopardize the potential future growth and yield from these lands. Likewise, FWP is interested in using timber harvest to enhance white-tailed deer habitat. It is of mutual interest to determine optimal seedling establishment methods for the area. FWP and DNRC are splitting the costs of the trial, which are primarily fencing, browse deterrent materials, the purchase of seedlings, and labor.

#### **Cooperative Agreement Between Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation**

In March 2020, FWP-Wildlife Division and DNRC-Forestry Division entered into a cooperative agreement which allows FWP to reimburse DNRC for assistance with project planning, design, and layout; contract administration; and prescribed burning. DNRC and FWP are currently working together on several projects under this agreement including the Threemile 2 Timber Sale, Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA Conifer Expansion and Native Grassland Restoration Project, Nevada Lake WMA Forest Habitat Enhancement Project, and Mt. Haggin WMA Forest Inventory. The agreement is effective through June 30, 2023.

### **Montana Forest and Conservation Experiment Station**

#### **BC Timber Bench Prescribed Burn**

In March 2020, FWP and the Montana Forest and Conservation Experiment Station (MFCES) entered into a cooperative agreement which allowed MFCES to assist FWP in the development of a burn plan, burn prep, burn implementation, and burn monitoring on 35 acres of the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA and 50 adjacent acres of the Bandy Experimental Ranch. FWP and MFCES prepped the burn unit in the summer of 2020 in anticipation of conducting a broadcast burn in 2021.

### **U.S. Forest Service**

#### **Sun River WMA Habitat Project**

FWP has partnered with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to implement conifer removal treatments on elk winter range. FWP is compensating USFS for labor, supplies, and materials through a

combination of grant funding and the FWP Forest Management Account. The agreement is in effect through December 31, 2021.

#### Threemile 2 Timber Sale

FWP is working with the DNRC and USFS-Bitterroot National Forest on NFSL parcels in the Bitterroot National Forest that are landlocked or immediately adjacent to the Threemile WMA. Through collaborative efforts by the three agencies, DNRC and USFS-Bitterroot National Forest executed a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) project that allowed DNRC to oversee a 164-acre timber sale in addition to FWP's 1,492-acre timber sale. DNRC advertised both timber sales under one Notice of Sale which allowed FWP and DNRC to award both timber sale contracts to one Purchaser. FWP is working with the DNRC GNA foresters to coordinate the on-going treatments.

#### Mount Jumbo WMA Habitat Restoration Project

FWP is working with USFS-Lolo National Forest and City of Missoula Conservation Lands Program to coordinate timber harvesting operations on Mount Jumbo WMA and adjacent Marshall Woods Timber Sale. The USFS-Lolo National Forest is also assisting FWP with slash disposal and burn plans to conduct cross boundary broadcast burning on the WMA, City of Missoula Conservation Lands, and NFSL adjacent to the WMA.

### **Bureau of Land Management**

#### Johnsrud Park FAS Forestry Project

FWP and the BLM-Missoula Field Office entered into an interagency cooperative agreement which allowed the BLM to assist FWP in implementing a 6-acre forest treatment on the Johnsrud Park Fishing Access Site near Bonner, MT. BLM included the FWP project in their Whisky Gulch Stewardship Contract and administered the contract on behalf of FWP at no cost.

### **The Nature Conservancy**

#### Western Montana Shared Forester

FWP, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Blackfoot Challenge, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the University of Montana partnered to establish a forester position housed with The Nature Conservancy to assist with forest management in the greater Blackfoot watershed area. FWP committed funds from its Forest Management Account to support the position for work to be completed on Blackfoot-area WMAs. The shared forester, Michael Schaedel, has assisted in the planning and implementation of projects on the Blackfoot-Clearwater and Nevada Lake WMAs as well as working to develop a forest management plan for the Marshall WMA.



#### Southwest Montana Sagebrush Conservation Partnership

The Nature Conservancy helps agencies organize and implement sagebrush ecosystem restoration projects across southwest Montana. TNC has assisted FWP in implementing several hundred acres of conifer removal treatments on the Robb-Ledford WMA.

### **FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS/INVENTORY DATABASE**

#### Marshall WMA Forest Management Plan

FWP, with the assistance of TNC, started the process of drafting a forest management plan for the 24,800-acres Marshall WMA near Seeley Lake, MT. TNC performed stand delineation and aerial photo interpretation of the entire WMA in the summer of 2019. FWP and TNC started road inventory and ground-truthing in the summer of 2019-2020. FWP expects to release a draft forest management plan in 2022.

#### Fleecer WMA Forest Management Plan

In 2020, FWP performed stand delineation and aerial photo interpretation of the 6,700-acre Fleecer WMA south of Butte, MT. FWP plans on performing field reconnaissance, ground-truthing, and road inventory in the summer of 2021 and expects to release a draft forest management plan in 2022.

#### Mt Haggin WMA Forest Management Plan

FWP, with the assistance of DNRC-Anaconda Unit, started field reconnaissance of the 58,000-acre Mt Haggin WMA in the summer of 2020. FWP plans on performing stand delineation and aerial photo interpretation in the winter of 2021. FWP will continue field reconnaissance, road inventory, and ground truthing in the summer of 2021 and expects to release a draft forest management plan in 2022.

#### Forest Inventory Database

In 2016, FWP started working on the development of a forest inventory database in order to track forest stand attributes that are necessary for forest management plans, monitoring, reporting, and reviewing and updating the sustained yield calculation every 5 years as required by law in § 87-1-622(4), MCA. FWP's forester and Technical Services Section have developed a centralized database system. The system contains five tiers of data. Three of the five tiers were put into production in April 2018. The two remaining tiers are still in development and testing. Database revision is on-going.

FWP has been awarded grant funding from Montana NRDP for forest inventory work on the Mt. Haggin and Garrity Mountain WMAs. FWP plans to conduct this forest inventory work in the

summer of 2021. FWP intends to use the data to assess forest conditions and identify forest management opportunities on these WMAs.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH**

In addition to implementing the legislative requirements of the forestry program, FWP's forester provided technical forestry assistance on FWP land interests, participated in educational outreach, and served as the spokesperson for external communication regarding FWP's forestry program.

### **Technical Assistance**

#### **Wheelbarrow Creek Project**

FWP's forester helped coordinate a grant agreement between FWP and the Bitter Root Water Forum to secure funding to replace two stream crossings and improve 1.7 miles of road to reduce sediment delivery into Wheelbarrow Creek and provide fish passage for native cutthroat trout. A portion of the project occurs on the Bolin Ranch, through which FWP holds a conservation easement, and the work would occur on an FWP road easement through the property. FWP's forester and FWP Design and Construction staff plan to coordinate the work with the on-going Threemile 2 Timber Sale road improvements in 2021.

### **Communication and Outreach**

#### **Montana Natural Resources Youth Camp**

The Montana Natural Resources Youth Camp (MNRYC) introduces youth to a variety of natural resources conservation and management disciplines including geology, soils, water, wildlife, range, and forestry. FWP has been involved in MNRYC since its inception. FWP's forester has served on the Board of Directors since 2016 and instructs the forestry course.

#### **Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation**

The FWP forester assisted the Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation and MSU Extension Forestry in identifying a site on the Threemile WMA for the Forest Stand Analysis and Tree Selection Workshop in June 2020.

#### **The University of Montana, W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation (FCFC)**

The FWP forester hosted field trips for forestry students from The University of Montana, FCFC. FWP's forester provided a presentation on FWP's forest management plan to the FCFC forest planning class in 2019 and 2020. FWP's forester also provided a field site, the K. Ross Toole FAS, for the FCFC forestry capstone class and provided review of the students' forest management plan.

#### Society of American Foresters

FWP's Forester has been a member of the Society of American Foresters (SAF), a professional forestry association, since 2002 and participates in the Montana SAF Executive Committee and Forest Policy Committee.

#### Montana Logging Association/Montana Wood Products Association

Timber harvest and timber sales remain a key tool in FWP's forest management toolbox and revenue generated from timber sales help ensure the fiscal sustainability of FWP's forestry program. FWP's Forester continues to maintain communication with accredited logging professionals and forest products manufacturers by providing updates to these organizations at their request.