

UPLAND GAME BIRD ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

REPORT TO THE 67th MONTANA LEGISLATURE

January 2021



Sharp-tailed grouse perched in a chokecherry shrub, foraging berries

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The Goal of the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program is to efficiently and responsibly conserve and enhance upland game bird habitats and populations—providing quality public hunting opportunities for upland game birds for present and future generations.

OVERVIEW

Montana is fortunate to have a program dedicated to upland game bird habitats and hunting access opportunities. The Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program (UGBEP) advances game bird conservation, providing the means for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and its partners to work directly with interested landowners and conservation partners to achieve abundant game bird populations. As changes in land uses intensify and hunting access becomes more difficult to attain, the value of the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program appreciates (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The UGBEP advances game bird conservation for the benefit of generations.

This biennial report chronicles program achievements, summarizes revenue and expenditures, and tabulates habitat enhancement projects and upland game bird releases conducted in FY

2019 and FY 2020 (biennium). This report is intended for Montana legislators, the UGBEP Citizens' Advisory Council, FWP staff, and interested organizations and citizens.

INTRODUCTION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks administers the statewide Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program, which is organized into two parts:

1. Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program (Montana ARM 12.9.7)
2. Upland Game Bird Release Program (Montana ARM 12.9.6)

The principle outcomes of the UGBEP are:

- establishment or enhancement of game bird habitats that benefit gray partridge, forest grouse, ring-necked pheasants, sage-grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and wild turkey;
- conservation of valuable game bird habitats;
- enhanced public game bird hunting opportunities;
- release of pen-reared pheasants into suitable habitats to establish or enhance populations;
- and
- wild turkey transplants in suitable areas generally void of turkeys.

A portion of the funds received from the sale of each upland game bird hunting license must be used by the department for the exclusive purpose to preserve and enhance upland game bird populations in Montana (87-1-246 through 87-1-249, MCA). Residential license sales for upland game bird and combination sports licenses contribute \$2 per license to the program. Non-resident licenses for upland game bird and big game combination contribute \$23 per license sold. Since 2013, sales of nonresident 3-day bird licenses contributed \$10 per license to the UGBEP.

Overall bird license sales appear to have stabilized since the last licensing adjustments in 2016, which included base hunting prerequisites and elimination of most free licenses. There appears to be some fluctuation in numbers due to the quality of bird hunting in a particular year, but the many combination licenses that include upland bird hunting buffers the effect of individual bird license sales. See Appendix A: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks MFWP.

Program implementation is focused and strategic, guided by the long-term UGBEP Strategic Plan (adopted by the Fish & Wildlife Commission in 2011). The program is delivered statewide on projects located on private or public lands and spans collaborative efforts with private landowners, government agencies, and conservation partners.

PROGRAM MILESTONES

The UGBEP continues to grow and evolve in ways that increases efficiency and participation. In the past biennium, the following program milestones were noteworthy:

Habitat Funds: Approaching a Structurally Balanced Framework

The Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program historically carried large sums of unspent, unobligated balances reserved for habitat and administration expenditures. In recent years, the unspent balance has considerably decreased, the result of multiple years where the program's expenditures exceeded the annual revenue.

Over the years, the program reported large, unspent balances. Much of the balance had been contractually committed to projects, but these obligations were not accounted for in the balances. Beginning in FY 2019, the program began to assign unique project numbers and obligate funds to each new habitat contract. This method will provide a better representation of the program's unspent, unobligated funds. In FY 2020, all contracts executed prior to FY 2019 transitioned to this same accounting method.

The program intends to operate in a structurally balanced manner whereby the department anticipates incoming revenue and administers the program at its potential, including leveraging outside funding and resources when available.

Habitat Project Proposals and Funding

Ensuring the program remains structurally balanced, program staff launched a new process in FY 2020 soliciting a call for proposals twice a year, occurring early in fall and spring, allowing for planning with landowners and ordering supplies in a timely fashion (e.g., shrubs, seeds, etc.). The process entails reviewing and ranking proposals to ensure high value projects receive funding in balance with available revenue.

Volunteer Public Access Habitat Incentive Program (VPA HIP) Grant

In March 2020, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service awarded FWP with a \$1.8 million VPA HIP grant to expand public access on private land through the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program and the Block Management Program. The UGBEP will use \$1.4 million of the grant over 3 years to expand walk-in game bird hunting access through its successful Open Fields for Game Bird Hunters option. Lands with either Conservation Reserve Program acres or with highly productive upland game bird habitats are eligible for enrollment.

Within the 3-year period, UGBEP expects to enroll approximately 120 landowners with a target of 75,000 new access acres. Average enrollment lengths for these types of projects has been around 8 years, supporting multiple years of return visits for hunters.

For producers enrolled in Open Fields, the UGBEP will cost share on mid-contract management practices, such as light disking, when approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Light disking can enhance grass plantings that have lost their vegetative diversity and wildlife value.

BIENNIAL REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES

Annual Revenues and Expended Funds

Table 1 reports the annual revenue and expenditures during the biennium. The total income includes funds for habitat, administration, and earmarked bird planting activities. The program expended a total of \$1,177,072 on habitat projects during the biennium, making payments on contracts executed during the biennium and from previous years. Payments relating to earlier contracts are typically for habitat cost-share reimbursements, annual leases, and cooperative conservation positions.

The program expended a total of \$34,195 during the biennium on pen-reared pheasant releases, an all-time historic low. Dwindling participant interest, lack of pheasant providers, and change in rule¹ were the chief reasons for the decline.

Administrative expenditures include all costs attributable to the overall operation and implementation of the program, including personnel and operations costs of the UGBEP coordinator, a portion of the 3 UGBEP habitat specialists' positions, and the annual Projects Access Guide. Administrative costs also included \$17,742 for 4 Council meetings, one of which was held virtually due to COVID-19. Council expenditures included daily honorariums, mileage and lodging costs, per-diem allowances, and meeting expenses.

In FY 2019, expenditures exceeded the total annual income, but banked funding from earlier years was still available. In FY 2020, the program expenditures were slightly less than the total income.

Table 2 provides fiscal information for Pittman-Roberson Federal Aid funds, which were used to partially fund the 3 UGBEP Habitat Specialists positions. UGBEP was used as match and reported in Table 2.

¹ Pheasant releases may occur annually within a five-year period starting from the first release. The department may fund additional releases for one additional five-year period if habitat improvements are established that address factors limiting pheasant numbers. (12.9.602(1)(r), ARM).

Table 1. UGBEP Revenue and Expenditures for FY 2019 and FY 2020.

FY 2019							
UGBEP Funding (\$)			FY 2019 Expenditures				
License Revenue	Interest Revenue	Total Income	Bird Planting	Habitat Enhancement	Admin	Overhead	Total Expenditures
712,545	56,892	769,437	24,771	688,119	192,387	128,467	1,033,744
FY 2020							
UGBEP Funding (\$)			FY 2020 Expenditures				
License Revenue	Interest Revenue	Total Income	Bird Planting	Habitat Enhancement	Admin	Overhead	Total Expenditures
705,811	37,534	743,345	9,424	488,953	110,264	84,357	692,998

Table 2. Non-license funds that contributed to the UGBEP.

FY 2019				FY 2020		
	Habitat Enhancement	Admin	Total FY 2019 Expenditures	Habitat Enhancement	Admin	Total FY 2020 Expenditures
Pittman-Robertson	NA	\$147,753	\$147,753	NA	\$238,431	\$238,431

Bird Planting Fund

Per statute, 15 percent of the program's annual revenue is earmarked for the bird planting fund. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is also required to spend 25% of the earmarked funds specifically on pheasant releases (87-1-247(2)(a, b), MCA).

Pheasant releases have predominantly taken place in some of the eastern regions of the state, typically in association with commercial pheasant raisers. Interest in pheasant releases continues to wane in regions 4 and 6. Region 7 has lacked a pheasant provider since 2016 and had no releases since that time. Overall interest in raising and releasing pheasants has declined sharply. Without renewed interest in participation combined with a lack of sources for pen-raised pheasants, there is a strong likelihood that this aspect of the program will maintain little to no activity.

While interest has declined, the UGBEP Bird Planting fund continues to grow. At the end of FY 2020, the bird planting fund had a total of \$386,138 (Table 3). The UGBEP Citizens' Advisory Council has recommended the statute be modified to allow unspent funds to be used for habitat projects.

Table 3. Summary of Bird Planting Fund, unspent during the biennium.

FY 2019	FY 2020	Accumulative Total
\$147,753	\$238,431	\$386,138

BIENNIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Habitat Project Accomplishments

The UGBEP funds habitat enhancements and conservation through partnerships with landowners, organizations, state, and federal government agencies (See APPENDIX B for a list of partners). During the biennium, the UGBEP enrolled 170 new projects and 3 new cooperative conservation contracts, enhancing and conserving a total of 33,090 acres of upland game bird habitats and supporting 232,256 acres of free public upland game bird hunting opportunity (Table 4). Types of projects included aspen regeneration, nesting cover, shelterbelts, grazing management, food plots, retention of CRP-enrolled lands through Open Fields and CRP seed cost-shares, and short-term and long-term habitat leases.

The total estimated cost of projects initiated during the biennium, involving all contributors, was \$3,182,334 (Table 4). Of that total, the UGBEP obligated² \$1,852,253 or 58%. With the exception of lease projects³, UGBEP contracts include either in-kind contributions or cash. Cooperators contributed a total of \$487,921 (15%) of the costs, usually as in-kind contributions. The remaining funds of \$842,160 (27% total costs) were combined contributions from federal and non-governmental conservation partner organizations. These partnerships include the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA Forest Service, Pheasants Forever, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Table 4 provides information on individual projects. Note: Several UGBEP contracts have multiple project types. To prevent over-counting access acres, cells marked with an asterisk (*) indicate the access acres were already reported.

² Obligated funds are defined as the program's financial commitment to a specific contract. Obligated funds are not the same as the expenditures, which are reported in Tables 1 and 2. All UGBEP obligated costs are tracked by the program coordinator for the purpose of conducting program payments and reconciling contract budget balances.

³ Habitat Management leases are a minimum of 3 years, but enrollments are frequently 10 years. Payments are made annually, leaving an unspent but obligated balance for the remainder of the lease term.

Table 4. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Aspen Regeneration	2	Missoula	07/09/18	1,250	1,000	\$12,000	\$35,000	\$63,000	\$110,000
Aspen Regeneration	2	Missoula	07/09/18	337	1,000	\$9,000	\$50,000	\$0	\$59,000
Aspen Regeneration	5	Fergus	07/09/18	167	1,000	\$3,000	\$42,801	\$5,000	\$50,801
Biennial Food Plot	4	Pondera	06/01/19	34	2,064	\$5,950	\$0	\$0	\$5,950
Conservation Lease Agreement	6	Phillips	09/13/18	3,076	3,076	\$28,834	\$0	\$63,435	\$92,270
Conservation Lease Agreement	6	Roosevelt	08/01/19	1,307	1,759	\$24,506	\$0	\$14,704	\$39,210
Cooperative Conservation Contract	2	Missoula	07/01/2019	2,112	USFS Lands	\$120,000	\$0	\$120,000	\$240,000
Cooperative Conservation Contract	4	Fergus	07/01/2019	547	10,868	192,000	\$0	204,000	\$396,000
Cooperative Conservation Contract	4, 6	Multi-	07/01/2019	886	*	55,250	\$0	12,750	\$68,000
Cover Crop	7	Fallon	09/01/19	200	1,720	\$12,000	\$40,000	\$0	\$52,000
Cover Crop	7	Dawson	09/01/19	320	2,300	\$19,200	\$64,000	\$0	\$83,200
Cover Crop	7	Wibaux	05/01/20	75	1,286	\$4,500	\$0	\$0	\$4,500

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
CRP Seed Cost-share	6	Roosevelt	09/01/18	137	160	\$4,220	\$1,085	\$6,751	\$12,056
Disking Project	6	Phillips	03/01/20	12	320	\$480	\$0	\$0	\$480
Disking/Interseeding	4	Pondera	06/01/19	110	*	\$3,372	\$0	\$0	\$3,372
Fence	7	Fallon	10/01/19	4	1,200	\$3,000	\$2,000	\$0	\$5,000
Fence (Food Plot)	7	Fallon	09/01/19	20	2,440	\$1,350	\$1,350	\$0	\$2,700
Fence (HML)	4	Pondera	05/01/19	0	1,075	\$9,836	\$3,279	\$0	\$13,115
Fence (HML)	4	Cascade	07/01/19	240	3,904	\$22,736	\$7,579	\$0	\$30,315
Fence (HML)	4	Teton	07/23/19	8	300	\$4,854	\$1,618	\$0	\$6,472
Fence (HML)	6	Phillips	03/01/20	0	*	\$2,200	\$550	\$0	\$2,750
Fence (HML)	7	Rosebud	12/20/18	60	9,292	\$15,840	\$15,840	\$0	\$31,680
Fence (HML)	7	Dawson	05/15/19	0	2,399	\$10,875	\$10,875	\$0	\$21,750
Fence (HML)	7	Wibaux	06/01/20	68	956	\$7,617	\$2,540	\$0	\$10,157
Fence (HML)	7	Richland	06/01/20	40	1,160	\$7,447	\$4,553	\$0	\$12,000

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Grain Food Plot	4	Pondera	05/01/19	10	*	\$1,601	\$0	\$0	\$1,601
Grain Food Plot	4	Pondera	05/01/19	10	*	\$1,500	\$500	\$0	\$2,000
Grain Food Plot	6	Daniels	05/01/19	2	160	\$225	\$75	\$0	\$300
Grain Food Plot	6	Chouteau	05/01/19	10	0	\$1,500	\$500	\$0	\$2,000
Grain Food Plot	6	Sheridan	05/01/19	10	480	\$4,500	\$1,500	\$0	\$6,000
Grain Food Plot	6	Daniels	05/01/19	9	3,900	\$3,825	\$900	\$0	\$4,725
Grain Food Plot	6	Phillips	05/01/19	5	1,000	\$750	\$500	\$0	\$1,250
Grain Food Plot	6	Daniels	05/01/20	2	1,120	\$338	\$225	\$0	\$563
Grain Food Plot	7	Fallon	09/01/18	40	1,720	\$18,000	\$6,000	\$0	\$24,000
Grain Food Plot	7	Rosebud	09/01/18	50	9,292	\$15,000	\$2,500	\$0	\$17,500
Grain Food Plot	7	Dawson	09/01/18	50	7,884	\$22,500	\$7,500	\$0	\$30,000
Grain Food Plot	7	Richland	09/01/18	40	13,965	\$18,000	\$2,000	\$0	\$20,000
Grain Food Plot	7	Fallon	09/01/18	40	5,765	\$30,000	\$10,000	\$0	\$40,000

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Grain Food Plot	7	Fallon	06/01/19	20	1,440	\$15,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$20,000
Grain Food Plot	7	Carter	06/01/19	35	4,998	\$15,750	\$5,250	\$0	\$21,000
Grain Food Plot	7	Dawson	05/15/19	20	3,633	\$12,000	\$4,000	\$0	\$16,000
Grain Food Plot	7	Custer	05/15/19	10	587	\$4,500	\$1,500	\$0	\$6,000
Grain Food Plot	7	Fallon	09/01/19	10	*	\$4,500	\$1,500	\$0	\$6,000
Grain Food Plot	7	Dawson	09/01/19	25	320	\$11,250	\$3,750	\$0	\$15,000
Grain Food Plot	7	Dawson	09/01/19	30	2,308	\$13,500	\$4,500	\$0	\$18,000
Grain Food Plot	7	Custer	09/01/19	20	1,700	\$9,000	\$3,000	\$0	\$12,000
Grain Food Plots	7	Prairie	10/01/19	30	4,823	\$13,500	\$4,500	\$0	\$18,000
Grain Stubble Management	4	Pondera	06/01/19	320	*	\$15,360	\$0	\$0	\$15,360
Grazing Management	6	Blaine	06/12/20	816	1,050	\$2,528	\$843	\$6,125	\$9,496
Habitat Management Lease	4	Toole	01/01/19	55	789	\$4,091	\$0	\$0	\$4,091

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Habitat Management Lease	4	Pondera	01/01/20	87	1,957	\$4,918	\$0	\$0	\$4,918
Habitat Management Lease	4	Pondera	06/01/19	160	*	\$57,354	\$0	\$0	\$57,354
Habitat Management Lease	4	Pondera	05/01/19	45	*	\$6,332	\$0	\$0	\$6,332
Habitat Management Lease	4	Pondera	05/01/19	27	*	\$1,987	\$0	\$0	\$1,987
Habitat Management Lease	4	Chouteau	07/09/19	50	100	\$3,738	\$0	\$0	\$3,738
Habitat Management Lease	4	Chouteau	07/10/19	71	160	\$6,422	\$0	\$0	\$6,422
Habitat Management Lease	4	Glacier	07/10/19	320	320	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Habitat Management Lease	4	Pondera	07/31/19	21	21	\$4,044	\$0	\$0	\$4,044
Habitat Management Lease	4	Pondera	08/14/19	160	160	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Habitat Management Lease	6	Daniels	09/20/18	120	320	\$7,230	\$181	\$0	\$7,411
Habitat Management Lease	6	Daniels	07/09/18	113	250	\$7,454	\$181	\$0	\$7,635
Habitat Management Lease	6	Roosevelt	07/01/18	82	705	\$5,247	\$174	\$0	\$5,420
Habitat Management Lease	6	Sheridan	07/01/19	160	270	\$18,321	\$0	\$0	\$18,321
Habitat Management Lease	6	Roosevelt	07/01/19	151	320	\$41,001	\$0	\$0	\$41,001
Habitat Management Lease	6	Sheridan	07/01/19	41	160	\$5,535	\$0	\$0	\$5,535
Habitat Management Lease	6	Sheridan	07/01/19	94	160	\$23,093	\$0	\$0	\$23,093
Habitat Management Lease	6	Sheridan	07/01/19	111	416	\$29,853	\$0	\$0	\$29,853
Habitat Management Lease	6	Phillips	03/01/20	16	*	\$4,539	\$0	\$0	\$4,539

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Habitat Management Lease	7	Richland	07/20/18	160	160	\$31,300	\$0	\$0	\$31,300
Habitat Management Lease	7	Dawson	07/31/18	80	640	\$4,845	\$0	\$0	\$4,845
Habitat Management Lease	7	Dawson	08/24/18	80	*	\$4,845	\$0	\$0	\$4,845
Habitat Management Lease	7	Wibaux	10/31/18	22	640	\$1,609	\$0	\$0	\$1,609
Habitat Management Lease	7	Rosebud	12/20/18	60	*	\$9,800	\$0	\$0	\$9,800
Habitat Management Lease	7	Dawson	04/01/19	86	160	\$6,629	\$0	\$0	\$6,629
Habitat Management Lease	7	Dawson	05/15/19	198	*	\$42,900	\$0	\$0	\$42,900
Habitat Management Lease	7	Dawson	10/01/19	348	2,853	\$84,400	\$0	\$0	\$84,400
Habitat Management Lease	7	Dawson	10/17/19	40	*	\$600	\$0	\$0	\$600

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Habitat Management Lease	7	Dawson	10/01/19	182	2,947	\$43,250	\$0	\$0	\$43,250
Habitat Management Lease	7	McCone	06/01/20	162	2,240	\$17,625	\$0	\$0	\$17,625
Habitat Management Lease	7	Wibaux	06/01/20	68	*	\$8,900	\$0	\$0	\$8,900
Habitat Management Lease	7	Richland	06/01/20	40	*	\$9,500	\$0	\$0	\$9,500
Nesting Cover	3	Broadwater	05/01/20	16	5,920	\$1,200	\$1,840	\$0	\$3,040
Nesting Cover	4	Chouteau	04/01/19	730	1,667	\$54,338	\$41,397	\$137,000	\$232,735
Nesting Cover	4	Teton	08/01/19	35	266	\$2,800	\$934	\$0	\$3,734
Nesting Cover	4	Cascade	10/01/19	10	*	\$1,200	\$400	\$0	\$1,600
Nesting Cover	4	Teton	04/01/20	35	263	\$3,200	\$800	\$0	\$4,000
Nesting Cover	6	Richland	10/01/18	182	717	\$25,590	\$8,530	\$0	\$34,120
Nesting Cover	6	Daniels	04/01/19	12	34	\$1,440	\$480	\$0	\$1,920

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Nesting Cover	6	Richland	04/22/19	1,668	24,161	\$18,305	\$12,203	\$91,523	\$122,031
Nesting Cover	6	Valley	05/01/19	17	470	\$2,040	\$680	\$0	\$2,720
Nesting Cover	6	Daniels	04/01/20	2	253	\$100	\$20	\$0	\$120
Nesting Cover	7	Fallon	05/15/19	2	1,720	\$383	\$128	\$0	\$510
Nesting Cover	7	Treasure	06/05/20	75	1,263	\$6,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
Nesting Cover	7	Richland	05/15/20	8	665	\$1,000	\$375	\$0	\$1,375
Nesting Cover	7	Richland	06/01/20	8	89	\$1,000	\$375	\$0	\$1,375
Open Fields	4	Pondera	07/27/18	142	186	\$6,393	\$0	\$0	\$6,393
Open Fields	4	Teton	07/20/18	272	320	\$12,231	\$0	\$0	\$12,231
Open Fields	4	Toole	07/20/18	66	319	\$4,593	\$0	\$0	\$4,593
Open Fields	4	Teton	07/20/18	306	317	\$13,752	\$0	\$0	\$13,752
Open Fields	4	Toole	09/01/18	318	640	\$14,332	\$0	\$0	\$14,332
Open Fields	4	Pondera	08/01/19	24	23	\$823	\$0	\$0	\$823

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Open Fields	5	Yellowstone	07/20/18	320	462	\$14,400	\$0	\$0	\$14,400
Open Fields	5	Golden Valley	07/20/18	320	520	\$6,400	\$0	\$0	\$6,400
Open Fields	5	Yellowstone	07/31/18	172	256	\$7,315	\$0	\$0	\$7,315
Open Fields	5	Yellowstone	07/20/18	299	420	\$4,485	\$0	\$0	\$4,485
Open Fields	6	Hill	07/20/18	317	317	\$6,340	\$0	\$0	\$6,340
Open Fields	6	McCone	08/24/18	320	1,201	\$6,400	\$0	\$0	\$6,400
Open Fields	6	Daniels	07/20/18	316	320	\$3,160	\$0	\$0	\$3,160
Open Fields	6	Blaine	09/01/18	320	800	\$8,000	\$0	\$0	\$8,000
Open Fields	6	Phillips	08/24/18	107	110	\$5,885	\$0	\$0	\$5,885
Open Fields	6	Phillips	08/24/18	295	321	\$7,375	\$0	\$0	\$7,375
Open Fields	6	McCone	07/20/18	204	492	\$2,040	\$0	\$0	\$2,040
Open Fields	6	Valley	07/20/18	295	297	\$13,275	\$0	\$0	\$13,275
Open Fields	6	Sheridan	08/01/19	90	120	\$9,603	\$0	\$0	\$9,603

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Open Fields	7	Prairie	06/01/19	435	480	\$8,696	\$0	\$0	\$8,696
Perennial Food Plot	7	Treasure	06/05/20	40	*	\$4,000	\$0	\$0	\$4,000
Shelterbelt	4	Pondera	04/01/20	3	*	\$8,721	\$3,041	\$0	\$11,762
Shelterbelt	4	Toole	08/01/19	6	320	\$7,324	\$3,429	\$0	\$10,753
Shelterbelt	4	Toole	07/09/19	6	960	\$9,823	\$4,690	\$0	\$14,513
Shelterbelt	6	Roosevelt	12/01/19	1	417	\$1,736	\$440	\$601	\$2,777
Shelterbelt	6	Daniels	04/01/20	1	*	\$2,820	\$470	\$470	\$3,760
Shelterbelt	7	Powder River	10/01/19	40	160	\$3,466	\$1,955	\$1,000	\$6,421
Shelterbelt	7	Fallon	05/15/19	1	*	\$390	\$130	\$0	\$520
Wildlife Friendly Haying	7	Dawson	05/15/19	30	*	\$1,500	\$531	\$0	\$2,031
Winter Food/Cover Plot	3	Broadwater	05/01/20	15	*	\$4,000	\$3,200	\$4,800	\$12,000
Winter Food/Cover Plot	4	Fergus	01/01/19	400	1,000	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
Winter Food/Cover Plot	4	Pondera	06/01/19	10	*	\$1,500	\$0	\$0	\$1,500

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Sheridan	09/21/18	3	160	\$491	\$150	\$0	\$641
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Sheridan	08/24/18	2	320	\$300	\$100	\$0	\$400
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Valley	08/24/18	4	550	\$681	\$200	\$0	\$881
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Valley	08/24/18	4	550	\$681	\$200	\$0	\$881
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Hill	08/24/18	8	2,615	\$1,418	\$400	\$0	\$1,818
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Chouteau	08/24/18	3	508	\$491	\$150	\$0	\$641
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Daniels	09/21/18	7	160	\$1,253	\$350	\$0	\$1,603
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Sheridan	08/24/18	2	320	\$381	\$75	\$0	\$456
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Sheridan	05/01/19	10	240	\$5,100	\$1,500	\$0	\$6,600
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Sheridan	05/01/19	10	240	\$5,100	\$1,500	\$0	\$6,600
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Daniels	05/01/19	10	1,150	\$1,700	\$0	\$0	\$1,700
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Daniels	05/01/19	3	360	\$570	\$150	\$0	\$720
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	McCone	05/01/19	7	1,300	\$1,190	\$350	\$0	\$1,540

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Acres Open to Access	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Chouteau	05/01/19	10	4,000	\$1,700	\$500	\$0	\$2,200
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Valley	05/01/19	10	900	\$1,700	\$500	\$0	\$2,200
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Valley	05/01/19	10	80	\$1,700	\$500	\$0	\$2,200
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Daniels	05/01/19	8	3,900	\$4,080	\$1,200	\$0	\$5,280
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Daniels	05/01/19	1	640	\$170	\$50	\$0	\$220
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Roosevelt	05/01/19	8	*	\$1,360	\$400	\$0	\$1,760
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Hill	05/01/19	10	2,615	\$1,700	\$500	\$0	\$2,200
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Valley	05/01/19	10	480	\$1,700	\$500	\$0	\$2,200
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Sheridan	05/01/19	4	320	\$1,800	\$600	\$0	\$2,400
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Sheridan	05/01/19	8	160	\$1,360	\$400	\$0	\$1,760
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Roosevelt	05/01/19	10	1,109	\$1,700	\$0	\$0	\$1,700
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Phillips	03/01/20	8	*	\$13,600	\$1,250	\$0	\$14,850
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Sheridan	05/01/20	8	160	\$2,880	\$1,200	\$0	\$4,080

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Access Acres	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Daniels	05/06/20	10	1,150	\$3,600	\$1,500	\$0	\$5,100
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Daniels	05/01/20	1	640	\$360	\$150	\$0	\$510
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Chouteau	05/01/20	10	2,000	\$3,600	\$1,500	\$0	\$5,100
Winter Food/Cover Plot	6	Hill	05/01/20	7	2,615	\$2,520	\$1,050	\$0	\$3,570
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Rosebud	09/01/18	50	*	\$7,500	\$2,500	\$0	\$10,000
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Fallon	05/15/19	10	*	\$8,433	\$2,500	\$0	\$10,933
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Fallon	05/15/19	8	1,200	\$6,803	\$2,000	\$0	\$8,803
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Carter	06/01/19	10	*	\$5,060	\$1,500	\$0	\$6,560
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Dawson	05/15/19	10	*	\$6,746	\$2,000	\$0	\$8,746
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Dawson	05/15/19	20	*	\$16,866	\$5,000	\$0	\$21,866
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Prairie	05/15/19	10	588	\$5,060	\$1,500	\$0	\$6,560
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Fallon	06/15/19	10	4,471	\$6,803	\$2,000	\$0	\$8,803
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Custer	05/15/19	5	612	\$2,530	\$750	\$0	\$3,280

Table 4—continued. UGBEP habitat enhancement projects initiated during the biennium.

Project Type	Region	County	Project Effective Date	Project Acres	Access Acres	Obligated Costs (\$)			
						UGBEP	Cooperator	Other Partners	Project Total
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Dawson	05/01/19	10	640	\$1,687	\$500	\$0	\$2,187
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	McCone	05/15/19	25	300	\$12,390	\$3,750	\$0	\$16,140
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Fallon	09/01/19	10	*	\$5,060	\$1,500	\$0	\$6,560
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	McCone	06/01/20	14	*	\$8,400	\$3,500	\$0	\$11,900
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Wibaux	06/01/20	10	*	\$6,000	\$2,500	\$0	\$8,500
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Richland	06/01/20	10	*	\$3,000	\$2,300	\$00	\$5,300
Winter Food/Cover Plot	7	Fallon	06/01/20	10	5,765	\$3,600	\$1,500	\$0	\$5,100
SUMMARY: 173 Habitat Projects				33,090	\$232,256	\$1,852,253	\$487,921	\$842,160	\$3,182,334

During the biennium, the program had a total of 424 active contracts, enhancing 357,855 acres of game bird habitat and providing approximately 765,246 acres of access.

A coarse-scale map (Figure 2, next page) shows all active UGBEP projects available for game bird hunting at the end of the biennium. In addition to general locations, colored map symbols let users know whether the project is located on public or private lands and how access might be obtained (e.g., Block Management, landowner contact, or walk-in with no further permission).

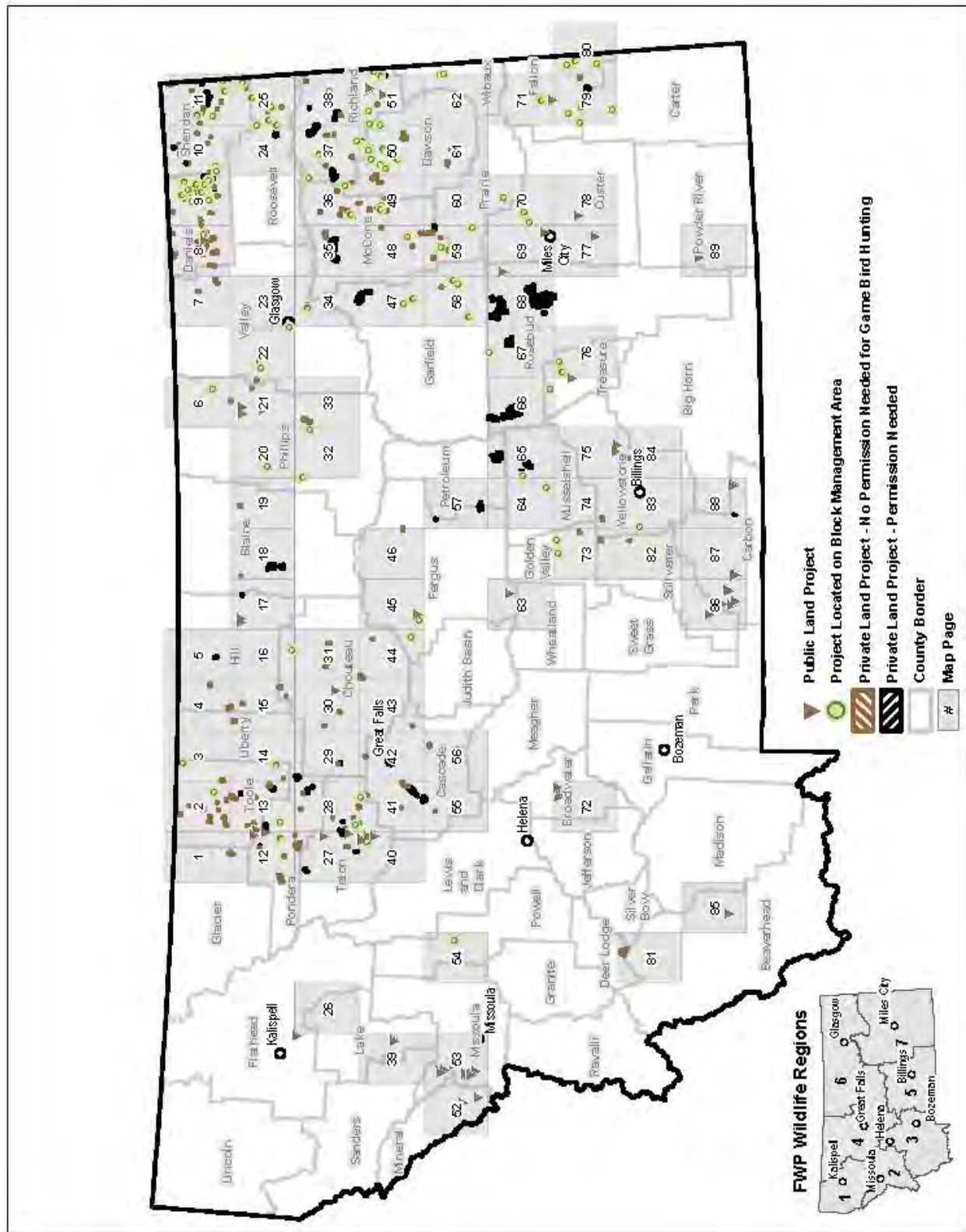


Figure 2. Map showing overview of active UGBEP projects (Fall 2019).

Cooperative Conservation Positions

The UGBEP currently contributes toward cooperative agreements with Habitat Forever, LLC, Pheasants Forever, Inc, and the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) to help support cooperatively-funded conservation positions in Denton, Billings, Charlo (Habitat Forever) and Missoula (NWTF). Additional contributors to these positions have included the USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Pheasants Forever chapters, and others. Three positions in regions 4 and 6 (Pheasants Forever, Inc) provide UGBEP outreach and are situated in USDA Service Center offices.

In FY 2019, the department awarded new contracts to the following conservation organizations:

- Habitat Forever, to continue habitat enhancement farming activities in the Denton area. (Region 4)
- Pheasants Forever, to support 4 positions that conduct UGBEP outreach while stationed at the USDA service centers. (Regions 4 and 6)
- National Wild Turkey Federation, to provide technical input on forest management practices to benefit mountain grouse and turkey. (Region 2)

The primary purpose of the Habitat Forever partnership positions is to establish and maintain habitat enhancements through traditional farming practices primarily for game birds on lands that are accessible to public hunting. The outcome of these activities not only provides productive habitat for upland game birds but also provides quality opportunities for upland game bird hunters in areas where public hunting access can be limited.

Habitat enhancement and maintenance accomplishments during the past biennium are described below for each of these 3 Habitat Forever Contracts. Weed management makes up well over half of the effort to establish and maintain these habitat project areas.

REGION 1 LAKE COUNTY-BASED FARMING (FWP/USFWS/HF/PF PARTNERSHIP)

The partner-supported Habitat Forever Habitat Specialist position focuses primarily on renovating upland habitats on USFWS Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) and on FWP Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area (WMA), all in the Mission Valley. These areas are popular hunting destinations, known for their beauty and highly productive waterfowl and pheasant habitats. The WMA offers approximately 4,000 acres of hunting access and WPAs span nearly 4,000 acres.

The habitat specialist treated approximately 800 acres through controlled burns, site preparation, herbicide treatments, seeding, and mowing. Approximately 234 acres were seeded to nesting cover and 123 acres were seeded to cover crops. The remaining acres comprised noxious weed treatments. The program expended \$33,487.83 in the biennium.

REGION 4 DENTON-BASED FARMING (FWP/HF/PF PARTNERSHIP)

This partnership primarily focuses on five properties: PF Coffee Creek (800 deeded acres)—see Figure 3; PF Wolf Creek (1,000 deeded acres); DNRC Wolf Creek (2,500 acres); DNRC Coffee Creek (640 acres); and the Beckman WMA (6,568 acres), totaling over 11,500 acres of habitat and hunting opportunity. The following projects have been developed and subsequently maintained by the Central Montana Chapter of Pheasants Forever (CMCPF) and the Habitat Forever Habitat Specialist.

Throughout the biennium, habitat work comprised mostly of maintenance of existing enhancement projects (Table 5). Ongoing maintenance efforts include mechanical tillage, in-row hand weeding, control of currant worms in the golden currant and tent caterpillars in the chokecherries, spraying and cultivating field bindweed infestations, and food plots.

In FY 2019 and FY 2020, the UGBEP contributed \$51,951 and \$50,128, respectively, towards the projects established and maintained during the biennium.



Figure 3. Mature shelterbelts, nesting/brood cover, and small grains culminate in a pheasant haven where birds thrive and hunters with dogs reap the benefits. (PF Coffee Creek).

Table 5. Summary of habitat enhancement and maintenance activities: Denton.

Project Sites	FY 2019		FY 2020	
<i>Beckman WMA Projects</i>	<i>Total Project Sites</i>	<i>Total Habitat Acres</i>	<i>Total Project Sites</i>	<i>Total Habitat Acres</i>
Food Plots: Spring, winter, barley, or mix	7	20	11	47
Nesting Cover & Food Plot Renovation	1	30	1	30
Shelterbelt	5	16	5	16
Silver Sage Travel Corridors	9	4	9	4 (5 miles double rows)
Sub-total	22	70	26	97

	FY 2019		FY 2020	
<i>DNRC Wolf Creek Projects</i>	<i>Total Project Sites</i>	<i>Total Habitat Acres</i>	<i>Total Project Sites</i>	<i>Total Habitat Acres</i>
Food Plots	2	3	2	2
Shelterbelt	1	4	1	4
Sub-total	3	7	3	7

	FY 2019		FY 2020	
<i>PF Wolf Creek Projects</i>	<i>Total Project Sites</i>	<i>Total Habitat Acres</i>	<i>Total Project Sites</i>	<i>Total Habitat Acres</i>
Food Plot	4	10	4	10
Nesting Cover	4	67	4	10
Shelterbelt	2	7	2	7
Silver Sage Travel Corridors	6	4 (3 miles double rows)	6	4 (3 miles double rows)
Sub-total	16	88	16	31

	FY 2019		FY 2020	
<i>PF Coffee Creek Projects</i>	<i>Total Project Sites</i>	<i>Total Habitat Acres</i>	<i>Total Project Sites</i>	<i>Total Habitat Acres</i>
Brood Cover	2	3	3	2
Food Plot	11	37	15	41
Nesting Cover (DNC)	4	325	5	350
Shelterbelts	5	34	5	34
Herbicide Treatment	7	5	8	6
Fence Maintenance	1	na	2	na
Sub-total	30	404	38	433

	FY 2019		FY 2020	
<i>DNRC Coffee Creek Project</i>	<i>Total Project Sites</i>	<i>Total Habitat Acres</i>	<i>Total Project Sites</i>	<i>Total Habitat Acres</i>
Food Plot	1	7	1	7
Nesting Cover (DNRC)	1	1	1	1
Sub-total	2	8	2	8

REGION 5 BILLINGS-BASED FARMING (FWP/HF/BLM PARTNERSHIP)

Now in its twelfth year, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Habitat Forever (HF), and FWP partnership continues to support a Billings-area Habitat Forever farming position. Additional supporting partners include the Yellowstone Valley Chapter of Pheasants Forever, Billings Rod & Gun Club, Montana Chapter of Safari Club International, and Conoco Phillips.

Known in the community as the Montana Habitat Partnership (Figure 4), the habitat work is intended to restore and enhance pheasant and other upland game bird habitats on public lands open to hunting along the Yellowstone River.

Habitat enhancement and maintenance efforts are focused on the BLM-administered Pompeys Pillar National Monument (Figure 5), FWP Yellowstone Wildlife Management Area, FWP Voyager's Rest Fishing Access Site, and FWP Clarks Fork Fishing Access Site (Table 6). Management is conducted on irrigated and dry land food plots, nesting cover, and brood plots, wetland development, riparian vegetation restoration, and shelterbelt/winter cover plantings and maintenance. Where available, flood and sprinkler irrigation are used to improve habitat enhancement results.



Figure 4: Montana Habitat Partnership sign located at BLM Pompeys Pillar.

In FY 2019, the UGBEP contributed \$49,639 to enhance and maintain 718 project acres. In FY 2020, the UGBEP contributed \$32,732 to enhance and maintain 715 project acres. These project areas provide a combined total of 4,870 acres of public access for upland game bird hunting.



Photo Courtesy FWP

Figure 5: A field recently converted to productive nesting cover is further enhanced by the Yellowstone River's riparian zone. Pompeys Pillar is seen in the background.

Table 6. Summary of Habitat Forever enhancement and maintenance activities: Billings.

Project Sites	FY 2019		FY 2020	
BLM Pompeys Pillar NM	Total Project Sites	Total Habitat Acres	Total Project Sites	Total Habitat Acres
DNC Cover/ Native Cover	19	157	10	132
Shelterbelt	2	16	4	10
Grain Food Plot	4	37	5	26
Clump Planting	na	na	1	1
Brood Plot	na	na	5	4
Sub-Totals	25	210	25	173

Project Sites	FY 2019		FY 2020	
FWP Yellowstone WMA	Total Project Sites	Total Habitat Acres	Total Project Sites	Total Habitat Acres
Irrigated Nesting Cover	3	27	9	78
Irrigated Food Plot	4	28	3	20
Dryland Nesting Cover	2	89	7	47
Roosting Cover	2	5	1	3
Brood Plot	1	5	2	12
Sub-Totals	12	154	22	160

Project Sites	FY 2019		FY 2020	
FWP Voyagers Rest FAS	Total Project Sites	Total Habitat Acres	Total Project Sites	Total Habitat Acres
Irrigated Food Plot	1	4	1	4
Sub-Totals	1	4	1	4

Project Sites	FY 2019		FY 2020	
Grant Marsh WMA	Total Project Sites	Total Habitat Acres	Total Project Sites	Total Habitat Acres
Irrigated Food Plot	1	25	1	25
Sub-Totals	1	25	1	25

Grand Total	FY 2019		FY 2020	
	Total Project Sites	Total Habitat Acres	Total Project Sites	Total Habitat Acres
	39	393	49	362

WESTERN FORESTS COOPERATIVE BIOLOGIST

Stationed in Missoula, the National Wild Turkey Federation Cooperative Biologist position has been in place for five years and is funded through the USDA Forest Service and FWP. The partnership's primary focus is to promote, design, and implement management activities that enhance wild turkey and forest grouse habitats and promote healthy forest ecosystems in the Bitterroot National Forest and other Montana National Forest complexes.

During FY 2019, the biologist position worked on 17 project sites on 3 National Forests in various stages of completion, ranging from pre-planning and writing of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents to implementation. Approximately 2,112 acres of forests received management treatments supported in part by the cooperative biologist position, particularly benefitting ruffed grouse and wild turkey. UGBEP contributed \$40,000 in FY 2019 and \$40,000 in FY 2020.

Projects were stalled in FY 2020 because of COVID-19, including planned prescribed burns.

PHEASANTS FOREVER FARM BILL BIOLOGISTS

The UGBEP contributes toward 4 Farm Bill Biologists' positions that are stationed in USDA Service Center offices in regions 4 and 6, as well as the state NRCS office in Bozeman. Staff provide UGBEP outreach to landowners who participate in Farm Bill programs, with the intent to increase program interest and enrollment. These positions have been especially valuable during the general CRP sign-up, where information about the various UGBEP options are provided. The program expended \$10,500 in FY 2019 and \$8,250 in FY 2020.

Pen-reared Pheasant Releases

The purpose of releasing pen-reared pheasants, as identified in statute (87-1-246 through 87-1-248, MCA), is to establish or enhance pheasant populations in suitable habitats that have combinations of permanent winter cover, idle cover (e.g., CRP), and cultivated grain. Each release consists of up to 40% cocks (12.9.602(1)(b), ARM), and all releases take place from August 1 through September 15.

Cooperators are eligible to participate in the pen-reared pheasant releasing program for up to 5 consecutive years (12.9.602(1)(r), ARM). An additional 5-year release period is allowed if habitat improvements are established that address factors limiting pheasant numbers.

For FY 2019, the program paid for the release of 2,665 pen-reared pheasants and expended \$24,771. During FY 2020, the program expended \$9,424 for the release of 968 pen-reared pheasants (Table 7).

Table 7. Summary of pheasant release contracts awarded.

	FY 2019		FY 2020	
Region	# Contracts	# Pheasants	# Contracts	# Pheasants
4	0	0	6	768
6	22	2,665	1	200
TOTAL	22	2,665	7	968

Wild Turkey Transplants

No wild turkey transplants occurred during the past biennium.

Supplemental Feeding

The option of supplemental feeding for game birds is restricted to a 3-county area in region 6 in northeast Montana (12.9.615(1), ARM). Monitoring of winter conditions on established routes was conducted by department staff from January through March during FY 2019 and FY 2020. Winter conditions were average. Supplemental game bird feeding is only supported by the program when certain weather and snow cover condition criteria are met, which didn't occur during the biennium and no supplemental feeding expenditures were incurred.

UGBEP Projects Access Guide

The annual Access Guide is the cumulation of current program accomplishments available for use by upland game bird hunters (Figure 6). The guide provides detailed information about every project completed through the UGBEP and the means to obtain permission from landowners for hunting access. The guide is published annually both in printed form and electronically by download through the program's web page: www.fwp.mt.gov/ugbep



Figure 6. Cover of the 2019 UGBEP Projects Access Guide, comprising a compilation of all active projects available for fall upland game bird hunting.

Within the guide, private lands projects include geospatially represented access boundaries that are color-coded to indicate whether the access area is open to: (1) walk-in game bird hunting with no further permission needed from the landowner (brown polygons), (2) landowner permission needed prior to hunting game birds (black polygons), or (3) private land projects enrolled in the Block Management Program (green circles). Public land projects are represented by triangular points. See Figure 7 for an example map page.

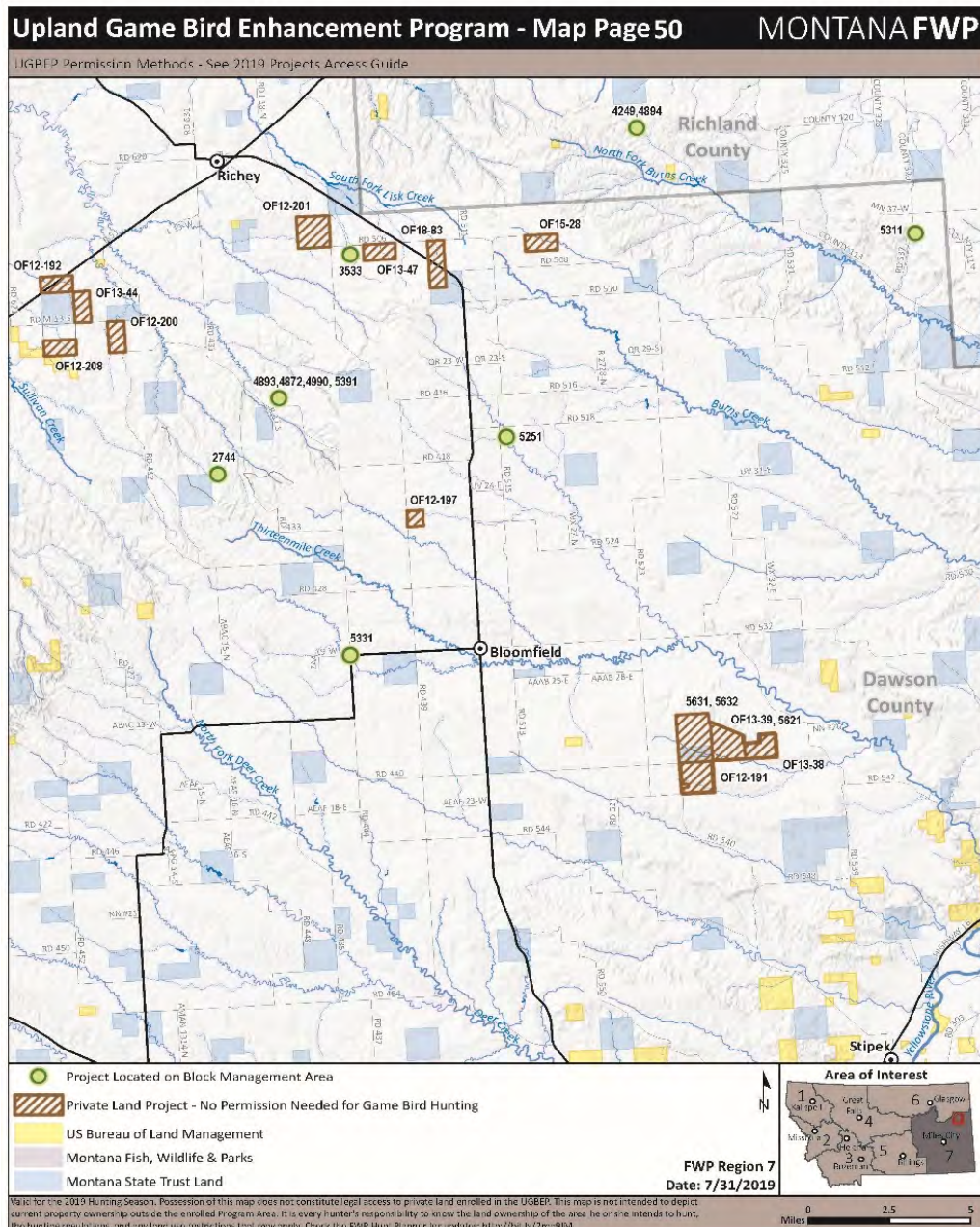


Figure 7. This example of a Map Page provides hunters with key information on project access.

Each year the UGBEP Access Guide is distributed to all FWP regions by late August. Hunters may also request a guide be mailed to them. The program printed 7,600 guides in FY 2019 at a cost of \$9,120 (\$1.20 per guide), which also included freight and mailings for online requests. In FY 2020, the program printed 7,500 guides for a total expenditure of \$9,000 (\$1.20 per guide), including freight and mailing costs for online requests. Table 8 provides an overview of the number of guides requested and distributed to hunters each fiscal year.

Table 8. Total number of guides requested online by fiscal year.

Calendar Year	Total Online Guide Requests
2020	2,992
2019	3,097
2018	1,395
2017	1,817
2016	1,968
2015	1,856
2014	631
2013	464
2012	459
2011	249

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND ONGOING ADAPTATION

The UGBEP receives evaluation or feedback in a number of ways, which helps the program adapt to changing circumstances, improving performance. These include: (1) project monitoring, (2) ongoing assessment of needs, (3) input from the UGBEP Council, and (4) hunter and cooperator feedback.

Contract/Project Monitoring

FWP Habitat Specialists and biologists conduct monitoring of all annual contracts, including Open Fields, Habitat Management Leases, grazing systems, and food plots. Project types such as nesting cover, shelterbelts, and conservation leases are monitored less frequently, on an established schedule. Unscheduled monitoring also occurs whenever staff stop by a project or to “check in” with the cooperator to collect receipts for reimbursements or to note progress of a project that is underway. Generally, well over 200 projects are monitored in a given year. Monitoring results are entered by field staff into the program database in association with contract records.

UGBEP Citizens’ Advisory Council

The council and department staff met four times in this past biennium, once on a conference call during COVID-19 shut down, to review work planning and progress, receive public input, and to make program recommendations. Since 2009, the Council’s input has consistently served to improve program performance. The department appreciates the Council’s dedication and support for the program.

In addition to ongoing program direction and technical guidance, the council recommended specific statutory changes for the program, which may be a consideration for the 2021 Legislature, as follows:

- Change the program’s pheasant release statute, allowing expenditures up to a *maximum* of 15% of annual program revenue (87-1-247(2)(a), MCA).
 - Eliminate the minimum expenditure requirement (87-1-247(2)(b), MCA).
 - Allow unspent pheasant release funds to be available for use on the habitat enhancement side of the program.
- Revise the requirement of council membership (87-1-251 (1)(f), MCA) to two legislators, *one from each major party*.

UGBEP Hunter Survey

The UGBEP invites hunters, via an on-line survey, to provide comments about their experiences with the program during the hunting season. The survey link is published in the UGBEP Projects Access Guide and on the program web page. During the biennium, 154 respondents provided comments on their UGBEP experiences. The following is a sampling of comments:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
FY 2019/2020	8	15	22	63	46
Percentage	5%	10%	14%	41%	30%

“I spend an enormous amount of money hunting birds and big game in Montana. Two reasons, access and opportunity.”

“I am always thankful for these programs in place. They provide more hunting opportunities to the general public which is a great thing. Thank you and keep up the good work, so many of us appreciate these opportunities.”

“The two other projects I hunted were OK, but there was not enough deep cover (trees) to keep birds nearby.”

“Spend most of funding on habitat protection and enhancement (grassland) in eastern portion of state. Planting trees in a grassland ecosystem is detrimental to native migrant wildlife. Pheasant releasing is not necessary and a waste of limited resources in eastern counties.”

APPENDIX A:

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE, & PARKS
10-YEAR LICENSE SALES UPLAND BIRD**

LICENSE TYPE	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Res. Bird	27,644	25,468	26,011	26,820	26,417	28,105	24,131	21,259	19,642	18,341
Res. Senior/Youth/Disabled Bird	1,294	1,209	1,304	1,299	1,289	1,533	12,733	11,658	10,721	10,067
Res. Sportsman (w/o bear)	18,812	19,782	18,708	19,126	19,330	18,943	23,189	23,882	24,217	24,882
Res. Sportsman (w/bear)	12,234	12,508	14,872	15,977	16,536	16,422	17,931	19,031	19,226	20,339
Res. Youth Sportsman	5,761	6,168	6,219	6,305	6,426	6,232	6,964	6,200	5,607	5,459
Res. Senior Sportsman	1,068	1,191	1,298	1,548	1,842	1,928	11,523	12,366	13,030	13,486
Military Recognition Sportsman	1,155	1,311	1,288	904	856	740	555	428	324	247
Cooperators Sportsman	1,049	1,044	885	829	614	607	631	622	567	549
Res. Free Youth Sportsman	5,439	5,051	4,976	5,194	4,872	4,661	1			
Total Resident Upland Bird Season	74,446	73,730	75,349	77,802	78,182	79,171	97,669	95,506	93,334	93,160
Nonres. Bird	6,833	5,568	6,373	5,144	5,215	5,580	5,419	4,318	4,213	4,328
Nonres. Bird - Youth	101	89	126	161	186	211	188	137	103	94
Nonres. Big Game Combo-General	11,500	14,145	12,197	12,362	12,570	12,376	12,303	11,657	12,241	11,817
Nonres. Big Game Combo-Outfit	3,317									
Nonres. Big Game Combo-Family Sponsor	269	125	48	20	12	10	183	263	296	298
Nonres. Elk Combo-Family Sponsor									39	53
Nonres. Deer Combo-General	4,001	6,628	8,481	9,777	9,776	10,139	10,316	10,653	10,838	11,326
Nonres. Deer Combo-Outfitter	1,971									
Nonres. Deer Combo-Landowner	2,000	1,780	1,470	1,284	971	980	893	884	948	1,010
Nonres. Deer Combo-Family Sponsor	212	112	41	20	15	12	98	128	148	182
Nonres. Elk Combo-General	742	1,791	2,482	2,529	2,756	4,316	4,641	4,800	4,638	5,432
Nonres. Elk Combo-Outfitter	837									
Nonres. Deer Combo-LO Reissued	64									
Nonres. Youth Sponsored Big Game Combo	298	298	388	511	548	592	628	594	311	266
Nonres. Youth Sponsored Elk Combo									28	34
Nonres. Youth Sponsored Deer Combo									451	560
Nonres. College Student Big Game Combo	353	356	393	409	463	477	115	106	90	77
Nonres. College Student Elk Combo									3	4
Nonres. College Student Deer Combo									22	30
Nonres. Cooperators Big Game Combo	120	118	127	123	128	139	147	147	166	178
Nonres. Native Upland Game Bird			416	595	653	663	73	60	53	44
Nonres. Native Big Game Combo							831	887	845	815
Nonres. Native Elk Combo									77	97
Nonres. Native Deer Combo							379	384	347	335
Total Nonresident Upland Bird Season	32,478	31,028	32,550	32,935	33,294	35,521	36,314	35,018	35,857	36,988
Nonres. 3-Day Bird Stamp-Shooting Preserve	662	568	526	507	479	521	505	473	508	431
Nonres. 3-Day Bird Stamp				1,911	1,989	2,432	2,539	2,200	2,112	2,007

APPENDIX B: LIST OF PARTNERSHIPS PARTICIPATING IN UGBEP PROJECTS

Region 1	Region 2
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Five Valleys Chapter of Pheasants Forever Habitat Forever Mission Valley Chapter of Pheasants Forever US Fish Wildlife Service	Blackfoot Community Conservation Area National Wild Turkey Federation US Forest Service
Region 3	
Beaverhead Chapter of Pheasants Forever Bureau of Land Management, Butte Field Office Gallatin Valley Chapter of Pheasants Forever	Headwaters Chapter of Pheasants Forever
Region 4	
Bureau of Land Management, Havre Field Office Central Montana Chapter of Pheasants Forever DNRC State Lands, Conrad Unit Ducks Unlimited Farm Service Agency, Cascade County Farm Service Agency, Chouteau County Farm Service Agency, Glacier County Farm Service Agency, Pondera County Farm Service Agency, Teton County Farm Service Agency, Toole County Golden Triangle Chapter of Pheasants Forever Habitat Forever, LLC	Montana Salinity Control Association NRCS Field Office, Cascade County NRCS Field Office, Chouteau County NRCS Field Office, Glacier County NRCS Field Office, Pondera County NRCS Field Office, Teton County NRCS Field Office, Toole County Rimrock Valley Preserve, LLC Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists Pondera County Conservation District Upper Missouri Chapter of Pheasants Forever USFWS Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge USFWS Benton Lake Wetland Management District USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife
Region 5	
Billings Rod & Gun Club Bureau of Land Management, Billings Field Office Conoco Phillips-Phillips 66 Habitat Forever, LLC	National Wild Turkey Federation Montana Chapter of Safari Club Yellowstone Valley Chapter of Pheasants Forever

Region 6	
Daniels County Conservation District DNRC State Lands, Glasgow Unit Ducks Unlimited Farm Service Agency, Blaine County Farm Service Agency, Daniels County Farm Service Agency, Hill County Farm Service Agency, McCone County Farm Service Agency, Phillips County Farm Service Agency, Richland County Farm Service Agency, Roosevelt County Farm Service Agency, Sheridan County Farm Service Agency, Valley County National Fish and Wildlife Foundation National Wild Turkey Federation Northeast Montana Chapter of Pheasants Forever NRCS Field Office, Blaine County NRCS Field Office, Daniels County	NRCS Field Office, Hill County NRCS Field Office, Phillips County NRCS Field Office, Richland County NRCS Field Office, Roosevelt County NRCS Field Office, Sheridan County NRCS Field Office, Valley County Northeast Chapter of Pheasants Forever Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists Phillips County Conservation District Roosevelt County Conservation District Sheridan County Conservation District The Nature Conservancy USFWS Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge USFWS Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
Region 7	
American Bird Conservancy Bureau of Land Management, Miles City Office Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Rosebud County Farm Service Agency, Dawson County Farm Service Agency, McCone County	NRCS Field Office, Baker County NRCS Field Office, Carter County NRCS Field Office, Custer County NRCS Field Office, McCone County NRCS Field Office, Richland County