



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Unlocking Public Lands | allow free public access to public lands in exchange for a state income tax credit

Overview

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' Unlocking Public Lands program seeks to "unlock" public access to isolated parcels of state or federal land for all outdoor recreation uses in compliance with public land rules.

Program at a Glance

The Unlocking Public Lands program is a creative way for landowners to provide public access to public lands for all recreation uses (camping, hunting, birding, etc.) in exchange for an income tax credit to the benefit of the residents and visitors of Montana.

Who is Eligible

To be eligible for the Unlocking Public Lands program private landowners, must be willing to provide public access across private lands to public lands for more than six months. Typically, this occurs from June 30-December 31.

Landowners allowing access to "locked" state lands must also hold the state land lease.

Landowners could also be considered for an agreement if they own land adjacent to the point where the corners of two parcels of public land meet. The landowner shall grant access through the landowner's land to establish a corridor between the two parcels of public land as long as one of the parcels of public land is accessible by a public road, waterway, or access granted by a landowner.

The public land to be considered cannot be accessed by:

- public road, right-of-way, or easement;
- public waters;
- adjacent federal, state, county, or municipal land that is open to public use; or
- adjacent private land because a landowner has granted permission to cross (such as neighboring landowners enrolled in FWP programs like Block Management)

Landowner Compensation and Benefits

Landowners who enroll parcels in the Unlocking Public Lands Program are eligible for an income tax credit of \$750 per parcel, with a maximum of \$3,000 in tax credits.

Fish, Wildlife & Parks may provide fall hunter management assistance dependent upon need, property rules and program availability.

FWP will provide and post signs with associated rules for each property enrolled in collaboration with the landowner.

Agreement Details

Agreements will be between private landowners and Fish, Wildlife & Parks for more than six months and are renewed annually.

Landowner determines when, where, and how the public may access public land in accordance with program guidelines including the possibility of limiting travel to foot traffic only.

Landowner Liability

Landowners enrolled in the Unlocking Public Lands program are provided liability protection under state law through 70-16-302, Montana Code Annotated (MCA) as long as fees for access/trespass are not charged. Landowners are also possibly eligible for reimbursement through FWP's Livestock Loss Reimbursement Program.

How to Apply

Applications are available in early January and due by March 15 for new projects. Applications can be obtained online or through a local FWP office. Agreements will be selected and landowners notified by May 15. For more information contact your local Fish, Wildlife & Parks Hunting Access Coordinator, FWP Biologist, FWP Warden or visit: <http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/hunterAccess/unlockingPublicLands/>



**UNLOCKING
PUBLIC LANDS**
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For more information: Contact your local FWP office or contact the FWP Headquarters Office
406-444-2612, LndSportRelations@mt.gov