

November, 2021 Newsletter

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Membership meeting: Membership meeting, Wednesday, December 8, 6:30-9 in the FWP Public Meeting Room.

We are starting membership meetings again! Please bring wild game snacks such as salami, pepper sticks, smoked fish, etc. you want to share to FWP starting at 6:30 PM. Flathead Wildlife will provide cheese and crackers, soft drinks and coffee. Bring in any antlers, horns or pictures you want to share. We will share Nature's bounty and tall tales until about 7. Fish, Wildlife and Parks will then give a brief recap of the 2021 hunting season results and a preview of proposed changes for hunting regulations for 2022-23. FWP Regional Supervisor Jim Williams is a Boone and Crockett scorer and will be available to measure any trophies you want to bring in. Covid and flu are in the Flathead, if you feel ill please stay home to protect everyone. **We hope to see you on December 8!**

Big Game Hunting Regulations Proposed Changes

Sometimes it can be hard to sort out hunting regulations. And you want to feel comfortable when you see that game warden approaching. To that end, Fish, Wildlife and Parks has proposed a major simplification effort for hunting regulations for 2022-23. Simplification is a good goal. But a lot of what are considered complications are extra opportunities such as tags, permits and extended seasons. Also proposed is combining hunting districts together. Again, district boundaries and different regulations in adjoining districts can be confusing. But combining districts means that you can't distribute hunting pressure as readily and you have to manage for the weaker populations. Again, opportunity may go away. FWP already held initial scoping meetings in each region in October to discuss proposed changes. The Fish and Wildlife Commission will discuss comments on those changes and adopt tentative regulations at the December 14 Commission meeting. Those proposed changes will go out for 30 day public comment. The FW Commission will then adopt final changes at the February Commission meeting.

Some of the initial proposed changes for Region 1 were:

- Convert all antlerless elk permits to antlerless B tags. Simpler but a hunter could theoretically kill 2 elk in some districts (general tag + B tag).
- Eliminate low number of antlerless elk permits (5) in Districts 110, 120 and 130 to reduce clutter. This will mean a low loss of opportunity.
- Combine Hunting Districts 101 and 109 (Eureka area). Expand the 3 week general hunt/2 week limited permits for buck mule deer.
- Combine Hunting Districts 102 and 102. Eliminate the limited draw mule deer buck permit in 103-50 (Fisher River).

- A statewide proposal is to eliminate elk shoulder seasons in over-objective districts and replace with 3 week antlerless elk only seasons in August and in December immediately after the general season. Lingering problems would then be dealt with through game damage hunts.

There are a number of proposals in other hunting districts and Regions. You need to check proposed changes for any Districts you hunt regularly.

This page contains the original proposed scoping changes. Scroll down for individual Hunting District proposals. Remember, the FW Commission will adopt tentative changes on December 14 and you will have an opportunity to comment for 30 days after that.

<https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/public-comment-opportunities/hunting-reg-changes>

Come to the December 8 FWI meeting to hear more about potential changes.

Foys Bend FCA Work Project

The 249 acre Foys Bend Fisheries Conservation Area (FCA) was purchased in 2009 from Dr. Cap and Bonnie Ingham. Purchased with Bonneville Power Mitigation funding, the Inghams sold the property at well below appraised value. The land was purchased to provide protection for westslope cutthroat and bull trout which use the adjacent Flathead River as well as associated riparian wildlife. The property had been extensively farmed, removing much of the native vegetation that stabilized river banks and provided wildlife habitat. FWP Restoration Ecologist Franz Ingelfinger is working to restore the cottonwood galleries and associated underbrush. When FWI reached out to Franz looking for a work project, he suggested Foys Bend.



A FWI volunteer crew including Roger Allick, Bill Boehme, Doug Bolender, Kendal Bortisser, Norm Brewer, Arvon Fielding, Jack Jay, Geo Johnson, Jim Vashro and Mike Wood worked on a sunny day in mid-October. The first task was to remove 8' fencing Franz had placed around a low spot to encourage cottonwood seeds to sprout and to protect the seedlings from browsing deer. This photo shows an amazingly thick stand of cottonwood seedlings on the right after just 1-1/2 years. The fence was removed to allow deer to naturally thin the stand.



The crew then drove posts around another 2 acre plot and erected the fencing to protect some bare root stock seedlings and to encourage seeds to sprout.

Foys Bend FCA is open to the public spring through fall. It is operated as a Block Management Area with sign-ups through the FWP Kalispell office for deer, turkeys and waterfowl.

This little gem is also a great place for bird watching. Check it out. And thanks to Franz for laying out a great project.

I shot a buck 3 days before Thanksgiving, 57 years to the day since I shot my first deer. That thought



brought a flood of emotions. I can still picture that first buck bouncing through the timber into an opening, then turning broadside and stopping. You've got to love mule deer. There have been a lot of deer since then and this one wasn't a whopper but I'm happy to say my heart was pounding while I waited for this one to step into the clear. I hope I never lose that thrill.

I was hunting on some Flathead Ridge Ranch property. We've seen some seismic shifts in land ownership the last few years in northwest Montana. Thank goodness private landowners like Mark

and Robyn Jones were willing to put most of their 127,000 acre Flathead Ridge Ranch into Block Management. There are many other landowners who are willing to grant access if you do your homework. And corporate timber companies like Stimson Lumber, FH Stoltze Land and Lumber, Green Diamond Resources and Southern Pines Plantation are cooperating to provide access through Block Management and conservation easements (more on that elsewhere in this newsletter). I also hunted a lot of Block Management in the Missouri Breaks this fall. When you think about it, it's a big leap of faith for landowners to open their lands to people toting firearms, driving vehicles and building fires. We need to thank them when we can, treat the land like our own and respect the privilege we've been given because the thoughtless actions of a few can make that all go away.

This was a tough year with record high temperatures and little or no snow. I've only heard of rutting buck activity in the last week. I hope your hunts were fun and safe, created memories with friends and family and maybe even put some venison in the freezer. As I look at a forecast for temperatures in the 50s tomorrow and my lawn greening up, I'm contemplating whether I'll be using my lawnmower or snowblower first. Jim Vashro

Bad Rock Canyon Wildlife Management Area (WMA)

More good news on the public access and wildlife habitat front. The FW Commission and State Land Board approved the purchase of the 772 acre property at the mouth of Bad Rock Canyon. This largely undeveloped land is bounded by several miles of the Flathead River and consists of both wet and dry conifer forest, wetlands and a spring creek. The parcel is inhabited by whitetail deer, elk, grizzly and black bears and a host of other wildlife, waterfowl and birds. The area is an important migratory corridor between the Swan and Whitefish ranges. Part of the Columbia Falls Aluminum Plant property, the land was offered to FWP by parent company Glencore with the provision the purchase be completed by the end of 2021. The \$7.26 million purchase price was funded with \$4 million from the USFS Forest Legacy Program/LWCF, \$2.5 million from Habitat Montana, paid for by Montana hunters, and \$590,000 raised in a monumental effort by the Flathead Land Trust from a variety of sources including the largest land purchase donation (\$2800) ever given by Flathead Wildlife, Inc. in recognition of the special values of this property. The property will be closed in winter as winter range. A parking area and trail will be built for public use and the area is currently operated as a Block Management Area for youth hunters and hunters with disabilities.

Somers Beach State Park and Montebello Fishing Access

On the Flathead Lake access front, the Montana State Parks Board has completed the purchase of the 106 acre Somers Beach property from the Sliter family. FWP worked with the Sliters and Flathead Land Trust to develop the project. Funding for the acquisition was provided by the Land and Water Conservation Fund (recently reauthorized through the efforts of Senators Tester and Daines) and required matches from Parks Earned Revenue funds. Immediate development will include parking, trails and sanitation while a long range plan is developed. The area will provide for family swimming and picnicking, non-motorized watercraft and a wetland for wildlife.

FWP has also acquired the 15 acre Montebello Fishing Access Site from the Mattson family. Situated on the mainland almost due north of Skeeko Bay on Wildhorse Island, when developed the site will offer day use with parking, a latrine, boat ramp and a camp host to control use.

Despite being the largest natural lake west of the Mississippi, Flathead Lake has limited public access with only a dozen or so developed sites. Thanks to the Sliter and Mattson families, access has now been greatly increased.

Kootenai Forestlands II

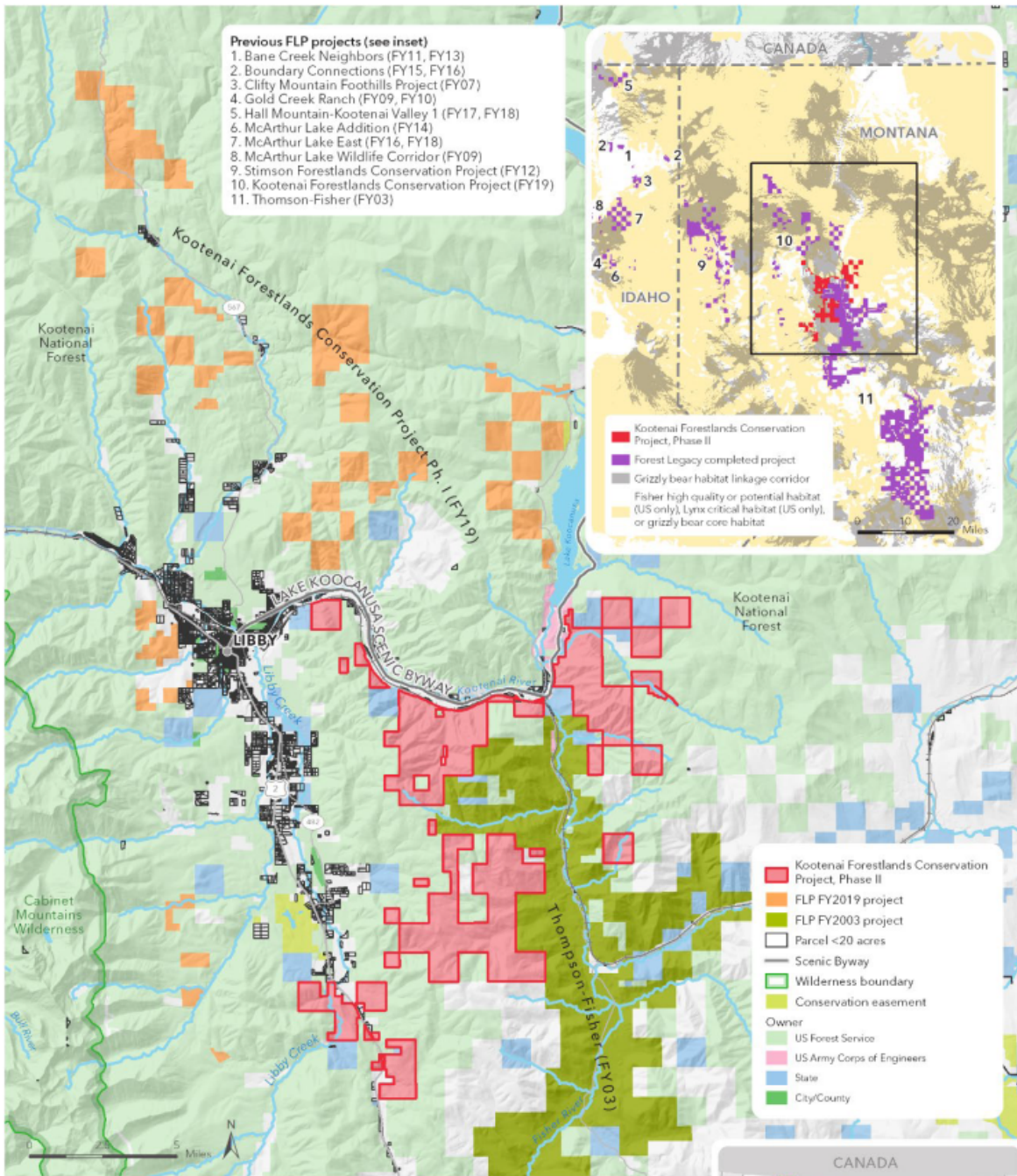
More good news in Northwest Montana. The Kootenai Forestlands Phase II Conservation Easement between Trust for Public Lands, FWP and Stimson Lumber has been approved by the FW Commission.

The 27,289 acre CE will be added to the 22,000 acre Kootenai Forestlands Phase I, the 28,000 acre Kootenai Valley CE and the 142,000 acre Thompson-Fisher CE that have been negotiated over the last 18 years. To fund the Phase II easement, FWP secured \$470,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, \$50,000 from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust and \$6 million from the USFS Forest Legacy Program. Since a preliminary appraisal in 2019, the value of the easement increased significantly to \$16.3 million. Officials with Stimson Lumber agreed to donate the difference between the original assessment and the current value, well over \$8 million.

The map below shows the current CE (pink) along with nearby CEs (orange and green). The inset map shows acreage (purple) previously protected under the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) including acres in the Swan and Clearwater drainages. The FLP is funded through the LWCF which was recently permanently authorized and funded thanks to the work of Montana's Senators Tester and Daines.

An incredible amount of work has gone into protecting these and additional acres by FWP, Trust for Public Lands, The Nature Conservancy and corporate timberland owners Plum Creek Timberlands, Weyerhaeuser, Stimson Lumber and F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber. These CEs will ensure these acres remain as working forests as well as providing fish and wildlife habitat, clean water and public access. And more CEs are in the works.

At a time when public access is shrinking and corporate timber and private land ownership is changing rapidly, these programs are great news.



Kootenai Forestlands Conservation Project Phase II

LINCOLN COUNTY, MONTANA

June 7, 2021. Copyright © The Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only.



Bluebird Nesting Boxes Building and selling bluebird nesting boxes is one of the primary fundraisers for FWI as well as providing nesting habitat. Sales were great this last spring thanks to support from Murdoch's Ranch and Home Supply and Sliters Lumber and Building Supply. We're now sold out, watch for a BBNB Build Party in January or February.

Flathead Wildlife, Inc. Memberships

FWI memberships run on the calendar year. Please renew your membership for 2022 so we can continue to represent your interests in the outdoors. Thanks!



Do you believe in Preserving our Hunting and Fishing Heritage, Promoting Public Access and Youth in the Outdoors? Join Flathead Wildlife, Inc. Today! Thank You For Your Continued Support.

__ Single \$20 __ Family \$25 __ Sustaining / Business \$35 __ Habitat \$50 __ Conservation \$100
Mail to PO Box 4, Kalispell, Montana 59903 or use PayPal on our website.

Flathead Wildlife Inc. Website Address: <http://flatheadwildlife.org/>

Flathead Wildlife Inc. Facebook Address: <https://www.facebook.com/ProtectingMontanasAccess/>

E-Mail for sending photos to be posted on Website / Facebook: flatheadwildlife.inc@gmail.com

RENEW YOUR FLATHEAD WILDLIFE, INC. MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your family from Flathead Wildlife, Inc.!