

February, 2022 Newsletter

Newsletter Editor Chuck Hunt
President Jim Vashro

Membership meeting:

Flathead Wildlife did not hold a membership meeting in February as Omicron variant Covid cases were spiking in Flathead County. It appears that caseloads are declining so we will plan for a meeting in March. Watch for an announcement, in the meantime stay safe and healthy. Practice social distancing by going ice fishing, hiking, skiing or wildlife watching. ☺

Bluebird Nesting Box Build Day

Building and selling bluebird nesting boxes is one of the primary fundraisers for FWI as well as providing nesting habitat. We will hold a **Build Day on Friday, February 25 starting at 9 AM in the Parks Shop at Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 490 N. Meridian, Kalispell**. A number of members have been cutting parts for up to 600 boxes so this will be assembly line construction. Bring a battery operated drill with Phillips bits, a brad nailer if you have one and gloves and eye and hearing protection as you wish. If you don't have tools we can still find a job for you. Flathead Wildlife will provide lunch. Park in the outside parking lot or the bank parking lot across the street. Thanks to Mike Valler for helping organize this project, Jack Jay for picking up and storing lumber and Stoltze Land and Lumber for giving FWI a good price on lumber. Watch for bird boxes to start appearing at Murdoch's and Sliters around March 1. Spring and bluebirds are coming, be ready!

Big Game Hunting Regulations Changes, 2022-23

FWP started on simplifying hunting regulations several years ago. The Fish and Wildlife (FW) Commission adopted final changes during a marathon meeting on February 4. However, the changes are anything but simple. Initial proposals appeared to be heavily weighted towards outfitted nonresident hunters and large landowners. For instance, some proposals would have changed limited entry elk permits where nonresidents are limited to no more than 10% of the total to unlimited permits with no limits on nonresidents. One proposal for several highly-sought after elk units in central Montana would have restricted limited-entry (bull elk) permit holders to hunting only on public land while hunters on private land could hunt bull elk with a general elk license. Those kind of proposals prompted thousands of comments from concerned hunters. The FW Commission listened and pulled back many of the proposals during a work session on February 3. The Commission meeting on February 4 brought forward many motions and amendments to where hunters and Commissioners were sometimes confused on just what was being voted on? That led to an unlikely consensus between United Property Owners of Montana, Montana Outfitters and Guides, Montana Wildlife Federation and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers all urging the Commission to reset regulations to 2021 and engage in a lengthier and more thorough regulation setting process. However, several Commissioners felt too much time was invested already, that there were some worthy proposals and that any resulting problems could be addressed in 2 years.



Flathead Wildlife, Inc.
P.O. Box 4, Kalispell, Mt 59903

You can find the new hunting regulations at the following link or wait for the hunting regulations to be published in the next month. Be sure to study carefully so you don't get tripped up by a change. Applications for some either-sex deer and elk permits (bucks and bulls) will be due April 1. <https://fwp.mt.gov/hunt/regulations>

Flathead Wildlife had submitted comments for Region 1 with some success and failure.

- Opposed combining hunting districts 101 and 109 and 102 and 103. Those districts were combined, the main change is imposition of limited mule deer buck permits in HD 101.
- FWI opposed combining districts 123, 124 and 200 due to loss of opportunity/less permits. That proposal was dropped.
- FWI opposed opening HD 122 and 130 to either-sex whitetail deer hunting the 1st week of the season. Either-sex WTD hunting was reinstated to be uniform with other districts, however, Wildlife Manager Neil Anderson says the last few mild winters have seen deer populations rebound.
- FWI supported shifting antlerless elk permits to antlerless elk B tags to reduce confusion even though a few hunters might kill 2 elk (general tag and B tag).
- FWI supported dropping Permit To Hunt From a Vehicle (PTHV) permits to shoot cow elk because many who applied were not eligible. Now anyone who is PTHV eligible can shoot a cow during season.

Statewide Changes

There are too many changes to list all, be sure to check the regulations when published.

- There was a proposal to extend the Upland Bird Season for a month through January. FWI and others opposed, birds and landowners need a break. Proposal dropped.
- There was a proposal to drop mandatory bear check-ins in favor of hunter submitted reports and bear teeth. FWI opposed, saying accurate data is necessary to manage bears. FWP cited work load problems, a pilot program was adopted for Region 1 to test hunter self reports.
- Flathead Wildlife proposed making it legal to use air rifles meeting certain specifications for mountain grouse and fall turkeys (when rifles are legal). FWI has been working on this proposal for 5 years. Our thanks to FW Commissioner Pat Tabor for his support and for getting the Commission to adopt this proposal.
- Hunters obtaining a limited entry either-sex (bull) permit can only hunt bull elk in that district (except for HD 270). Think carefully before you apply far afield. This does not apply to antlerless elk B tags. Limited entry either-sex elk permit numbers were increased in some districts.
- Central Montana archery elk tags were unbundled and now are available for most districts as limited entry permits, some districts will be unlimited or general license.
- Mountain lions were previously managed through a quota system in Region 1. That often led to opening day scrambles and running over the quota so Region 1 went to limited entry permits. A new proposal would adopt a hybrid system where a percent (10%-30%) of the permits would be limited entry, the rest of the harvest would go on a quota system open to anyone. That proposal is open for comment through March 18. <https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/public-comment-opportunities>

Be sure to check the new hunting regulations when they are published.

Don't forget you need new hunting and fishing licenses March 1!

Flathead Wildlife Memberships Due

Flathead Wildlife runs memberships on the calendar year. If you haven't already done so, please renew and get a friend or family member to also sign up. Flathead Wildlife's membership has declined after a year of no meetings. But that doesn't mean the Board of Directors hasn't been busy representing your interests. Following is a list of activities for 2021.

- Supported acquisition of the Bad Rock Wildlife Management Area and contributed towards the purchase. Donation done in memory of Scott Johnson and Tim Dilworth.
- Supported the acquisition of Danford Reed's Slough viewing area in the Lower Valley and contributed towards building a parking area for school groups/buses for classes.
- Supported acquisition of the Somers Beach State Park. Commented on preliminary facility development and erosion control.
- Supported acquisition of the Montebello Fishing Access Site on Flathead Lake just due north of Wildhorse Island.
- Donated \$1,000 to the Flathead 4-H Shooting Sports in memory of Pat McVay and Bernie Windauer. The program teaches safety and proficiency to up to 400 youth ages 9-18 in archery, air rifle and pistol, small bore, shotgun and muzzleloader.
- Contributed funds and instructors to a Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) ice fishing workshop.
- Commented heavily during the 2021 Montana Legislature on fish and wildlife bills. Did email alerts to FWI members and were active in a sportsmen's coalition.
- Commented extensively on proposed 2022-2023 Hunting Regulations.
- Got the Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt a proposal to allow use of certain air rifles for mountain grouse and fall turkeys to increase turkey harvest and promote safety.
- Supported the Kootenai Forestlands II conservation easement with Stimson Lumber.
- Attended the FWP Director's Listening Session to express FWI concerns.
- Attended Region 1 FWP Citizen Advisory Committee meetings to keep up to date on issues and represent FWI interests.
- Took residents of the Montana Veterans Home fishing at Pine Grove Pond.
- Worked with FWP at the Foys Bend Fisheries Conservation Area on the Flathead River on a cottonwood restoration project to stabilize streambanks and provide wildlife habitat.
- Constructed and sold 500 bluebird nesting boxes through Murdoch's and Sliters to provide bluebird nesting habitat and fund FWI activities.
- Provided comments supporting expansion of the archery range at Lone Pine State Park and creating a new archery range at Big Arm State Park.
- Sent a letter to Senators Daines and Tester thanking them for supporting permanent authorization and funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) through the Great Outdoors Recreation Act.

- Provided comments to FWP on fish removal projects.
- Ran a State-Fish Art Contest encouraging interest in the Montana State Fish, the cutthroat trout. Produced a number of national winners for Montana.

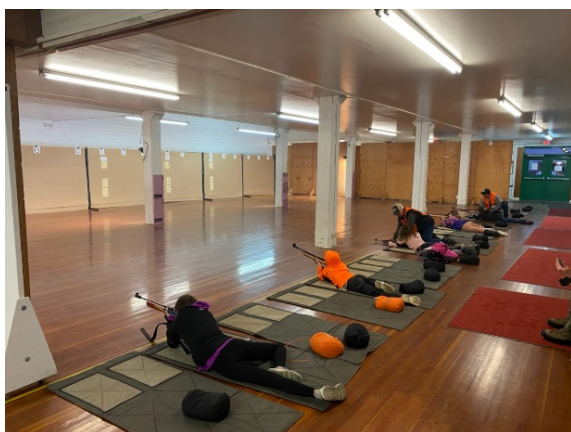
A \$20 membership would get you all the benefits above. We need your membership dues and your name on the membership rolls to continue to do good work. There are thousands of hunters and anglers in northwest Montana, why don't more people sign up? Outdoor opportunities are decreasing, access is being sold, access sites are getting more crowded. Stay informed, get involved. Join Flathead Wildlife and sign up your friends so we can represent you. See the membership application at the end of this newsletter.

Flathead 4-H Shooting Sports Program

The Flathead 4-H Shooting Sports Program teaches safety and proficiency to up to 400 youths ages 9-18, thanks to a group of dedicated volunteers. Shooting disciplines include archery, air pistol and rifle, small bore and muzzleloader with classes Monday and Thursday evenings. Instructors are trying to develop a hunting skills program. It costs the kids \$2/night/discipline but that doesn't cover all costs (air rifles and pistols can cost more than \$1,000).



L-R, Dennis Urban, Brent Mitchell (FWI), Jim Vashro (FWI), Dale Saverud and Don Anderson



This program fits many of Flathead Wildlife's goals for firearm safety, preserving our hunting heritage and involving youth in the outdoors so Flathead Wildlife donated \$1,000 in memory of long time FWI member Scott Johnson and Leonard Howke who taught Hunter Education for 56 years, Hooked on Fishing for more than 20 years and the Olney Check Station for over 20 years.

This donation was made possible in part by Mrs. Katherine Johnson who made a large donation in Scott's memory and an anonymous donor (Thank You!) who contributed a large amount.

<https://flathead.msuextension.org/fcss.html>

Letter To Senators Daines and Tester

Dear Senators Daines and Tester,

Flathead Wildlife, Inc. is northwest Montana's oldest sportsmen and women organization, founded in 1956. Flathead Wildlife is committed to preserving our hunting and fishing heritage, protecting and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, protecting and expanding public lands and access to those lands and involving youth in the outdoors.

Flathead Wildlife thanks you for your past support of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act to permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in 2017. Furthermore, we want to thank you for your sponsorship and support for the Great American Outdoors Act to permanently fund not only LWCF but also the Forest Legacy Act and to provide funding for 5 years to address the backlog of deferred maintenance on National Parks, US Forest Service lands and National Wildlife Refuges. Those pieces of legislation are vital to meeting the goals of Flathead Wildlife.

Montana, and northwest Montana in particular, has benefitted greatly from the expenditure of more than \$600 million under LWCF in past years. LWCF has been used to fund projects such as rifle ranges and more than 3 dozen Fishing Access Sites in northwest Montana. LWCF was used as part of the funding for Lone Pine and Thompson Chain of Lakes State Parks and for Montana's newest State Park, Somers Beach, on Flathead Lake. The recent purchase of the 776 acre Bad Rock Wildlife Management Area will preserve a vital wildlife corridor between the Swan and Whitefish mountain ranges for grizzly bears and elk and will provide habitat for dozens of wildlife and bird species as well as providing opportunities for youth hunters and hunters with disabilities and a recreational site for residents of Columbia Falls and the Flathead Valley. Glacier National Park and Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge are vital to our way of life and economy. Corporate timberlands in Northwest Montana have provided great jobs and wood products for decades in northwest Montana as well as wildlife habitat and free access for hunters, anglers and recreationists. All that could have potentially changed as up to 800,000 acres was contemplated for sale. Thanks to LWCF and the Forest Legacy Act, as well as support from state and federal agencies, nonprofit conservation groups, clubs like Flathead Wildlife and ordinary Montanans, many of those acres have been purchased or placed under conservation easements to maintain traditional uses. There's still work to be done and LWCF and the Forest Legacy Act will be vital to completing those projects.

So Flathead Wildlife thanks you for your past support and hopes you will continue to support future legislation that will protect our hunting and fishing heritage, protect wildlife and public access and provide opportunities for youth to get outdoors.

Sincerely,

Flathead Wildlife, Inc. Board of Directors

Jim Vashro, President

Fish, Wildlife and Parks Wildlife Staff Change

The Staff at Region 1 Wildlife has undergone some major shuffling.

Bear Management Specialist Tim Manley has retired after 37 years. Tim spent as much or more time educating humans on how to keep bears from getting into trouble as he did dealing with problem bears. Tim's expertise, knowledge and easy-going way of educating people along with innovative techniques went a long way in helping bears and people coexist. FWI wishes Tim summers and falls enjoying the outdoors instead of waiting for the next phone call.

Wildlife Mitigation Program Supervisor Alan Wood retired a year ago. Alan and Gael Bissell were responsible for stitching together many conservation easements to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat in NW Montana. Chris Hammond, who was the regional Nongame Biologist, was selected to fill the

Mitigation post.

Jessy Coltrane, who was the local area wildlife biologist switched to the Nongame Biologist position and will also work on furbearers.

Franz Ingelfinger, who was the Restoration Ecologist, is now the local area wildlife biologist. Franz was the biologist who organized the fencing project at Foys Bend last fall and we look forward to working with Franz.

Jessie Newby, who was working the local moose study, is now a local area biologist in SW Montana (Lima). Colin Peterson has taken the moose study post.

Kris Tempel, who has been leading conservation easements and habitat acquisitions has resigned to take a position with the Forest Service on the Forest Legacy Program. Forest Legacy has been a major funder of habitat protection in the area so Kris will still be helping locally.

Ethan Lula replaced Tim Thier who retired from Eureka about 3 years ago. Mike Ebinger replaced Bruce Sterling who retired in Thompson Falls about a year ago.

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

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