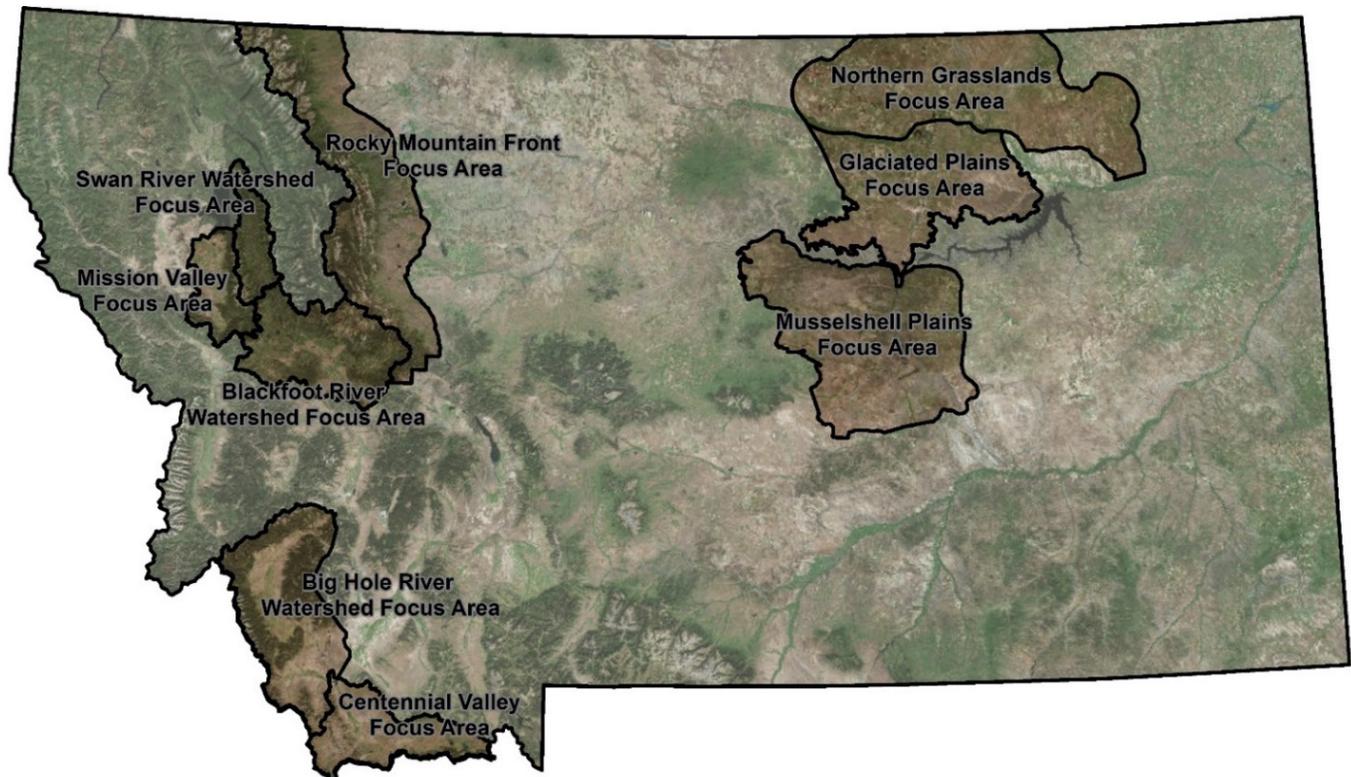


Montana



Montana PFW program Focus Areas. USFWS map.

Introduction and Overview

The Montana Partners for Fish and Wildlife (MT PFW) program had another great year during FY 2017 thanks to our partners and landowners. We worked with 38 landowners to complete restoration on over 1,157 wetland acres, 8.2 miles of in-stream/riparian habitat, 11,362 upland acres, 6 fish passage structures and 1 grizzly bear exclusion fence. The program implemented impressive conservation projects and helped coordinate important outreach/in-reach events. We made progress toward our 5-year

habitat goals, broadening partnerships and enhancing accountability. As in past years, the dedication, creativity and vision of MT PFW program field biologists played a major role in these successes.

Personnel changes during FY 2017: During FY 2017, we were fortunate to add two new employees to the MT PFW program: Adam Braddock and Levi Morgan. Adam is stationed in southwest Montana alongside Jim Magee, and will be covering the Centennial Valley Focus Area while Jim focuses on the Big Hole River Watershed Focus Area. Levi is

stationed in Lewistown and will be covering the new Musselshell Plains Focus Area.

Advancing Strategic Habitat Conservation and Surrogate Species:

During FY 2017, the MT PFW program started implementation of the fourth generation of our Strategic Plan, which covers FY 2017–2021. Our comprehensive, multi-step approach has really begun to attract interest in Montana from our many conservation partners. We also completed our first year under our monitoring plan. This report summarizes the results for FY 2017.

Goal I. Conserve Habitat

Montana Partners for Fish and Wildlife FY 2017 Habitat Accomplishments

| Habitat Type (restored/enhanced/established) | FY 2017 Total | FY 2017–2021 Cumulative Total | FY 2017–2021 Target | Percent Complete |
|--|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Upland acres | 11,362 | 11,362 | 56,070 | 20% |
| Wetland acres | 1,157 | 1,157 | 2,150 | 54% |
| Riparian/river miles | 8.2 | 8.2 | 78 | 11% |
| Fish passage structures | 6 | 6 | 37 | 16% |
| Grizzly bear exclusion fences | 1 | 1 | 17 | 6% |



Owl Creek Restoration Project that removed an earthen dam, restored historic stream channel, fish passage, converted connected on-channel wetlands to off-channel wetlands, and re-graded the floodplain elevations in the Swan River Valley Focus Area. USFWS photo.



Many streams in the west have down cut over the last 200 years at an accelerated rate. One way to restore streams to their historic elevation and allow them to access their floodplain is by installing structure in the stream. These structures are sometimes called beaver mimicry. This photo is of a recently completed beaver mimicry structure on Long Creek in the Centennial Valley Focus Area. USFWS photo.

Goal II. Broaden and Strengthen Partnerships

Robust conservation delivery relies on productive partnerships. The MT PFW program staff is fully engaged in strengthening partnerships. Key partners include, private landowners, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Arctic Grayling Recovery, Blackfoot Challenge, Partners for Conservation,

Big Hole Watershed Committee, Rancher Stewardship Alliance, Swan Valley Connections, Natural Resources Conservation Service, county conservation districts, Native American tribes and numerous private foundations.

Goal III. Improve Information Sharing and Communication

The FY 2017 Information Sharing and Communication accomplishments are summarized

below. We believe that on-the-ground conservation delivery and strong partnerships are tied to rigorous internal and external communication. Service and DOI leadership support this premise based on the number of requests we receive for field tours, high-level briefings, meetings, workshops and media events.

Montana Partners for Fish and Wildlife FY 2017 Partnership Accomplishments

| Accomplishment Type | FY 2017 Total | FY 2017–2021 Cumulative Total | FY 2017–2021 Target | Percent Complete |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Private landowner agreements | 39 | 39 | 188 | 21% |
| Partnerships | 79 | 79 | 1,068 | 7% |
| Technical assistance (staff days) | 302 | 302 | 1,170 | 26% |
| Leveraging ratio (PFW:non-program) | 1:2.2 | 1:2.2 | 1:2 | n/a |

Montana Partners for Fish and Wildlife FY 2017 Communication Accomplishments

| Accomplishment Type | FY 2017 Total | FY 2017–2021 Cumulative Total | FY 2017–2021 Target | Percent Complete |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Congressional briefings | 2 | 2 | 10 | 20% |
| Youth & nature | 1 | 1 | 10 | 10% |
| Field tours | 3 | 3 | 10 | 30% |
| MTFWP coordination meetings | 1 | 1 | 5 | 20% |



Seeding native grasses on a restoration site in the Northern Grasslands Focus Area. This focus area contains some of the largest blocks of intact native mixed-grass prairie in the US and provides valuable grassland habitat for Sprague’s pipit, Baird’s sparrow and chestnut-collared longspur. USFWS photo.

Goal IV. Enhance our Workforce

MT PFW program staff are required to have a vast knowledge of many different disciplines. Montana, like many other states, is big and complex, requiring understanding of local ecology, geology, hydrology, sociology and economics to work with our diverse partners. Our dedicated staff embrace the challenge and do an outstanding job continuing to learn new concepts and techniques. MT PFW program FY 2017 activities are listed below:

- Opportunity for 40 hours of training will be provided to each biologist
Objective met

- Work with MT PFW program staff to update Individual Development Plans
Objective met

- Organize and participate in at least 20 landowner/watershed meetings, conferences or workshops
In process

- Annual staff meetings and monthly conf. calls to provide updates, issues of concern, and guest speakers.
Objective met

- Annual award recognition for outstanding accomplishments
Objective met



MT PFW staff work with local landowners to host workshops, meetings, and other events to inform Service and non-Service staff. USFWS photo.



Cattle on spring pasture in an intact native mixed-grass prairie of the Northern Grasslands Focus Area. Many working ranches like this one provide unparalleled habitat for grassland songbirds, waterfowl, and sage-grouse. Managed livestock grazing is the most compatible land-use for these species. USFWS photo.



The Glaciated Plains Focus Area, contains large areas of intact grassland-sagebrush. This focus area contains the largest Greater Sage-Grouse Priority Area for Conservation in Montana. It is also contains some of the best habitat in North America for declining grassland songbirds, including chestnut-collared and McCown’s longspur, Baird’s sparrow, and Sprague’s pipit. With a high density of wetlands, it provides important upland breeding habitat for many waterfowl species including northern pintail, northern shoveler and mallard. The Glaciated Plains are threatened by conversion to small grain agriculture, and there is significant opportunity to restore and enhance native grasslands and wetlands. Photo by Ken Plourde.

Goal V. Increase Accountability

The MT PFW program delivers technical assistance to cooperators across the state. Each PLA receives funding based on criteria pertaining to its location within a defined focus area and overall benefit to focal species identified in our strategic plan. The MT PFW program set measurable targets that enabled the program to increase overall accountability for funded PLAs. To measure accountability the MT PFW program is working towards the following objectives:

- Produce annual accomplishment report
Objective met

- All projects will have completed implementation and compliance monitoring
Objective met

- Work with Service-Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) office to develop the MT PFW program Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database
Objective met

- Ensure that all HabITS data entries are timely and accurate.
Objective met



The MT PFW program works throughout Montana's diverse landscapes to benefit numerous fish and wildlife species while supporting viable rural economies. USFWS photo.