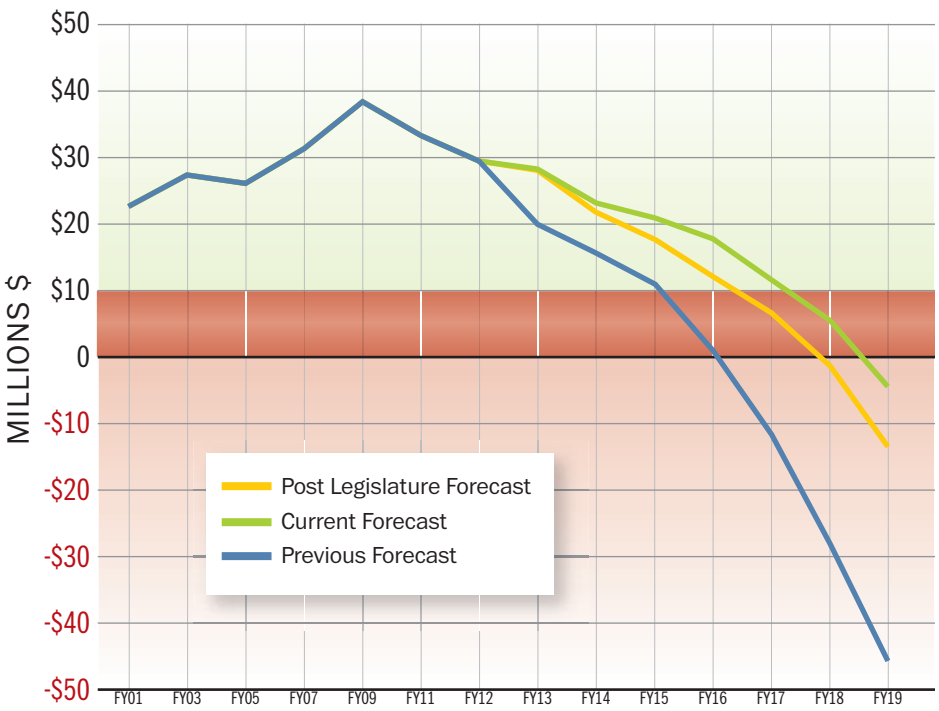
CHOICES FOR THE FUTURE

Funding Montana's fish and wildlife management and opportunities in the years ahead

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

FWP License Account Balance

FY 2001 projected to FY 2019



The time to choose is now.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is at a point where funding will not be adequate to sustain current operations in the near future. The agency either needs to increase revenue or decrease expenses or some combination of both.

Where do FWP's dollars come from?

Approximately two-thirds of the revenue used to manage Montana's fish and wildlife comes from hunting and fishing license fees of which nonresidents contribute about 70 percent. The remaining one-third comes primarily from federal taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. Less than one half of one percent of FWP's fish and wildlife management budget comes from the state's general fund.

Is this unexpected?

No. The Legislature usually enacts a hunting and fishing license fee increase about once a decade. Initially that creates more revenue than FWP spends in a year and the surplus goes in a dedicated savings account. Over time, as expenses increase due to inflation and new responsibilities, FWP begins spending more annually than the revenue FWP receives. The difference is then made up by spending down the savings account.

Starting in 2010 expenditures exceeded revenue and the difference has been made up by spending down the savings account.

In 2017, FWP will be at the point in the natural cycle of FWP's budget model where the savings account will no longer cover expenses.

Have other social and economic factors come into play?

Yes. Other factors contributing to the potential revenue shortfall include: inflation; additional responsibilities; a decline in license sales resulting from a number of events including the hard winter of 2010 and 2011 which dramatically impacted deer and antelope numbers and resulted in fewer licenses for sale; the perception of the negative impact wolves and other predators are having on hunting opportunity; the national economy and declining hunting and angling participation throughout the country.

What's been done to address this?

When it was determined that FWP would not take a fee increase proposal to the 2013 Legislature, FWP took the following actions to save $4.4 million annually:

- A $1.2 million cut in its operating budget starting FY2013
- $2 million annual funding shift to federal dollars
- Supporting legislation (HB 401) that resulted in $1.2 million in new revenue through licensing efficiencies

What are some examples of cuts and increased efficiencies?

- Reduced operations budgets
- Reduced shooting range grants funding
- Eliminated a whirling disease lab
- Eliminated an information officer's position in Helena
- Implemented electronic options that reduced paper and staffing
- Replaced ¾ ton pickups with more fuel efficient ½ ton trucks
- Installed a video conferencing system to reduce the need for staff and constituents to travel to and from Helena for meetings

What are our options?

- Program cuts
- A resident fee increase
- Redirection of funding
- A combination of the above

Advice from Montanans.

FWP established an advisory council to work on the complexity, structure and funding associated with Montana's hunting and fishing licenses. In addition, the 2013 Legislature (HB 609), provided for an interim study of hunting and fishing licenses by the Legislature. These are cooperative efforts.

Who will make the decisions?

In short, the people of Montana. Recommendations will be made to FWP by the Licensing & Funding Advisory Council that will ultimately go to the Fish & Wildlife Commission for public comment. Final budgets, license fees and structure are the responsibility of the Montana Legislature, where all citizens have the opportunity to participate.

How do I comment?

Comments can be made via FWP's website at **http://fwp.mt.gov/choices 2015**. Interested individuals are also encouraged to contact any FWP employee or office or attend meetings that will be scheduled throughout the state.

Why should Montanans care?

Montana's fish and wildlife related opportunities are important to our quality of life. Not to address the funding issue would be irresponsible and could lead to a change in many benefits associated with Montana's fish and wildlife resources, including hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing. Our hunting and fishing heritage, our continuing economic growth, and our reputation as a wonderful tourism destination, are also at stake.

For more information and to comment, visit **fwp.mt.gov/choices2015** or follow the QR smart code below:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 East Sixth Avenue
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Office Hours: Monday-Friday,
8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Phone: (406) 444-2535
Fax: (406) 444-4952
Web: fwp.mt.gov/choices2015

Photo credits: Cover, clockwise from top left: istockphoto.com; Paul Queneau/FWP; Jim Herrly; Kenton Rowe; Paul Queneau; Andrew McKean/FWP; Donald M. Jones; FWP.
Back cover: istockphoto.com. Pages 2 & 3 photos: FWP

5,000 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of $0.17 per copy, for a total of $850, which includes $750 for printing and $100 for distribution.