



FWP MOVES ACCESS PROJECTS FORWARD

With the passage of HB190, Bridge Access Clarification legislation, authority was granted to FWP to assist in providing safe passage where fences exist and may hinder access to public waters at bridge rights-of-way. Under the law, anglers and recreationists have the legal right to access streams and rivers from a county bridge right-of-way. But landowners also have a right to put up fences for livestock control in bridge right-of-ways.

FWP has been moving forward with several projects this summer by coordinating with landowners, counties, the public and sportsmen groups to identify bridges and access needs. Some MWF affiliates such as the Public Land and Water Access Association, Hellgate Hunters and Anglers, Flathead Wildlife Inc., and others are offering their assistance in this process including labor for the installation of public passage mechanisms.

The department is developing 'Guidelines for Bridge Access Procedures and Objectives' that will help navigate the process in compliance with HB190. Game wardens are handling much of the field work coordinating with fishery and parks staff while also reaching out to landowners, sportsmen, and river recreationists.

MWF encourages the participation of local sportsmen groups in the process. The approach of coordinated collaboration was a big selling point in the passage of the legislation, a process to resolve conflicts. If you or your club are aware of a location, an access point within a county bridge right-of-way that should be a priority or a cooperative landowner or are willing to offer assistance to the department in this regard, including installation labor or cost-sharing, please contact the FWP Regional Supervisor. It may be difficult for the agency to outreach with all of the clubs and they can use your help this summer.