



FWP NEWS

Ranging from 2 to 12,000 acres in size, Montana's 54 state parks offer visitors everything from tent camping to RV sites and the more unique and often overlooked tipi, cabin and yurt rentals.

For instance, camping cabins at Lewis & Clark Caverns offer a peaceful, comfortable retreat at the end of a day of hiking or fishing nearby waterways. Each cabin contains one double bed, one set of bunk beds, a table with chairs, electricity, and heat. Cooking grills are located outside each cabin and flush toilets and warm showers are a short walk away.

Fishing, hiking, wildlife watching, picnicking, boating, swimming, water skiing, rafting, horseback riding, camping during hunting seasons, free informational programs, historic sites, or just hanging around the family camp fire...Montana State Parks offer something for everyone.

Most campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis but reservations for some accommodations may be required or are strongly recommended, i.e., tipi, cabin or yurt rental. While most parks are open seasonally, some are open year-round.

State Parks offer a variety of adventures, so before leaving home you might start by selecting a 'cultural', 'natural', or 'recreational park' from the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks web-site guide at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/lands/>. You can also find links that will help you explore Fishing Access Site', Wildlife Management Areas, and Fish Hatcheries.

Entrance Fees

There is no entrance fee for a vehicle with Montana license plates; no special stamps, stickers or passes--just a Montana license plate.

An optional \$4 fee is included on the registration of light vehicles in Montana, which in turn allows admission into all state parks for private vehicles with Montana license plates. These funds are earmarked for the care and maintenance of state parks, fishing access sites, and historic Virginia City and Nevada City.

Any resident who does not wish to include the \$4 fee in their vehicle registration can opt out while paying annual registration fees. Just complete the form available at your county treasurer's office while at the court house and the fee will be deducted from your vehicle registration.

Nonresident Daily Entrance Fee

Since nonresidents do not contribute to Montana's park system through the vehicle registration fee, they will be charged daily entrance fees unless they purchase an Annual Parks Pass (see below). For those parks that charge an entrance fee, the cost is \$5 per vehicle, per park.

Annual Pass

Nonresidents who visit state parks regularly can purchase a State Park Annual Pass which allows an unlimited number of visits for the year at one low price of \$25 per vehicle. Two additional vehicle passes may be purchased for \$20 each, if all passes are purchased at the same time.

The State Park Annual Pass is valid for one license year (March 1 to the last day in February). The Annual Pass covers only the daily entrance fee to state parks. It does not include any additional fees for camping, showers, guided tours, special events, or rentals of cabins, tipis, and yurts. To be valid, the pass must be permanently affixed by the holder to the vehicle's interior left front windshield. It admits one private vehicle and the occupants to enter all Montana state parks. A pass is not required to enter fishing access sites and wildlife management areas. The Annual Pass can be purchased at selected hunting and fishing license agents in local communities, FWP regional offices, designated recreation fee areas, and online at <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

Additional fees are charged at state parks for camping, showers, some guided tours, special events, and the rental of cabins, tipis, and yurts. Some fishing access sites also require a camping fee.

If you sell a vehicle with a valid Annual Pass, remove the pass from the windshield and take it to any Fish, Wildlife & Parks office for a replacement park pass.

Fishing Access Sites

Montana's 320 Fishing Access Sites offer water recreationists a variety of access opportunities to streams and rivers, lakes and reservoirs. There is no fee to enter a site, to access waterways or to launch but many sites do require a fee to camp, even for residents.

Please, treat these sites with respect, they offer the public access to public waterways through agreements with private landowners or land acquisitions. Do not trespass on any adjacent private lands, and help keep Montana clean by not leaving garbage or by picking up what might have been left by other visitors.

To help you find FAS sites, you can now search for a site by name, nearest city, regional area, closest water body, activity or facility. You may download the field guide at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/lands/sitesbyllid.aspx>

Montana Wolf Update

About 500 Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolves now inhabit Montana, equally distributed between the state's northern and southern areas, according to a 2008 annual wolf conservation and management report released by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

FWP's report, which is available online at fwp.mt.gov, shows Montana's wolf population increased about 18 percent in 2008, compared to a 34 percent increase in 2007. The minimum Montana wolf population is estimated at 497 wolves, in 84 verified packs, and 34 breeding pairs. Federal rules require Montana to maintain at least 100 wolves and 10 breeding pairs

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decision to remove the wolf from federal Endangered Species listing in Montana, Idaho and parts of Washington, Utah, and Oregon but not in Wyoming was delayed by a legal challenge but recent court rulings upheld the decision which has now taken effect as of May 4. The decision was based in part on the USFWS's determination that the northern Rocky Mountain population in the approved areas has exceeded recovery goals and potential threats to the wolf have been resolved. Additional legal challenges may again delay some state management actions.

FWP/State Management

The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission had approved the basic regulatory framework for a fair chase wolf-hunting season February 20, 2008 but a legal challenge blocked implementation. On the heels of the recent court rulings and the decision by USFWS, the Commission recently adopted a new preliminary suite of hunting management options May 14. The deadline for public comment to be received on proposed 2009 Wolf Quotas and Subquota is 5:00 PM Friday, June 19, 2009. The FWP Commission will take final action on this item at its July 9, 2009 meeting. Information on the comment process and quotas can be found at: http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/notice_2073.aspx

As in 2008, FWP intends to proceed cautiously and conservatively, but, again, renewed legal challenges are expected that may block a 2009 hunting season and the timing of license sales is unknown.

Harvest quotas would limit the total number of wolves that could be harvested by hunters within three wolf management districts. A wolf trapping season has not been approved in Montana. The proposed season dates generally correspond to Montana's early back country and general big game rifle seasons and would close December 31 or when quotas are filled. Intense monitoring of hunting management would allow the season to be shut down within a 24-hour notice to prevent over harvest.

For the latest information on a wolf hunting management season contact a regional FWP office, contact Carolyn Sime, Statewide Wolf Coordinator (406) 444-3242, email questions to wolfquestions@mt.gov, check on-line at <http://fwp.mt.gov> or call FWP headquarters in Helena at: (406) 444-2535.