

NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR STEVE BULLOCK

STATE OF MONTANA

FOR RELEASE: March 12, 2013

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Governor Announces Appointments to FWP Commission

Directs FWP and Commission to Involve Public in Budget and Land Acquisition Review

HELENA – Governor Steve Bullock today announced the appointment of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commissioners, and named Commissioner Dan Vermillion as chair.

“Serving on this Commission is demanding and its members have to deal with complex and, at times, very contentious issues,” Bullock said. “The nominees are exceptional and demonstrate the high value Montanans place on preserving access to our public lands, streams and wildlife – and the opportunities they afford to all of us.”

Bullock appointed the following to the FWP Commission:

- **Bob Ream**, Helena. Qualification: District 1. Ream is Professor Emeritus at the University of Montana’s School of Forestry. He was a research ecologist for the US Forest Service. Ream has served on the Commission since 2009.
- **Richard Stuker**, Chinook. Qualification: District 3. Stuker has extensive experience in breeding and managing domestic livestock and has operated a family cattle ranch in northern Blaine County for 32 years. He has served on the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Region 6 State Parks Search Committee, Montana Association of State Grazing Districts, Chinook School Board, and the Triangle Communications board.
- **Matthew Tourtlotte**, Billings. Qualification: District 5. Tourtlotte is a partner at Brown Law Firm in Billings. He earned his Law Degree from the University of Montana Law School.
- **Lawrence Wetsit**, Wolf Point. Qualification: District 4. Wetsit is the Vice President of Community Services at Fort Peck Community College, and previously was the Marketing and PR Manager for Nemont Telephone Cooperative in Scobey. Wetsit also served as Chairman of the Fort Peck Tribes. He will fill the remainder of the term of A.T. Stafne, who resigned, which ends in 2015.

The Governor also named **Dan Vermillion**, Livingston, as chair of the Commission. Vermillion is the District 2 representative, and is serving a term that ends in 2015.

In a letter to the Commission announcing the appointments, the Governor charged the Commission with assisting the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Park in two major undertakings:

initiating a public process to develop FWP's budget for the 2015 Legislature and conducting a comprehensive review of the agency's land holdings and acquisition policies.

As part of the budget review, Bullock asked FWP and the new Commission to prepare a balanced budget that considers public comment and addresses a range of issues, including licenses and fees; options for streamlining and simplifying licenses and permits; the number and complexity of free and discounted licenses; and more diverse and nontraditional funding sources.

Bullock's second charge to FWP and the Commission was to undertake a critical assessment of existing land holdings and upcoming land acquisitions, both fee and easement. This review should consider a wide range of factors, including operation and maintenance, good neighbor policies, management priorities, funding needs, and any other management obligations or liabilities. The Governor noted that involving the public in this discussion was an important element of the review process.

Bullock's letter also indicated that he plans to revitalize the Private Lands, Public Wildlife Council, broadening its membership.

"It's time we conducted a comprehensive, bottom-up review of hunter access programs, including Block Management," the Governor said. "I want this group to reassess everything from the program's funding and effectiveness, to landowner incentives and how it can be more responsive to hunters' needs."

The first meeting of the new Commission is scheduled for April 11.

The Governor's letter to FWP and the Commission follows.

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Date: March 12, 2013

To: Director Hagener and Members of the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission

From: Governor Steve Bullock

Re: Opportunity to strengthen the vital relationships between Montana landowners and sportsmen and women.

First, let me acknowledge and thank each of you for your willingness to accept the enormous responsibility of acting as the stewards of Montana's public lands and waterways, and the wildlife and fish they sustain. Without question, these resources have been precious to generations of Montanans. With your guidance, I am confident they will continue to be well managed so that we can be proud of the Montana we pass on to future generations.

To that end, through this letter, I direct the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to undertake two important reviews, and ask the Commission to assist in these endeavors: first, to initiate a comprehensive public process to develop FWP's budget proposal for the 2015 Legislature, and second, to conduct a thorough review of the agency's land holdings and acquisition policies.

In addressing FWP's budget, the goal must be to prepare a balanced budget that considers public comment and addresses a range of issues, including licenses and fees; options for streamlining and simplifying licenses and permits; the number and complexity of free and discounted licenses; and more diverse and nontraditional funding sources.

The second major task I ask you to undertake is a critical assessment of land holdings and upcoming land acquisitions, both fee title purchases and easements. This evaluation should consider a wide range of factors, including operation and maintenance, good neighbor policies, management priorities, funding needs, and any other management obligations or liabilities. Again, public discussion must be an important element of the review process.

It is also my intent to revitalize the Private Lands, Public Wildlife Council, beginning with broadening its membership. I ask that this advisory council conduct a thorough review of hunter access programs, including the Block Management program. This review will necessarily involve landowners and hunters in a discussion of priorities, funding, effectiveness, equity, landowner incentives, and better responsiveness to the needs of hunters.

Serving on the FWP Commission is demanding and, as commissioners, you will face complex and, at times, contentious issues. However, I am confident that FWP's leadership and this Commission are equal to the tasks I have asked you to undertake.

I look forward to being involved in your deliberations and reviewing the recommendations you present to my administration and to the people of Montana.