

602 FOREST FIRE DISTRICTS (Wildland Fire Protection Districts as of 7/1/2007)

A. DESCRIPTION OF WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS

Wildland fire protection districts are areas of classified forest land with a definable boundary. All of the forest land within the areas is protected by a recognized protection agency, and the private landowners pay for the protection received via the assessment rolls. Government lands within the District may be protected, with payment procedures outlined in a master agreement. A wildland fire protection district may be divided up into several protection units, each protected by a separate protection agency. This is usually done to allow an agency with a predominant land ownership, or offices and facilities in the areas, to become involved. This system of one agency in a given unit providing protection to all lands within the unit has proven both effective and economical.

A Wildland Fire Protection District is formed by a vote of the landowners (see **76-13-204 MCA**). To form a Wildland Fire Protection District, boundaries must be set, notice to landowners given, meetings held, petitions circulated, and a vote taken (see **Formation of Wildland Fire Districts – Samples, pages 602-3 through 602-13**). The forest fire district, once formed, will be assigned by the Department to a recognized protection agency for protection. A recognized protection agency is defined as an agency recognized by the Department as having full fire protection responsibilities. Some of the criteria for designation as a recognized protection agency is (but not limited to) whether that agency has the capability and full ability to maintain, sustain, and pay for all pre-suppression, readiness, suppression, and related responsibilities on assessed Wildland Fire Protection District, Affidavit, or Non-Forest Agreement lands. A Recognized Protection Agency is not to be confused with a jurisdictional agency, which has legal authority to respond to fire activity on a given piece of geography. There is only one Recognized Fire Protection Agency for a given piece of assessed land, whereas there can be and often is more than one jurisdictional agency for that same piece of land. Thus, Counties and their fire agencies can be and often are jurisdictional agencies who share suppression obligations, but who are not able to meet criteria as a Recognized Protection Agency.

The protection provided for a wildland fire protection district is the highest level of wildland fire protection available.

B. LISTING OF WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS (76-13-204 MCA)

Below is a list of approved Wildland Fire Protection Districts in Montana.

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Designation</u>	<u>* Date Formed</u>
AD	Avon Protection District	<u>1975</u>
APD	Anaconda Protection District	
B	Blackfoot Protection District	
BRF	Bitterroot National Forest Protection District	
BU	Bigfork Protection District	
EU	Eureka Protection District	
FF	Flathead National Forest Protection District	
GBD	Gallatin-Bridger Protection District	<u>1971</u>
GRD	Gallatin River Protection District	<u>1973</u>
HCD	Helena Continental Divide Protection District	
HD	Helena Protection District	<u>1976</u>
I	BIA-Flathead Agency Protection District	
K	Northern Montana Protection District	
KF	Kootenai National Forest Protection District	
LF	Lolo National Forest Protection District	
PD	Philipsburg Protection District	<u>1990</u>
SCD	State Continental Divide Protection District	
SU	Stillwater Protection District	
SW	Swan Protection District	
YD	Yellowstone Protection District	<u>1976</u>

* Formed after 76-13-204 MCA was changed to allow a vote of the forest landowners.

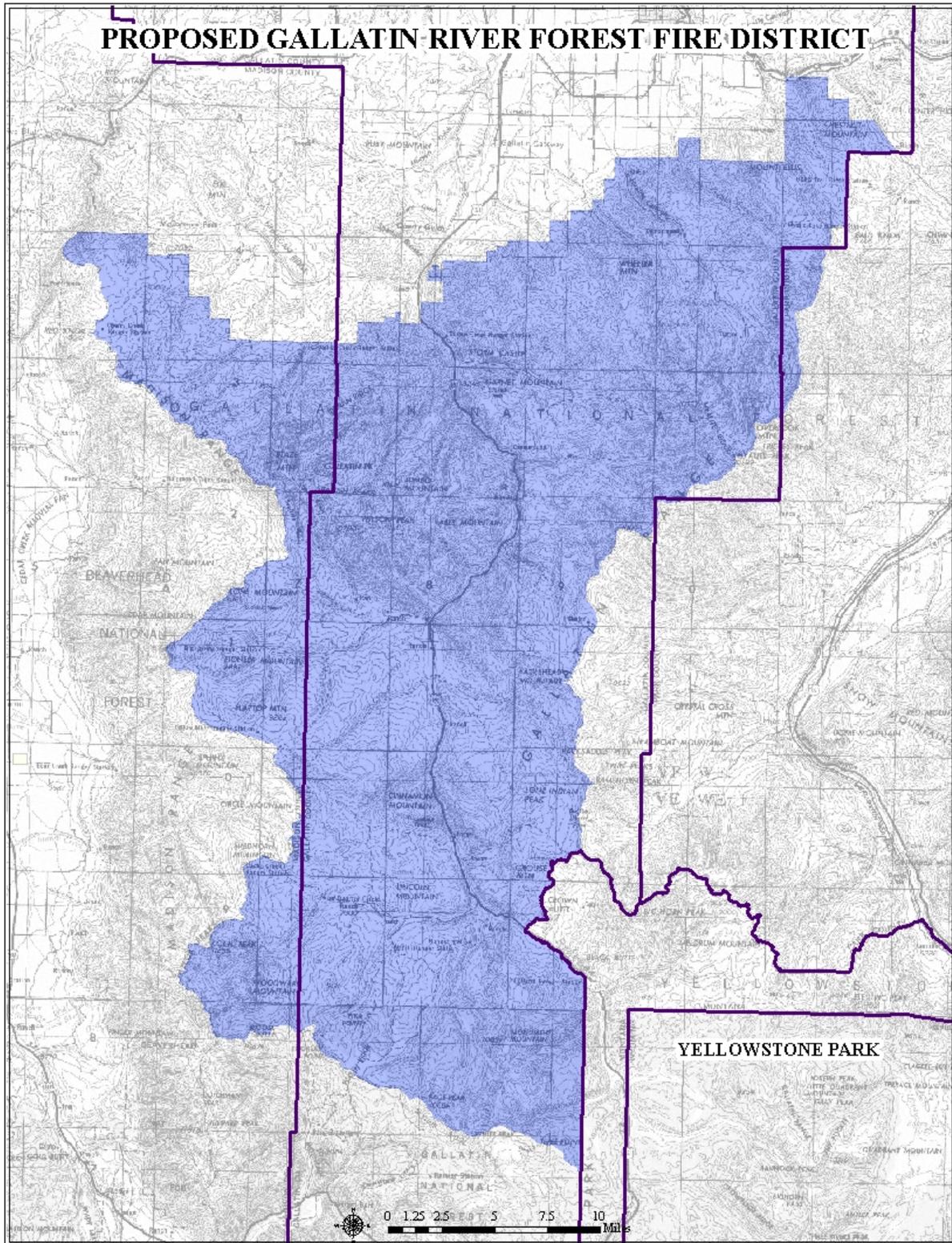
C. FORMATION OF WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS - SAMPLES

SAMPLE Timetable – Formation of a Wildland Fire Protection District

Timetable
Gallatin Protection Unit

<u>Job</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Sample due date</u>
Recommended Declassification of Lands	USFS (Districts)	June 1, 1972
Prepare Forms Showing Ownership	USFS (Districts)	June 1, 1972
Prepare Forms Showing Classification	State	June 1, 1972
Prepare List of Landowners & Acreages by T&R	USFS (Districts)	June 1, 1972
Notify Large Landowners	S&PF	July 1, 1972
Check Ownership List with County Records	USFS, then to State	June 1, 1972
Complete Ownership & Classification Forms	USFS	July 1, 1972
Prepare Map from Ownership & Class. Forms	State	July 1, 1972
Prepare News Releases	State	July 15, 1972
Prepare Letters to Landowners	State	July 15, 1972
Prepare for Public Meeting	Forest, S&PF, State	July 15, 1972
Schedule Public Meetings	USFS, State	July 15, 1972
Contact Key Landowners	Forest & State	July 15, 1972
Release News Articles and Mail Letters to Landowners	State	July 15, 1972
Conduct Meetings (also get signatures, if possible)	All	July 31, 1972
Contact Landowners Not at Meeting	Forest & State	Aug. 15, 1972
Present Petition to Land Board	Dept. & S&PF	1 st Board Meeting
Review All Data and have District in Effect	All	Upon Board Approval

SAMPLE Map of District



SAMPLE Listing of Informational Meetings

GALLATIN RIVER DISTRICT MEETINGS

<u>Places</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
Ennis Ranger District Office Ennis, Montana	February 21	1:00 p.m.
Big Sky Convention Center Big Sky, Montana	February 21	7:30 p.m.
Gallatin County Courthouse Community Room Bozeman, Montana	February 22	7:30 p.m.
U.S. Department of Agriculture Building West Front Livingston, Montana	February 23	7:30 p.m.

SAMPLE Notice of Meetings to News Media

Date: _____

To: (List newspapers)

From: Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
2705 Spurgin Road
Missoula, Montana 59801

For Immediate Release

**PROPOSED GALLATIN RIVER WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT HEARINGS
SET**

Hearings have been set to discuss the possibility of forming a wildland fire protection district to encompass the State-owned and privately-owned forest lands within the fire protection boundary of the Gallatin River Unit of the Gallatin National Forest, Jerry Beagley, Land Office Manager for the Montana DNRC announced this week.

These hearings will be held as follows: (insert dates, etc...)

Indications are that a majority of the owners of approximately 151,000 acres of classified forest land within the area are favorable to the idea of forming a district because higher quality fire protection will be permitted, Beagley said. All owners of classified forest land within the proposed district will receive a letter of explanation within the next two weeks. The public meetings are designed to provide an exchange of ideas, and to clarify questions landowners may have, before they are asked to sign the petition for the district, Beagley added.

SAMPLE Notice of Public Hearings

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Notice is hereby given by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to determine that 51% or more of the landowners owning 51% or more of the privately-owned classified forest land within the Gallatin River Unit of the Gallatin National Forest lying approximately six to forty-eight miles southwest of Bozeman, desire to form a wildland fire protection district for the purpose of providing fire protection boundaries of the Gallatin River Unit.

The times and places of the Hearings are:

February 21st 1:00 p.m. Ennis Ranger District Office Ennis, Montana
February 21st 7:30 p.m. Big Sky Convention Center Big Sky, Montana
February 22nd 7:30 p.m. Gallatin County Courthouse Community Room Bozeman, Montana
February 23rd 7:30 p.m. U.S. Department of Agriculture Building West Front Street
Livingston, Montana

A map of the proposed district is on file at the following locations and may be viewed during normal business hours.

GARY G. BROWN
Administrator
DNRC Forestry Division

SAMPLE Affidavit of Publication

602.3f SAMPLE - AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

COUNTY OF MADISON }
STATE OF MONTANA } SS.

Daryl L. Tichenor

being duly sworn says that he is publisher and printer of The Madisonian, a weekly newspaper published in the City of Virginia City, County of Madison, State of Montana; that the annexed notice is a true copy which was published in said

newspaper for a period of 1

successive weeks, commencing on the 1

day of February, 19 73

and ending on the SAME day of

....., 19.....

Daryl L. Tichenor
Publisher and Printer.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 6th

day of February, 19 73

Gus J. Gilman

Notary Public in and for the State of Montana, residing at Virginia City, Montana. My commission Alder

expires December 13, 19 73

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given by the Montana Division of Forestry of Public Hearings to determine that 51 per cent or more of the landowners owning 51 per cent or more of the privately-owned classified forest land within the Gallatin River Unit of the Gallatin National Forest lying approximately six to forty-eight miles southwest of Bozeman, desire to form a forest fire protection district for the purpose of providing fire protection to the privately-owned forest lands included within the fire protection boundaries of the Gallatin River Unit.

The times and places of the Hearings are:

February 21st, 1:00 p.m., Ennis Ranger District Office, Ennis, Montana.

February 21st, 7:30 p.m., Big Sky Convention Center, Big Sky, Montana.

February 22nd, 7:30 p.m., Gallatin County Courthouse, Community Room, Bozeman, Montana.

February 23rd, 7:30 p.m., U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Bldg., West Front Street, Livingston, Montana.

(s) Gareth C. Moon
Administrator
Division of Forestry

(Pub. Feb. 1, 1973) dnr

SAMPLE Notice to Individual Landowners

602.3g SAMPLE - NOTICE TO INDIVIDUAL LANDOWNERS

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE LANDS
FORESTRY DIVISION**



TED SCHWINDEN, GOVERNOR

2705 SPURGIN ROAD

STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 728-4300

MISSOULA, MONTANA 59801

(Date)

(GRD)

Dear Landowner:

Enclosed is a copy of the Notice of Public Hearings which has appeared in your local newspapers. We are sending you a personal copy of the notice so you may make plans to attend one of the hearings.

A petition for approval of the District formation will be available for signature at the hearings. Formation of the District depends upon 51% of the landowners owning 51% of the classified forest land signing the petition.

We will be looking forward to seeing you at one of the hearings when we will have the opportunity to discuss future fire protection plans for the area.

Yours truly,

GARY G. BROWN
Administrator
Division of Forestry

Enclosure - Notice of Public Hearings

"AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER"

SAMPLE Fact Sheet – Wildland Fire Protection Districts

FACT SHEET

PROPOSED GALLATIN RIVER WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT 1973

1. Changing from affidavits to a district will reduce the amount of clerical work involved in the program and over a period of time help in keeping costs down.
2. The level of protection will be increased by going to a district. The agency no longer has to check ownership prior to responding to a fire call, thereby reducing response time.
3. Everyone within the district will receive protection. Everyone pays his fair share. The threat of fire from a neighbor's property, not on affidavit, will be greatly reduced.
4. The landowner no longer has to refile his affidavit if his ownership changes, these changes are automatically made by the agency.
5. The protection agency will continue to fight all forest fires, regardless of size or expense.
6. The protection district level of protection is substantially higher than that being provided to lands outside of the district.
7. The forest landowner continues to meet the requirements of states statutes dealing with owner responsibilities.
8. The landowner no longer has an option to cancel each year as he had under the affidavit system.
9. The assessment rate chargeable to the landowner continues to be limited by state regulations.

SAMPLE Petition

PETITION FOR THE GALLATIN RIVER WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

To the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation:

We, the undersigned, pursuant to the provisions of 76-13-204 MCA respectfully submit to you:

1. That we are the owners of fifty-one percent (51%) or more of the privately-owned, classified forest land acreage within the proposed district.
2. That we constitute fifty-one percent (51%) or more of the taxpayers, who are freeholders of the private forest land within the proposed district, and whose names appeared as said taxpayers upon the last completed preceding assessment roll.
3. We desire that the Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation establish a Wildland Fire Protection District to be known as the Gallatin River Wildland Fire Protection District, and to include in said District the lands within the Protection Boundary of the Gallatin National Forest, Gallatin River unit of the United States Forest Service. **(See attached map of the Gallatin River Unit Boundary.)**

Wherefore, we petition that the said Wildland Fire Protection District be established by the Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation, and that the District be provided protection through the Department according to the provisions of 76-13-204 MCA, as amended.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 20 _____

(Sample Petition Continued)

PETITION FOR THE GALLATIN RIVER WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Name or Names	Acreage of Forest Land	Signature
Robert G. Simpkins & Vernon F. Taylor trustee	3,107	
Allen J. & Julie E. Skillman	½	
State Lands, Division of Forestry	638	
State of Montana, Department of Fish & Game	6,929	
State Water Conservation Board Land	66	
Robert T. Jr. & Hope B. Stevens	117	
Velma E. Story c/o Velma Story Vandenhook	80	
Norman Strung	5	
George J. Stublar c/o V. Hugo Schmidt	640	
Susan A. Talbot	2	
Lyla R. Todd c/o Lyla R. Hager	623	
E.B. & Willabelle A. Tonn	105	
Willabelle L. Tonn	105	
Lena M. Vanausdal	39	
Charles Vandenhook, Jr. & Anne M. Doornbos	80	
David V.V. & Alice B. Wend	12	

SAMPLE News Release – Favorable Vote on District

NEWS RELEASE

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Division of Forestry
2705 Spurgin Road
Missoula, Montana 59801

March 26, 1983

Gary Brown, Administrator, Montana Division of Forestry, today approval by the Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation, of the formation of a wildland fire protection district south of Bozeman. The district known as the Gallatin River Wildland Fire Protection District encompasses some 150,000 acres of State and privately owned forest lands. All of these lands are located within the boundaries of the Gallatin National Forest – Gallatin River Unit.

The District was formed by submission of a petition from the landowners within the area to the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. A majority of the landowners owning some 98% of the private land voted favorably for the district.

Brown also announced that the State would provide wildland fire protection to this district through the United States Forest Service, Gallatin National Forest.