

## GALLATIN COUNTY FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT: A GIS INTERFACE<sup>TWS</sup>

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Situated directly adjacent to Yellowstone National Park, Montana's Gallatin County provides a gateway to this unique ecosystem for both human recreationists as well as native wildlife. As such, expanding human land use has recently encroached upon historic migratory routes and important habitat for native species. Recognizing this conflict, Gallatin County has developed a comprehensive management plan for "smart growth" that allows for both continued economic development as well as effective conservation of native habitat. However, this plan lacked any inventory of habitat distributions across the County. Therefore, a team of graduate students at Montana State University (MSU-Bozeman) embarked on the first attempt to compile such an inventory. The resulting "Gallatin County Fish and Wildlife Habitat Assessment" represents not only a synthesis of the best available wildlife science, but it also provides for the first time a relevant context of reference data layers in a user-friendly GIS interface. This digital mapping tool allows planners to turn on map layers that are relevant to a particular planning decision. It is our hope that this product will contribute to the County's GIS initiative in a way that encompasses long-term habitat protection in concert with more immediate smart growth.