



News

Montana State Parks • 1420 E. 6th Avenue • Helena, MT 59620

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Public Comment Sought on Turning Back Management of Madison Buffalo Jump State Park to DNRC

- Starts on Monday, Dec. 31-

(Helena, MT) – Montana State Parks (stateparks.mt.gov) announced today that it is seeking public comment on forgoing management control of Madison Buffalo Jump State Park, located near Three Forks. This move would turn control back to the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), the agency with majority land ownership. Public comment starts on Monday, December 31 through Thursday, January 31.

Madison Buffalo Jump State Park encompasses 638.4 acres of land. DNRC owns 617.5 of those acres (designated as School Trust lands) while 20.9 acres are owned by FWP.

Since 1967, the Parks Division has been responsible for a full scope of park operations and maintenance, including visitor use management and resource protection. Operating costs (personnel and operations) have averaged \$15,192 per year since 2008.

A 2012 legislative audit found that Montana State Parks should be paying DNRC an annual fee of \$4,272 (plus 2% annual increase) for use of the Buffalo Jump property in order to compensate the School Trust, which funds educational institutions in Montana. But since the lease was signed in 1967, the Parks Division has not provided this annual compensation, as DNRC recently discovered that it should be collected.

“We are great supporters of schools and, in fact, this year alone saw more than 22,000 students participating in educational programs at our state parks,” said Chas Van Genderen, Administrator for Montana State Parks. “But our park system faces challenges as we are constantly stretching dollars to meet demands. We operate more state parks on a tighter budget than most states in our region. Paying additional dollars to manage School Trust land just doesn’t pencil out in this case, given limited resources and critical needs at other State Parks’ properties.”

Madison Buffalo Jump State Park is open year around for day use activities and has averaged 3,786 visitors per year and \$1,839 in earned revenue annually since 2008. In 2012, it ranked 47th out of 51 state parks for the calendar year, where visitation data is collected. Madison Buffalo Jump is noted for

its impressive views of the Madison Valley and the limestone cliff that was used by native people to stampede bison off of for 2,000 years.

While Madison Buffalo Jump State Park contains highly significant cultural resources, the state parks' system also includes First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park near Ulm which is considered one of the largest buffalo jump sites in the country and is currently under consideration for National Historic Landmark status.

Since 2009, Montana State Parks has decommissioned other properties under easement or lease including Parker Homestead, and the DNRC lands at Fort Maginnis and Citadel Rock, in an effort to reduce the size of the park system holdings.

On December 20, the FWP Commission asked the Parks division to collect public comments on this issue and come back to the Commission at a later date with a tentative proposal.

Public Comments will be accepted for 32 days starting Monday, December 31 through Thursday, January 31 at 5pm.

The public can attend an open house and/or review background information online at stateparks.mt.gov click on "Public Notices".

There are two ways to provide comments:

- Online at stateparks.mt.gov click on "public notices" on the right-hand navigation bar
- Send written comments by mail to:
Madison Buffalo Jump Comments
c/o Montana State Parks
PO Box 200701
Helena, Montana 59620-0701.

Join Us: Montana State Parks is hosting two public open houses:

Wednesday, January 9 – Three Forks

6-8 pm

United Methodist Church Annex, 124 2nd Ave East, Three Forks

Tuesday, January 15 – Bozeman

6-8pm

FWP Region 3, 1400 South 19th Avenue, Bozeman

(406) 994-4042

The open houses will include a short presentation about the issues that will start promptly at 6pm.

*Contact: Dave Andrus, Park Manager, Madison Buffalo Jump State Park
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