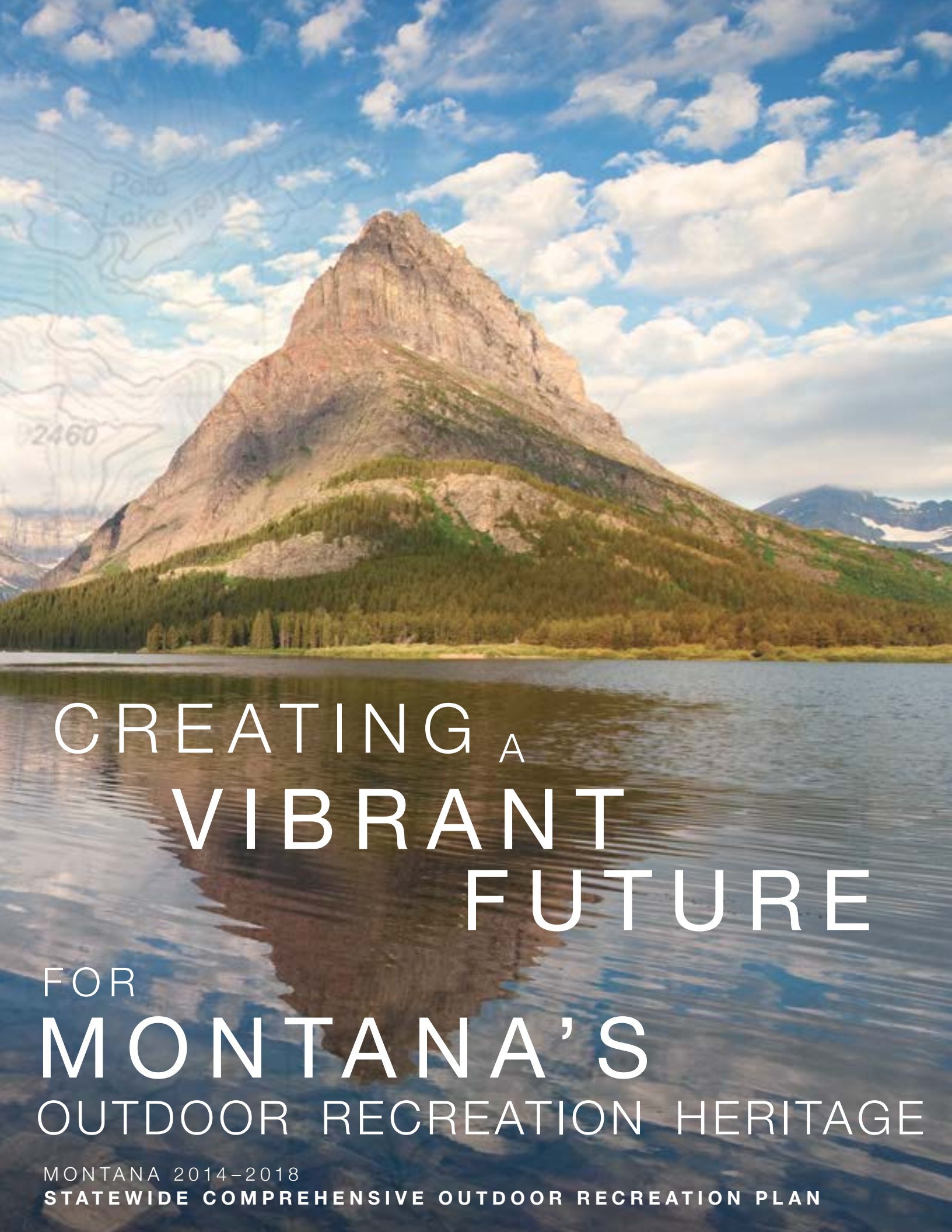


CREATING A VIBRANT FUTURE FOR MONTANA'S OUTDOOR RECREATION HERITAGE

MONTANA 2014–2018

STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

This document was printed at state expense in 2014. Information on the cost of the publication may be obtained by contacting the Department of Administration or Montana State Parks in Helena, Montana.

CREATING A VIBRANT FUTURE FOR MONTANA'S OUTDOOR RECREATION HERITAGE

STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

STEVE BULLOCK, GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

JEFF HAGENER, DIRECTOR
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

CHAS VAN GENDEREN, ADMINISTRATOR
MONTANA STATE PARKS
LWCF STATE LIAISON OFFICER

stateparks.mt.gov
Explore More.

The preparation of this SCORP was financed through a planning grant from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, as amended).

Developed by Montana State Parks
A Division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Montana State Parks acknowledges the significant contributions made by those who committed their time and expertise to help develop Montana's 2014-2018 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The following agencies, organizations, and individuals have made particularly valuable contributions to this document.

SCORP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Victor Bjornberg	Montana Office of Tourism
Nedra Chandler	Montana Dept. of Public Health and Human Services (Former)
Dr. Wayne Freimund	University of Montana
Margaret Gorski	U.S. Forest Service (Retired)
Shannon Heath	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
John Keck	National Park Service
Christina Miller	Bureau of Land Management
Lisa Moisey	Missoula County Parks & Trails
Lis Novak	U.S. Forest Service
Richard Potts	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Lisa Schmidt	Montana Dept. of Public Health and Human Services
Kory Thomson	City of Billings/Montana Trails, Recreation & Parks Association

RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

University of Montana

Norma Nickerson, Ph.D	Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research
Elizabeth Metcalf, Ph.D	Parks, Tourism and Recreation Management
Alexander Metcalf, Ph.D	Bolle Center for People and Forests

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE AND EXPERTISE

Dave Landstrom	Montana State Parks
Seth McArthur	Montana State Parks (LWCF)
Joanne Oreskovich, Ph.D	Montana Dept. of Public Health and Human Services (BRFSS)
Lynda Saul	Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality (Wetlands)
Beth Shumate	Montana State Parks (Recreational Trails Program)
Jerry Walker	Montana State Parks

PRIMARY CONTRIBUTORS

Montana State Parks

Maren Murphy	Parks & Recreation Planner, SCORP Coordinator
Roger Semler	Assistant Administrator
Tom Reilly	Assistant Administrator

Special thanks to fellow SCORP planners for their expertise and advice throughout the process.

IN
MEMORY
OF

WALTER TIMMERMAN

FOR ALL OF WALT'S HARD WORK
AND DEDICATION TO SCORP, LWCF,
AND RECREATION IN MONTANA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0 EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW 1-13

1 INTRODUCTION 14-29

2 SUPPLY AND PREFERENCES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES 30-42

3 RECREATION LANDSCAPE IN MONTANA 43-101

4 TRENDS AND USAGE PATTERNS 102-143

5 SCORP REGIONAL PROFILES 144-187

6 PRIORITIES 188-205

7 GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 206-217

8 FIGURE, TABLES AND MAPS INDEX 218-219

9 APPENDICES

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR

JOHN WALSH
LT. GOVERNOR

January 2014

Dear Friends:

As Montanans, parks and outdoor recreation are our way of life. Montana is home to magnificent landscapes and abundant opportunities to get outside. Recreation truly is an integral part of our heritage, including hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and skiing. It also attracts more than 10 million visitors from other states each year, creating a $5.8 billion industry in Montana and supporting over 64,000 jobs—a major contributor to the State's tourism economy.

I am pleased to present this bold effort to ensure these opportunities continue to exist and expand. Montana's 2014-2018 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), titled *Creating a Vibrant Future for Montana's Outdoor Recreation Heritage*, provides a roadmap that enhances recreation service provision and holistically grows our outdoor heritage. This document sets the benchmark for recreation policy throughout Montana and guides the disbursement of federal dollars from the vitally important Stateside Land and Water Conservation Fund that supports community recreation projects throughout Montana.

Managers at the federal, state, local, and Tribal level are being met with diverse and critical challenges to meet growing demands, while maintaining high-quality experiences. We must proactively address these challenges together and support the broad significance of our public lands for improved quality of life of residents, sustained economic vitality for communities, and opportunities to attract new business and visitors.

Unlike previous plans, this SCORP calls to action Montana's recreation providers, industry, and citizens to collaborate on a seamless system of management of natural, cultural, heritage, and recreational resources. I commend the Parks Division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the SCORP Advisory Committee for crafting the strategy with strong public involvement and thorough data collection. It represents a framework that ensures residents and visitors of all ages, abilities and backgrounds are able to get outside and explore more.

I urge each of you to answer the challenges set forth in this plan as we strive to sustain Montana's heritage with new initiatives, diverse partnerships and collaboration at all levels. Montana truly is *The Last Best Place*.

Sincerely,

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Creating a Vibrant Future for Montana's Outdoor Recreation Heritage, the Montana 2014–2018 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) serves as the guiding document to promote integrated outdoor recreation management and service provision in Montana in a more holistic and effective manner. The plan serves as a catalyst to enhance the quality of life of all Montanans and support vibrant communities through a growing recreation industry while also maintaining our high quality natural, cultural, heritage, and recreational resources. Through the coordination of federal, state, and local outdoor recreation providers, land managers, and partners, the SCORP sets the stage for recreation in the 21st century by describing current supply and trends, growing demands and challenges, and provides a framework for future recreation management and focus.

The Land and Water Conservation Act of 1965 (LWCF) provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of community outdoor recreation areas and facilities, as well as funding for federal land acquisition and conservation strategies. As a requirement to be eligible to receive state side funds, each state must prepare a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan every five years. The stateside LWCF program is intended to create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States. Since 1965, Montana has received close to $38 million in LWCF state side appropriations.

PLANNING PROCESS AND CONTEXT

Developing the 2014-2018 SCORP has been a true collaboration at all levels with a wide variety of federal, state, local, and organizational partners. As a requirement to be eligible to receive state side funds, each state must prepare a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan every five years. Lead by Montana State Parks with the guidance of the SCORP Advisory Committee, the process was a multi-faceted, data-driven approach in order to fully understand the status of recreation in Montana. Data collection consisted of:

- A survey of federal, state, tribal, county and city outdoor recreation areas and facilities;
- Trends and benchmarks analysis of the emerging recreation demands and influences impacting our state;
- Statistically valid public surveys to understand preferences for outdoor recreation activities, and quantify opinions on outdoor recreation resources; and
- Analyzed tourism, industry, and national trends to provide context for recreation in Montana; and
- Advisory committee comprised of federal, state, local, and organizational partners.

When discussed in this 2014-2018 SCORP, outdoor recreation is considered within the context of numerous interconnected initiatives, industries and relevant factors that influence recreation, including quality of life, economy, service provision, and the America's Great Outdoors initiative. Recreation transcends just facility development, and is a dynamic field and industry that provides numerous benefits to Montana citizens, industry, and visitors alike.

EMERGING CHALLENGES

Outdoor recreation is core to Montana's outdoor heritage. Residents enjoy a diverse array of outdoor recreation opportunities on our 38 million acres of public land. Additionally, more than 10 million visitors each year come to experience Montana's breathtaking landscape and endless opportunities this great state has to offer. However, recreation managers are struggling to reflect this high priority that Montanans and visitors place upon our natural, cultural, heritage and recreational resources.

RECREATIONAL CHALLENGES:

- DECLINING PRIORITY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION
- DECREASED FUNDING AND RESOURCES
- INCREASED MAINTENANCE COSTS
- LACK OF STATEWIDE COORDINATION

Many agencies have seen a decrease in recreation budgets, particularly at the federal level. The U.S. Forest Service's recreation budget in Montana has decreased 48% since 2009. The Bureau of Land Management's recreation budget comprises on average 5% of their total budget, which has decreased 35% since 2008. The National Park Service has seen a 6% decrease in funding, and other agencies are struggling with budget reductions. Stateside LWCF appropriations in Montana has decreased 78% since its highest appropriations level in 1979, and unequal distribution between state and federal funds has placed greater emphasis on land acquisition over development of community recreation parks and facilities. The sequestration in 2013 pushed federal budgets into deeper cuts, and this is impacting the ability of managers to meet many basic services and operations.

Unless recreation is prioritized to a higher level, the capacity of agencies to manage recreation safely and adequately on public lands will continue to diminish. Deferred maintenance in particular is a major challenge among agencies at the federal as well as state and local levels. There is an immense backlog of deferred maintenance needs at all levels, and many land managers indicated this as a top need to be addressed over the next five years. Without regular maintenance and improvements, our recreational, natural, cultural, and heritage resources are vulnerable to damage, and we risk losing the very assets that people come to Montana to enjoy.

Outdoor recreation also lacks guidance and direction on a statewide level, and agencies are challenged to look past their boundaries to assess the overall recreation landscape in Montana. A new vision for outdoor recreation is necessary to ensure that our recreation resources function at a high level and are sustained for current and future generations. Montana residents and visitors expect and deserve more from our public lands.

INFLUENCING TRENDS

A number of influencing trends emerged throughout the planning process that are shaping outdoor recreation preferences and influencing how agencies and decision makers are thinking about recreation management.

CHANGING OUTDOOR RECREATION PREFERENCES

Outdoor recreation preferences are changing both at the national and state level. Hunting and fishing, undoubtedly synonymous with Montana, has seen a shift in recent years in participation levels. Hunters and anglers are aging, and fewer youth are taking up the activities. License sales have become static or declined. Still, Montana is a paradise for sportsmen, and nearly two-thirds of Montanans participated in wildlife-associated recreation in 2011, with the majority enjoying wildlife watching.

Walking is continuously the most popular recreation activity. There has been an even stronger increase in walking, hiking and biking activities in recent years, and there is a pronounced need for more trails and paths on public lands. Motorized recreation has also significantly grown in users, with a 300% increase in off-highway vehicle registration and a close to 200% increase in snowmobile registration since 2000. Aquatic facilities continue to be popular among land managers and recreationists, and the greatest recreation facility identified are swimming pools, followed by trails for road bicycling, walking, and mountain biking. Facilities to support youth, seniors, and to meet accessibility standards are also top priorities.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS:

- 95% of Montanans say outdoor recreation is important to their quality of life
- 75% of Montanans use paths and trails for hiking, walking, jogging, and bicycling
- 37% of recreation managers reported a decrease in recreation funding over the last five years
- 61% of Montana adults and 21% of high school students are overweight or obese
- Aquatic facilities and hiking and biking trails are top needs to meet growing demands
- Youth and future generations is the top influencing issue for recreation management decision-making

TOP FACILITY NEEDS

- AQUATIC FACILITIES
- PLAYGROUND
- EXPAND FACILITIES
- DEFERRED MAINTENANCE
- WATER ACCESS

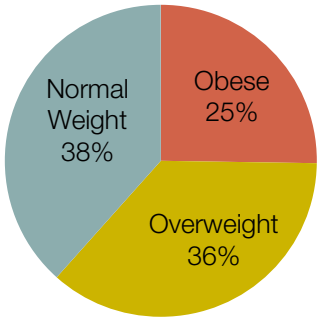
TOP FACILITY FOR YOUTH

- PLAYGROUNDS
- HIKING/BICYCLING TRAILS
- AQUATIC FACILITIES

TOP FACILITIES FOR ADULT/SENIOR/ADA

- HIKING/BICYCLING TRAILS
- CAMPGROUND

DISTRIBUTION OF MONTANANS BY BODY MASS INDEX (BMI), 2011



AGING AND GROWING POPULATION

Since 2000, Montana has gone through demographic changes that demonstrate our population is both aging and growing at the same time. The median age of Montanans is increasing and the percent of residents 65 years and older has grown 21% since 2000. Geographically, residents in central and eastern Montana are generally older than residents in western Montana. Projections through 2030 indicate that Montana's population will continue to age and there will be fewer young people that call Montana home. By 2020, the population of 65 years and older is projected to surpass the population of 15 years and under, and essentially one in four Montanans will be over 65 years of age.

Montana is also growing, with a 9.7% increase in population at the 2010 Census. By 2030, the population is projected to grow another 16.7%. Much of this growth is expected to occur in and around population centers, particularly in the Flathead Valley and in Gallatin County. Growth in Eastern Montana is also projected to occur related to the Bakken oil development and other energy development. With these growth and demographic trends, land managers can expect to see an increase in users on public lands, as well as the need for more accessible and universally designed facilities and amenities.

INCREASING INACTIVITY AND HEALTH PROBLEMS

Compared to national data, Montanans are more active and have lower rates of obesity. Still, trends show that Montanans are increasingly becoming more sedentary and the state is beginning to see an increase in health problems. Nearly a quarter of Montana adults are obese, and another 36% are overweight. More than 20% of high school students are also obese or overweight. Close to 8% of Montanans have diabetes and nearly 35% have high cholesterol.

At a time when obesity rates among adults and children are increasing, the important role of physical activity and access to outdoor recreation resources cannot be underestimated. About a quarter of Montanans do not regularly participate in leisure time physical activity. The highest proportions of inactive Montanans are those with disabilities, with low income or low education, and Montanans over 65 years of age. As Montana grows and becomes more urbanized, sustaining a connection to our natural resources and public lands should be a high priority. Parks and outdoor recreation opportunities provide critically important connections to our natural world and improve the quality of life of residents and the overall health of our communities.

NUMBERS ON HEALTH COSTS

Reducing the average body mass index in Montana by 5% could lead to health care savings of more $1 billion in 20 years.

For every $1 spent on building biking trails and walking paths in Montana, we could save close to $3 in medical expenses.

GROWING OUTDOOR RECREATION AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

Outdoor recreation is a growing industry in Montana and provides significant economic contributions and benefits to communities and the state as a whole. Outdoor recreation in Montana generates $5.8 billion in consumer spending, creates 64,000 direct jobs, and generates $1.5 billion in wages and salaries. It also contributes $403 million to state and local tax revenues that go to support public services. Since 2006, consumer spending on outdoor recreation has increased by 132%, the number of jobs created has doubled, and tax revenue has increased 242%. Outdoor recreation is a growing and vitally important sector in Montana that makes up 18% of spending in the state and creates nearly 1 out of every 6 jobs in Montana's workforce.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

Connecting children with nature continues to be a high priority among recreation providers at the federal, state, and local levels. Although many Montana communities are surrounded by national forests and diverse public lands that support an array of outdoor recreation opportunities, many Montanan children and youth have become disconnected from the landscape. Some school-aged students have as little an opportunity to get outdoors as youth living in dense cities like New York City or Los Angeles. Recreation managers indicated that children and youth are top issues for decision-making, and agencies are focusing efforts to develop programs that get young Montanans outdoors. Further efforts are needed to enhance networks and connections between communities and public lands. Additionally, providing opportunities to engage youth and encourage the next generation of land stewards will ensure Montana's outdoor legacy remains a core value in the state.

KEY PRIORITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative for local, state and federal recreation managers to work collaboratively with tourism, industry, and Montana citizens to create a vibrant future for Montana's outdoor recreation heritage where Montanans live healthier lifestyles, the economic well being of communities is sustained, and providing high quality recreational opportunities comes second to none. Recreationists do not care who manages the landscape. People care about getting outdoors and experiencing the unique natural, cultural, and recreation resources that Montana has to offer. It is up to recreation providers and partners to collaborate and integrate recreation management to provide high quality service provision and well-maintained resources for current and future generations.

Priorities for the 2014-2018 SCORP reflect the current research and trends on outdoor recreation at the national and state level, connects to initiatives around health, livability, and economic vitality, and addresses strategies to overcome challenges that will elevate Montana as a national leader in recreation with vision, focus, and coordination.

A. IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF ALL MONTANANS

OBJECTIVE: STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS BETWEEN OUTDOOR RECREATION, HEALTHY LIFESTYLES, PUBLIC SAFETY AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

1. Improve access to outdoor recreation resources, facilities, and trails to connect public lands to communities and encourage routine, daily outdoor activity everywhere Montanans live, work, learn, and play.
2. Provide priority for Montana State Parks-administered trail grant requests that enhance Montanans' connections to the outdoors, encourage healthy and active lifestyles, and support close-to home trail acquisition and development, as identified through a local or regional planning process.
3. Encourage development/expansion of new or existing alternative transportation systems to parks, open spaces, and public lands, including ADA accessible transportation by bus, rail, and non-motorized systems such as pedestrian and bicycle trails.
4. Collaboratively develop strategies and initiatives among recreation providers, Montana Trails, Recreation and Parks Association, and partners to engage Montana's youth in outdoor activities and on public lands.

B. SUSTAIN ECONOMIC VITALITY

OBJECTIVE: ASSESS AND ADAPT TO THE GROWING RECREATION AND TOURISM DEMANDS AND CHANGING PREFERENCES OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS, AND PROMOTE THE BENEFITS OF RECREATION TO STATE AND LOCAL ECONOMIES.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

1. Coordinate marketing and messaging with community, regional, and state tourism information providers and local lodging associations and chambers of commerce to keep information about facilities and recreation opportunities up-to-date, compelling and relevant for visitors and local users.
2. Encourage federal, state, and city recreation providers to share their visitation data on an annual basis to the Montana Office of Tourism, the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, and other tourism stakeholders to facilitate a stronger understanding of tourism-related recreation trends.
3. Research and understand the impacts of energy development and population growth on Montana recreation providers, communities, and tourism demands and preferences.

C. PROMOTE STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

OBJECTIVE: PROTECT AND ENHANCE MONTANA'S NATURAL, CULTURAL, AND HERITAGE ASSETS BY GROWING A RESPONSIBLE RECREATION LAND ETHIC AMONG RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

1. Provide priority for urban refuge and wetland conservation grant requests that enhance awareness and connectivity between wetlands and communities through partnerships to increase the urban refuge and wetland presence in Montana cities.
2. Promote and support programs that teach about and connect residents and visitors to Montana's diverse natural and cultural heritage. Encourage interagency heritage programming within a larger recreation context to deliver cohesive experiences with other related historic sites and cultural properties.
3. Work with outdoor recreation ethics organizations (e.g. Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics and Tread Lightly!) to develop and distribute promotional materials and messages to promote safe and responsible recreational use of public lands. Support educational efforts with public service announcements, signage, and interpretive programs.

OBJECTIVE: DEVELOP CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE FUNDS FOR ROUTINE AND PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE OF CURRENT FACILITIES, AS WELL AS EXPAND DEVELOPMENT OF FACILITIES TO MEET THE GROWING NEEDS OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

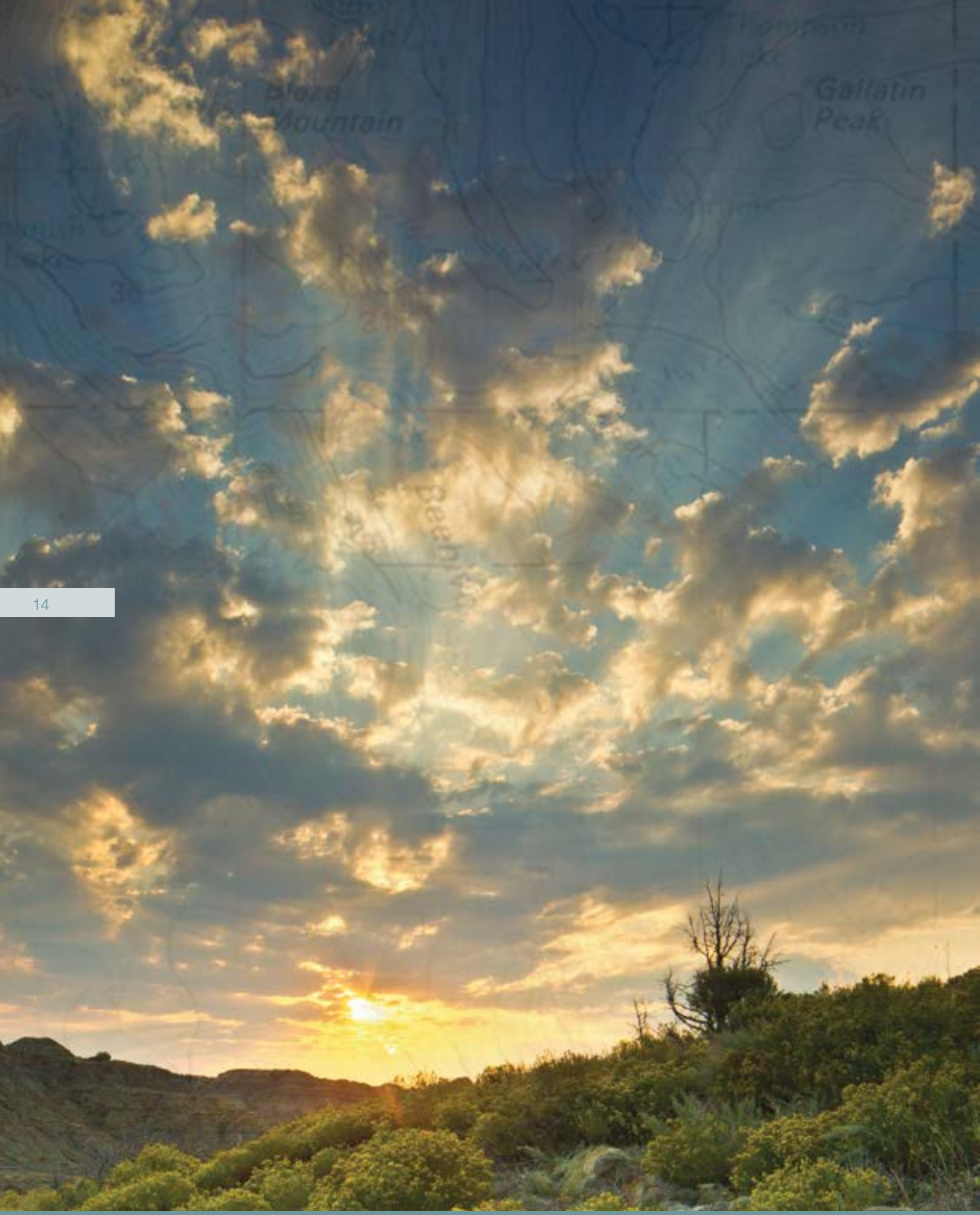
4. Explore opportunities to develop a Montana State Parks-administered grant program based on new revenue sources to adequately fund state and local recreation projects and programs that enhance access for all Montanans.
5. Establish regional working groups with federal, state, local, and tribal governments and other stakeholders to investigate opportunities for interagency partnerships to share staff, expertise, and resources to reduce operations and maintenance costs.
6. Advocate for the reauthorization of the LWCF Act in 2015 to full funding and at equitable levels between federal and stateside apportionments. Encourage broadening the funding criteria to reflect maintenance costs, and to allow communities to more easily repurpose previously funded recreation developments to reflect changes in demand.

D. ENHANCE AGENCY SERVICE PROVISION

OBJECTIVE: PROMOTE A SEAMLESS SYSTEM OF COORDINATED MANAGEMENT AMONG RECREATION PROVIDERS AND AGENCIES AT ALL LEVELS.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

1. Provide collective leadership on recreation challenges in Montana, promote resources and information exchange, and expand opportunities on public lands.
2. Partner on projects that span agency boundaries and link communities to their public lands and provide access from community staging areas to adjacent public recreation opportunities and settings.
3. Advocate and develop standards for recreation policies that encourage recreation planning and enhance active living as part of long range planning at the city and county level.


Gallatin
Peak

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"*Creating a Vibrant Future for Montana's Outdoor Recreation Heritage*," the Montana 2014-2018 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), represents a collaborative effort between Montana's diverse recreation providers, the tourism community, and residents to guide the management of outdoor recreation resources in a more holistic and effective manner. By capturing the growing awareness of the recreation benefits related to health, economics, and livable communities, the SCORP sets the stage to bring outdoor recreation in Montana into the 21st century. The plan advocates for proactive and engaged interagency coordination, cooperation and service provision for recreation across boundaries and throughout the state. Strong partnerships and integrated programs will establish strategies to connect children and all residents to recreation opportunities, support a strong and vibrant economy, and enhance the resource assets that represents Montana's recreation heritage.

Every five years, Montana publishes a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan to guide the management of outdoor recreation resources, meeting the requirements of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965. At its foundation, the plan is used to allocate funding to local community recreation projects throughout the state. The plan also transcends many levels of outdoor recreation policy and direction, and provides the strategic framework to identify issues and provide recommendations for outdoor recreation priorities among recreation managers and partners at all levels.

Creating a Vibrant Future for Montana's Outdoor Recreation Heritage is a five year plan for 2014 to 2018 that serves as a catalyst to coordinate and enhance Montana's outdoor recreation and tourism community. The plan reflects the high value placed on recreation by Montana residents and visitors, as well as the high quality of recreational experiences that exist throughout the state.

A NEW VISION FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreation is synonymous with Montana—the state is an outdoor recreationist's paradise, with extraordinary natural, cultural, and recreational assets, landscapes that seem endless, and opportunities abound for all ages and abilities. To some Montanans, outdoor recreation is taking a walk around the local park or a day hike in the national forest, while for others it is horse-packing into the Bob Marshall Wilderness or hunting on the badlands of the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge. And for others still, recreation is camping with family at one of Montana's 54 state parks or riding ATVs with friends. Snow enthusiasts enjoy Montana's cold and white winters, with hundreds of miles of trails for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling; destination ski resorts and picturesque gateway communities; and countless lakes and reservoirs for ice fishing and ice hockey. The list of outdoor activities in Montana is vast, and the number of outdoor recreationists is growing.

Montana is truly the last best place, and recreation is at the core of what makes the Big Sky state so great. As part of Montana's outdoor heritage, recreation is vital to our high quality of life and helps sustain the economic vitality of our communities. Getting outdoors helps improve our physical health and mental and emotional wellbeing, as well as creates community through social interactions. Parks, open spaces, facilities, and programs are critical to fostering connections with the great outdoors. Close access to outdoor recreation is one of the main reasons so many people enjoy living, working, and visiting the state, and contributes to the high quality of life we experience here. Preserving and developing this access to public lands ensures that Montanans will be able to enjoy these opportunities for generations to come.

With over 10 million visitors a year to Montana, the outdoor recreation industry also has huge economic benefit for local communities and the state as a whole. Our outdoor recreation industry is a significant and growing part of the economy, contributing to well-paying jobs for skilled workers and a tax base that funds essential services. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation in Montana generates $5.8 billion a year in consumer spending, which is 18% of total consumer spending in the state. Recreation also generates $403 million in state and tax revenue, $1.5 billion in wages and salaries, and supports over 64,000 jobs, or 14% of Montana's employment. Our endless opportunities for outdoor recreation make us attractive to not only residents, but also to visitors and businesses alike. Recreation is one of the major selling points for employers looking to hire quality workers who want to be close to the outdoors to enjoy hiking, camping, fishing, and hunting.

While outdoor recreation is an integral part of Montana's heritage, there is another side that is not as openly discussed. Recreation providers at the federal, state, and local level are struggling to meet the growing demands of users while facing a myriad of challenges, including decreasing or flat lining budgets, a growing backlog of maintenance needs, and lack of coordination among agencies. Our recreation landscapes and facilities are not being adequately managed or funded at a sustainable level to meet the high quality that residents and visitors expect and deserve. Managers on national forests in Montana are struggling to maintain the 18,000 miles of trails while recreation funding has decreased 10% in the last five years, and facilities across the state are stressed to stay open given current budget, resource, and staffing levels. Outdoor recreation lacks guidance and direction on a statewide level, and agencies are challenged to look past their boundaries to assess the overall recreation landscape in Montana.

A new vision for outdoor recreation is necessary to ensure that our recreation resources function at a high level and are sustained for current and future generations. Outdoor recreation must be elevated to a higher priority, along with management of other natural, cultural, and heritage resources. Recreation managers at all levels need to work together with citizens and industry for the integrated and seamless management of public lands. In doing so, we can ensure that recreation enthusiasts of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can easily find information about opportunities, can access recreation sites and amenities, and can get outdoors and enjoy Montana's wonderful array of resources.

Montana's 2014-2018 SCORP is a statement to recreation managers, agency partners, users groups, and stakeholders to envision a new future for recreation in Montana. We must work proactively to ensure that recreation is given the attention and resources necessary to provide high quality experiences, facilities, and programs for Montana residents and our more than 10 million annual visitors. The time is now. In doing so, Montana can demonstrate to our citizens, as well as the rest of the country, that recreation is a deep part of our heritage and we recognize its values and benefits to enhance livelihoods and contribute to the success of our economy. Montana is poised to be a national leader for outdoor recreation, and this plan provides the initial step toward becoming that leader.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federally funded program enacted in 1965 to provide for the development and acquisition of public lands for outdoor recreation and open space. The LWCF Program provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities, as well as funding for shared federal land acquisition and conservation strategies. The program is intended to create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States.

LWCF has two sides of funding: federal acquisition and the stateside grant program. The federal portion of the LWCF is used to acquire lands and waters necessary to achieve the natural, cultural, wildlife, and recreation management objectives of federal land management agencies. Federal LWCF cannot be used for recreation development. The stateside LWCF grant program is administered by Montana State Parks, a division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Stateside LWCF is the only source of federal funding for state and local recreation projects, which is awarded as competitive matching grants through a project rating system called the Open Project Selection Process.

The 2014-2018 Montana SCORP continues to meet LWCF eligibility with the following criteria:

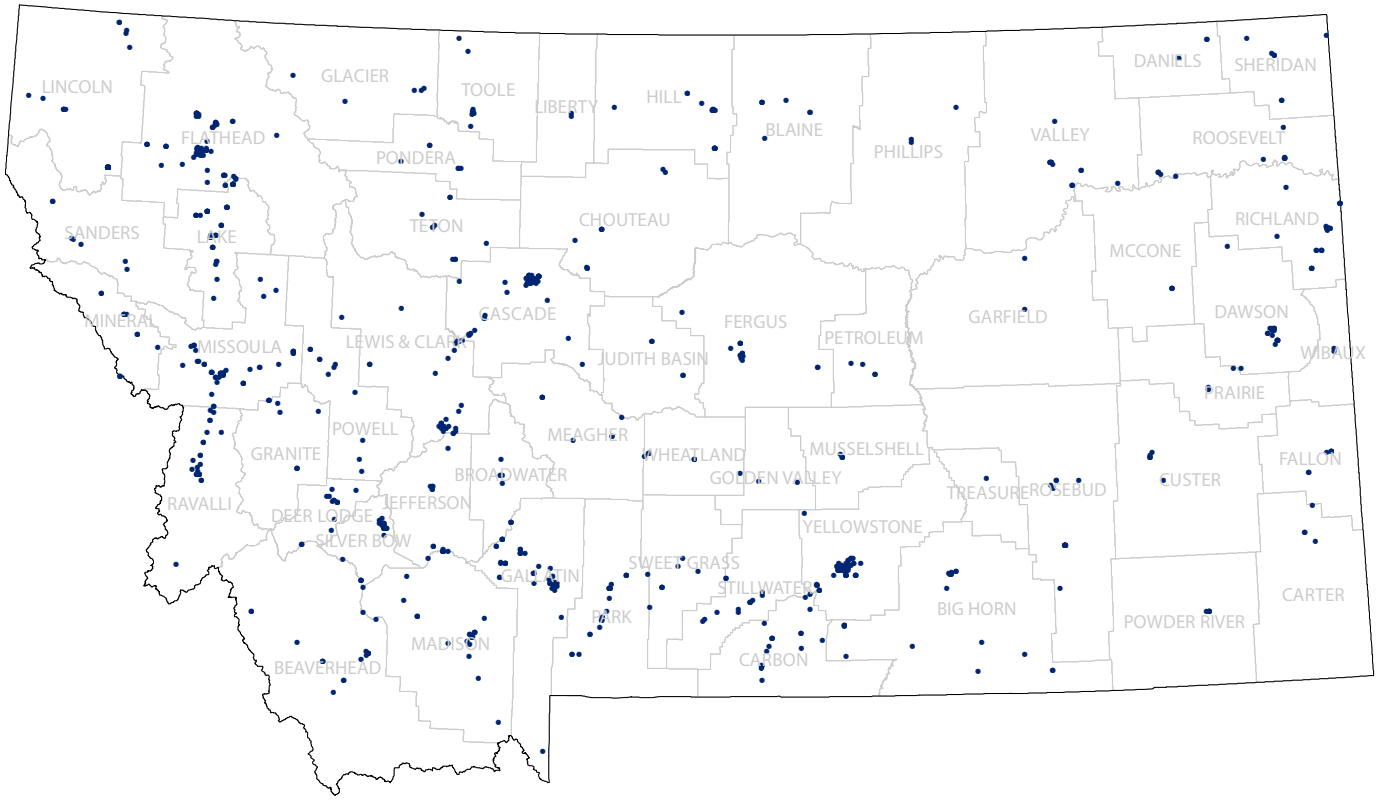
- Identify outdoor recreation issues of statewide importance and challenges facing the state's outdoor recreation and natural resources using public, provider, and user feedback.
- Evaluate demand for public outdoor recreation preferences.
- Evaluate supply of and demand for outdoor recreation facilities and resources.
- Establish priorities based on outreach efforts, data research, and relevant plans.
- Coordinate recreation management and planning initiatives with federal programs, and other state, regional, and local plans.
- Assess the recreation value of wetlands and identify outdoor recreation opportunities.

The stateside LWCF program funds community recreation facilities, park development, and open space acquisition at the state, local, and Tribal levels. According to the LWCF project database maintained by the National Park Service, the stateside LWCF program has provided close to $38 million to Montana since 1965 for state and local outdoor recreation projects. Based on the funding appropriation equation, which considers both land mass and population, Montana's LWCF funding is slightly less than what Idaho has received since 1965, and slightly more than what the North and South Dakotas have received. From the community pool in Sidney, to the tennis courts in Hardin, to development at Wayfarers State Park, every county and nearly every community in Montana has benefited from LWCF funding—totaling more than 800 projects over the years.

Even though LWCF has made a significant contribution to community outdoor recreation facilities and resources in Montana, Congressional funding of the stateside program has been inconsistent over the years (Figure 1). This inconsistency has made the LWCF program less effective in recent years, as communities struggle to see the value in applying for state funds, and Montana State Parks is challenged to meet requests of projects that do apply for funding. Additionally, the funding levels have also created a challenge to keep communities and agencies engaged in the SCORP planning process, as partners again struggle to see the value in the process.

The LWCF program is authorized at $900 million a year, with funds generated from offshore oil and gas leasing. Since 1965, funding for federal acquisition and the state grants program has averaged approximately $100 million per year, with a peak of $369 million in 1979. In the last 20 years, annual appropriations have decreased to a low of zero funding in 1982 and 1996-1999. However, as a direct by-product of the effort to enact the Conservation and Reinvestment Act, the drought ended in fiscal year 2000 with appropriations that ranged from $140 million in 2002 to $28.3 million in 2006.

MAP 1. LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND STATESIDE PROJECT SITES



Source: Land and Water Conservation Fund, National Park Service. http://www.nps.gov/lwcf/.

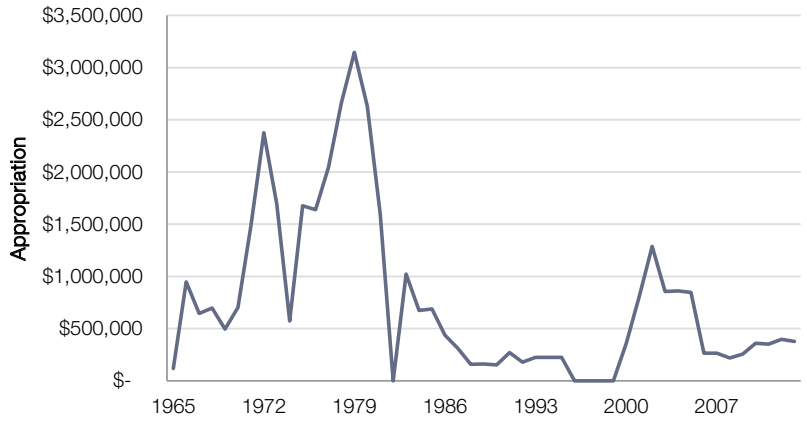
When the LWCF Act of 1965 was enacted, the legislation stated that the federal LWCF program was to receive no less than 40% of the appropriated funds, leaving up to 60% for the stateside program. Historically, however, federal acquisition has generally been funded to over 60% of the total LWCF appropriations, leaving less than 40% for state grants. In 2013, about $40 million was appropriated to state grants, while $189.2 million was appropriated for federal acquisition, which constitutes more than 80% of the LWCF appropriated funds. Since 2008, federal acquisition has averaged about 84% of the LWCF program, leaving on average 15% to the stateside funds.

The highest amount of LWCF funding Montana has received was during the peak funding year in 1979, with nearly $3.1 million in stateside funds. Funding zeroed out in the early 1980s and most recently in 1999, matching the overall funding trend at the national level. As a result of this, Montana did not prepare a SCORP from 1997 to 2002, the only time since 1965 that Montana opted not to complete a plan. Since then, Montana SCORPs were approved in 2003 and again in 2008. In 2013, Montana received close to $400,000 and funded four community projects for facility development and land acquisition. The current level of funding is 88% less than the peak in 1979.

Conversely, the federal LWCF program has brought close to $308 million to Montana for land acquisition since 1965—more than eight times the amount provided to the stateside program. The federal LWCF program, however, only funds land acquisition, and does not fund development of recreation sites and facilities. These acquisitions—which are critical for habitat conservation, open space preservation, and supportive of recreation opportunities—have greatly overshadowed the contributions of the LWCF stateside program. However, the State recreation grants program remains the only program that ensures the protection of our recreation resources in perpetuity.

The funding of other high priority Interior programs from the LWCF through the appropriations process has resulted in a decrease in funding for recreation grants in recent years. As such, federal, state, and local land managers are continuously challenged to meet the needs of recreationists, to address the deepening maintenance backlog on public lands, and to provide for adequate levels of staffing and resources for recreation programs. With the limited scope of federal LWCF on land acquisition, coupled with growing overhead costs for federal agencies and decreasing recreation program budgets, many federal agencies in particular are struggling in recent years to maintain

FIG 1. MONTANA STATESIDE LWCF APPORTIONMENTS, 1965–2013



Source: Land and Water Conservation Fund, National Park Service. http://www.nps.gov/lwcf/.

high quality recreation facilities and resources. While budgets are decreasing, federal land managers apply for State-administered grants to support seasonal positions, develop recreation and trail facilities, and maintain existing facilities.

The LWCF Act of 1965 will sunset in 2015, 50 years after it was enacted by Congress. Leading up to 2015, the stateside LWCF program will certainly be a focus for politicians, community leaders, and decision-makers to highlight the benefits of the program for Montanans. In accordance with this, there will need to be honest discussion of creating a better funding balance between the federal and state LWCF programs. While federal lands are undoubtedly important landscapes in Montana, we must also recognize that community parks, trails, and recreation facilities close to where Montanan's live, work, learn, and play are where the majority of residents interact with the outdoors on a daily basis. Funding the stateside program to a more equal and sustainable level will go farther to benefit all Montanans, enhance communities, and support Montana's growing tourism industry.

The LWCF program is still a crucial contributor to Montana's quality of life and its economy in sustaining and enhancing outdoor recreation throughout the state. With the reauthorization of LWCF in 2015 comes the opportunity for us to truly invest in what LWCF was originally established to do: create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States.

For the remainder of this SCORP, LWCF refers to the stateside LWCF program, unless otherwise specified as federal side LWCF.

RELATION TO PLANS AND INITIATIVES

The following plans and initiatives are relevant to the dynamic recreation planning efforts for the Montana SCORP, and are core ideas represented in this updated plan.

FEDERAL INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON OUTDOOR RECREATION (FICOR)

At the national level, federal agencies managing recreation participate in the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR). The America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Report called for the establishment of the FICOR to support outdoor recreation access and opportunities on Federal public lands, waters, and shores. According to the FICOR charter, the goal of the FICOR is to promote better coordination and collaboration among Federal agencies whose missions or programs include providing outdoor recreation and conserving or managing natural and cultural resources.

The FICOR consists of the agency directors of the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and the National Ocean Service on behalf of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The objectives of FICOR are to:

- Coordinate recreation management, access, and policies across multiple agencies to improve public enjoyment and recreational use of Federal lands, waters, and shorelines.
- Improve collaboration by Federal agencies with state-level conservation and outdoor recreation planning efforts, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund-mandated Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans.
- Streamline and align policies and procedures among Federal agencies for the purpose of clarity and consistency in working with State, local, tribal, and other outdoor recreation providers.
- Provide national leadership and encouragement to agencies and states to organize and support state-level outdoor recreation and conservation cooperatives to support outdoor recreation, access, and opportunities on state, local, and tribal lands.
- Identify and support opportunities for interagency demonstration projects that may have significant implications and benefits (e.g., spatial analysis of recreation assets, Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning) to the sustainability of outdoor recreation opportunities and resources on Federal lands, waters, and shorelines.
- Identify partners in the private recreation and tourism industry, and related industries such as health, communications, and transportation to partner with the FICOR on projects.
- Identify inconsistent and conflicting partnership legal requirements and authorities that create barriers to working with public and private partners and determine options to create more seamless partnering processes and requirements.
- Identify and pursue opportunities to leverage multiple Federal resources for joint outdoor recreation projects and initiatives.

The FICOR is a significant step in the management of federal lands to create a seamless system of recreation management. Recreationists in Montana and elsewhere do not care who manages the land; they care about the opportunities and quality of experiences available on the land. The FICOR's role is to create, promote, coordinate, and support an effective, efficient, and collaborative nationwide system of sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities and benefits that will significantly contribute to America's economy, community development, and environmental conservation, as well as citizens' health, wellness, and quality of life.

In this SCORP, the FICOR model has been elevated as a model for recreation management in Montana, not just for federal agencies but among state, local, and Tribal agencies as well. Calling on FICOR to be more supportive and engaged in SCORP planning, we asked each federal agency in Montana, as well as state and local partners, to prepare an agency narrative that openly discusses their service provision in the state as well as funding and resource challenges and opportunities and successes. The agency narratives comprise the bulk of Chapter 2 Montana's Recreation Landscape. For the complete FICOR charter, see Appendix G.

AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS

The America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative is established in recognition of the importance of conservation to the American people, and calls for greater federal support to grassroots conservation efforts through financial and technical assistance. Direction for the AGO Initiative was taken from the public through 51 listening sessions held across the country as well as 105,000 submitted comments. The consensus was clear: America's outdoor spaces are essential to our quality of life, economy, and national identity.

Through this public engagement, three major visions emerged. The first vision promotes a connection and enhancement of relationships between the American people and vast outdoor recreation opportunities. The second AGO vision seeks to ensure availability of quality outdoor recreation to the public through open space conservation and restoration, especially by funding the LWCF. Finally, the AGO vows for federal agencies to become a more effective conservation partner by fostering cooperation and collaboration between federal, state, and local governments, and AGO partnerships.

For this plan, we use the AGO as a framework for understanding national trends and initiatives, and connecting it with statewide and local efforts. A new vision for conservation in the 21st century is put forth the AGO report, and we have aligned the Montana SCORP with many recommendations from the AGO vision to connect people with public lands, enhance natural, cultural and recreation resources through conservation and restoration, and highlight a seamless system of coordinated management between recreation providers, partners, and citizens. The AGO Report was released in February 2011 and is available on the Department of the Interior's website at http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/.

GET OUT WEST!

The ***Get Out West!*** Initiative is part of the Western Governors' Association (WGA) efforts to connect kids and families to the West's great outdoors, and grow the tourism and recreation economies in the West. The purpose of the initiative was to identify the economic contribution of outdoor recreation and tourism to the health of our local economies as well as our citizens. In addition to promoting outdoor recreation and tourism across the West, the initiative was designed to highlight successful strategies for managing the recreational assets that serve as the foundation of the outdoor recreation and tourism sectors. The SCORP recommends Montana continue to participate in the WGA initiative, and supports many of its findings on outdoor recreation, conservation, tourism, and volunteerism.

HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services unveiled ***Healthy People 2020*** in 2010 as the nation's new 10-year goals and objectives for health promotion and disease prevention priorities and actions. The initiative strives to identify nationwide health improvement priorities; increase public awareness and understanding of the health risks; provide measurable objectives and goals that are applicable at the national, State, and local levels; and engage multiple sectors to take actions to strengthen policies and improve practices that are driven by the best available evidence and knowledge.

Physical activity is one focus area in ***Healthy People 2020*** and reflects the strong state of science supporting the health benefits of regular physical activity among youth and adults. It is part of the 2008 report on Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, the first-ever publication of national guidelines for physical activity. The Physical Activity objectives for 2020 highlight how physical activity levels are positively affected by structural environments, such as the availability of sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, and parks, and how legislative policies can improve access to facilities that support physical activity. ***Healthy People 2020*** reflects a multidisciplinary and dynamic approach to promoting physical activity that is further represented in the Montana SCORP. This approach brings about traditional partnerships, such as that of education and health care, with nontraditional partnerships with recreation, transportation, urban planning, and environmental health.

MONTANA TOURISM AND RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2013-2017 Montana Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan is an action plan coordinated by the Montana Office of Tourism with input from the state's tourism and recreation stakeholders. The plan provides the framework for enhancing Montana's tourism industry based on new trends and emerging opportunities as well as the community develop interests of stakeholders. The plan pursues three high-level goals which mirror the priorities for this SCORP:

- Improved economic benefits
- Preservation of assets and quality of life
- Improved visitor experiences

The desired outcome for stakeholder actions presented in the plan is to maximize and balance the benefits of tourism for Montanans and continue building a firm foundation for the long-term, sustainable competitiveness of Montana as a visitor destination. The plan is available at the Montana Office of Tourism's Program Website: http://travelmontana.mt.gov/2013strategicplan/ This SCORP uses the state's six formal tourism region boundaries to present data analysis and research results on a more local level. This was done to align the SCORP with tourism efforts as a way to explicitly draw the connection between resident and non-resident recreational interests, and local, state, and regional economies. The regional profiles and research are presented in Chapter 5.

FEDERAL RECREATION PLANS AND PROCESSES

Federal agencies in Montana produce their own plans for the management of outdoor recreation resources and facilities. These include, among others, Forest Plans, Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Comprehensive Conservation Plans for National Wildlife Refuges, and General Management Plans for National Park Service units. These various plans address diverse large-scale topics for federal public lands like natural resource conservation, habitat management, open space protection and acquisition priorities, timber management, environmentally sensitive areas, wilderness areas, and recreation management.

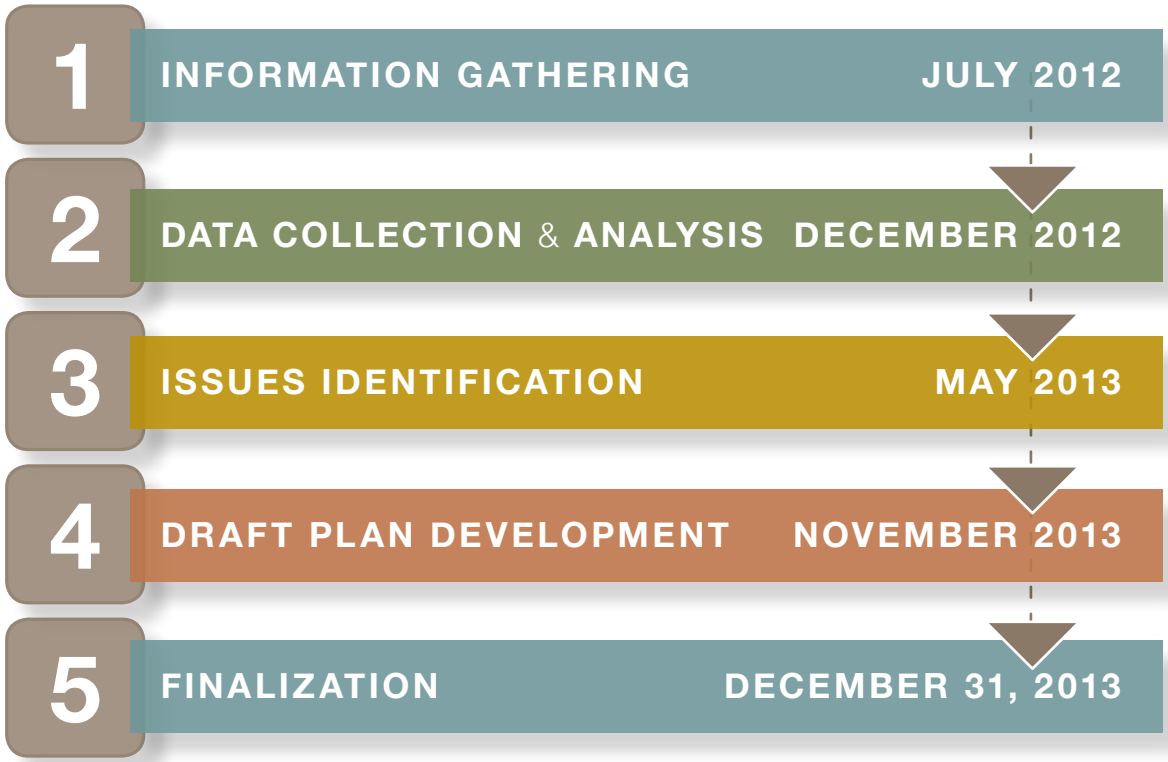
While not highlighting one agency in particular, the recommendations of the Montana SCORP parallel and complement the focus areas of the federal agencies involved in the SCORP planning process as well as other providers like the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers. The SCORP recognizes these planning processes as important elements of recreation management, and encourages a coordinated level of management within the planning process to ensure a high quality recreation experience on all public lands in Montana.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The SCORP planning process places a strong emphasis on public participation in the development of the plan, according to the requirements of the LWCF Act of 1965, as amended. Over the course of the plan's development, Montana State Parks staff worked closely with fellow state agencies, local government representatives, federal recreation management partners, and non-governmental organizations to gather input and feedback at key milestones throughout the process.

In an effort to reach as many Montanans as possible, a webpage dedicated to SCORP was launched on the Montana State Parks website in the summer of 2012 to provide a communication and engagement platform for the plan. The website served as the base for information and for review of the draft plan and recommendations. The website will continue through the life of the plan as the main host for the final plan as well as a clearinghouse for the process and a place to highlight accomplishments and progress reports.

FIG 2. SCORP PLANNING PROCESS



SURVEYS AND DATA ANALYSIS

One major component of public input was through the implementation of two original surveys with the University of Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) to collect new data on outdoor recreation. During the process, ITRR distributed a Facility Manager and Resource Area Survey to public lands recreation providers at the federal, state, local, and Tribal levels. Also, a Public Recreation Use survey was implemented to Montana residents around the state to gather input and feedback on their recreation experience on public lands. These sources provide primary data on recreation in Montana, and an opportunity for those involved directly with recreation management as well as the general public to provide input on the priorities and direction of the SCORP. ITRR also analyzed a number of secondary data sources from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and resident travel surveys. National and regional reports were also used to understand the larger context of recreation.

SCORP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The SCORP Advisory Committee (SAC) was created to advise and guide the planning process, and to support the plan's implementation. The SAC comprised of 11 key members that represented a diverse range of agencies and organizations with an interest in, and responsibility for, outdoor recreation in Montana. State and federal agencies, state level associations, and related academia were represented on the committee. A full list of participating agencies is included in the Acknowledgments. In addition to the Advisory Committee, other partnering agencies and organizations were consulted with throughout the preparation of the document to help with the development of specific parts of the plan and provide feedback and information as needed.

The SAC met five times during the planning process, at key milestones where advice and direction were needed. In their time together, the SAC members helped revise and improve the Facility and Resource Needs Survey, identified major trends and issues for focus in the plan, and developed and reviewed plan recommendations. This group of engaged and committed individuals provided a well-rounded voice for the plan. The SAC will not continue past the completion of the plan, but each member will go forward with renewed commitment to SCORP and its mission and goals, and continue to raise awareness of it during the lifetime of the plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The draft SCORP was open for public comment in October and November 2013 to solicit public input on the plan. Public comment allows for the public to provide direct feedback on the plan. For a complete summary of public comment received on the draft plan, see Appendix F.

PLAN OUTLINE

CHAPTER 2: SUPPLY AND PREFERENCES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES

Discusses the public land base and recreation providers in Montana, and presents the supply and quality of recreational resources from the facility manager survey, and the demand of outdoor recreation preferences based on results from the public use survey.

CHAPTER 3: RECREATION LANDSCAPE IN MONTANA

Presents in-depth narratives of Montana's recreation providers based on narratives developed by public land managers at the federal, state, and local levels. Discusses agency missions, service provisions, visitation, funding, and opportunities and challenges as related to recreation management.

CHAPTER 4: TRENDS AND USAGE PATTERNS

Presents influencing issues in outdoor recreation, including discussions on demographics shifts, population trends, national, state, and regional trends, and emerging activities for consideration.

CHAPTER 5: SCORP REGIONAL PROFILES

Presents profiles, data, and research for the six SCORP Regions.

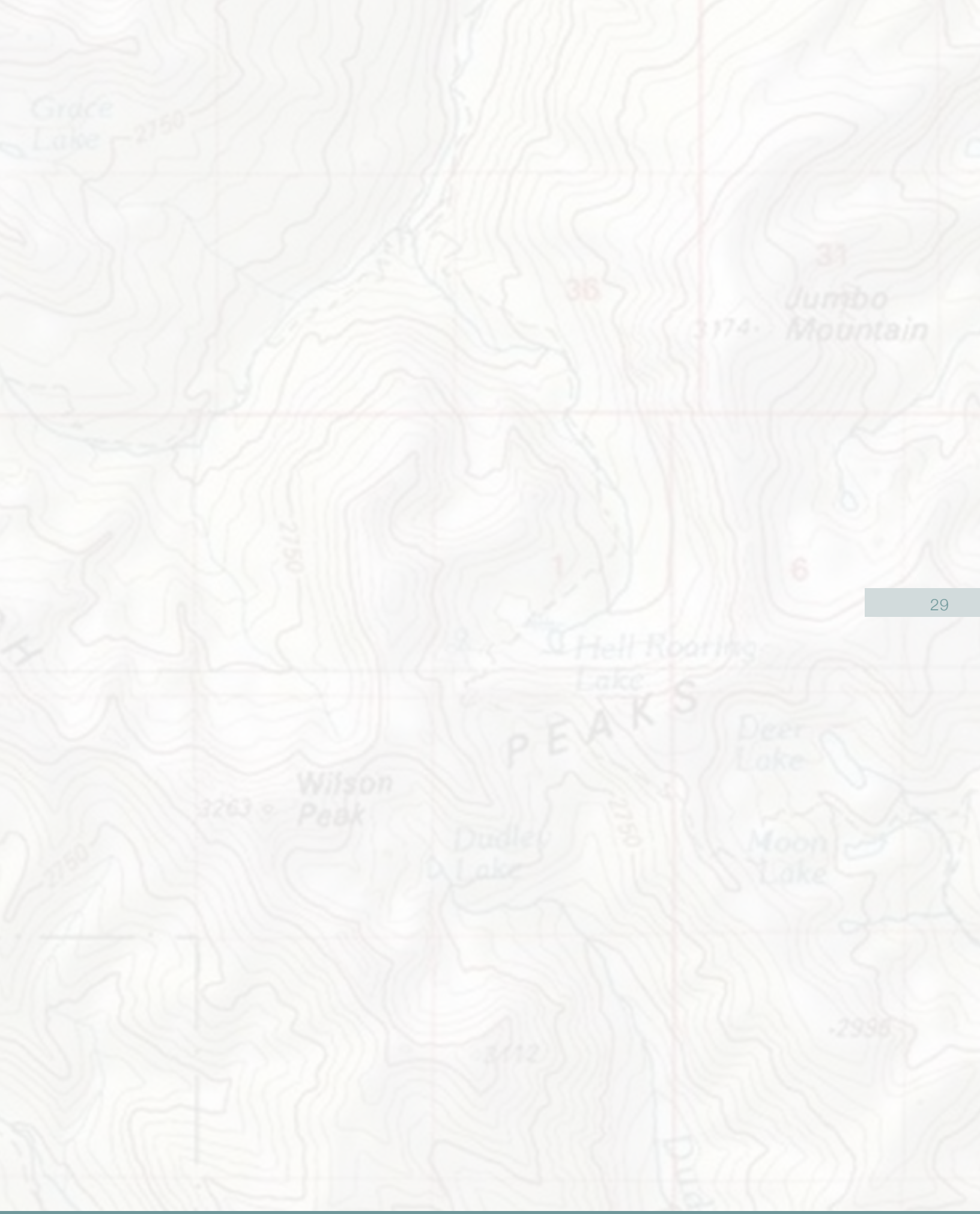
CHAPTER 6: PRIORITIES

Discusses the four major priority areas for the plan that provide the framework for the recommendations.

A. Improve quality of life of all Montanans
B. Sustain the economic vitality of Montana communities
C. Promote stewardship and sustainability
D. Enhance agency coordination, cooperation, and service provision

CHAPTER 7: GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Outlines the goals and recommendations to guide recreation providers, partners, and policy makers as they develop programs and policies from 2014 to 2018.


Grace Lake
2150
36
31
Jumbo Mountain
3174
1
6
Hell Roaring Lake
PEAKS
Deer Lake
Wilson Peak
3263
Dudley Lake
Moon Lake
2996