



CHAPTER 3

RECREATION LANDSCAPE IN MONTANA

The recreation landscape in Montana is as diverse as the lands our public agencies manage. Federal, state, Tribal, and local agencies manage 40% of the total land base in Montana, while the other 60% is in private land ownership. This section describes the roles and importance of major recreation providers in Montana including federal, state, and local agencies in more detail. Collectively, these agencies play a unique and vital role in providing and supporting diverse public outdoor recreation experiences throughout the state. While it is impossible to highlight every agency and organization relevant to outdoor recreation in Montana, particularly non-profits and the private sector, the most significant providers and public land managers that impact recreation statewide are highlighted in this section. The Montana SCORP only focuses on the public land management agencies.

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As part of the collaborative efforts for SCORP, Montana State Parks requested agencies to draft a narrative of their role in providing recreation in Montana. A template was provided to guide the development of the narrative. The following section includes the narratives provided by each agency, in the agency's own words, for their role as public outdoor recreation providers in the state, their mission, visitation levels, agency trends, and challenges faced in the coming years.

COMMON THEMES

A number of themes emerged from the agency narratives that discuss similar challenges public land agencies are facing in managing outdoor recreation opportunities and facilities, including decreasing budgets and deferred maintenance. Recommendations provided by the agencies speak to a stronger need for coordination and resource sharing. A common thread throughout all the discussions is the need to prioritize recreation to a higher level.

Budgets are a major component of agency operations, and each agency was asked to describe their budgets in relation to recreation management. Many agencies have been faced with decreasing recreation budgets, with funding reprioritized or shifted to other needs, like fighting forest fires. These measures have had big implications for the management of Montana's recreation landscape in providing safe and accessible recreation. In 2013, the federal government implemented sequestration measures that forced many agencies to further reduce their program budgets and resources for operations and maintenance, as well as furlough staff and reduce travel budgets.

Deferred maintenance in particular is a major challenge among agencies, at the federal as well as state and local levels. Maintenance of recreation facilities is paramount to providing high quality and safe recreation experiences on our public lands. Deferred maintenance and repairs is maintenance that was not performed when it should have been or is scheduled to be and which is put off or delayed for a future period, often due to funding and priorities. The National Park Service alone had \$11.5 billion in deferred maintenance at the end of fiscal year 2012. National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis stated in testimony before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee¹ in July 2013 that to hold the backlog at \$11.5 billion would require the NPS to spend nearly \$700 million a year on deferred maintenance projects, which is 31% of their \$2.2 billion annual operating budget for the entire National Park Service. This does not even address a reduction in the deferred maintenance. The immense backlog of deferred maintenance at the federal level is challenging agencies abilities to meet many of their basic operations and maintenance functions.

The backlog of deferred maintenance is also a challenge at the state and local levels. There remains adequate level of funding for acquisition and development of new facilities, including through the stateside LWCF program. However, LWCF and other funding programs do not fund maintenance needs as a priority, and thus, instead of creating a legacy of high quality recreation sites around the country, we are faced with a legacy of deferred maintenance that grows every year with no current solution or alternative source of funding to address the needs. This makes our recreational, natural, cultural, and heritage resources vulnerable to damage and vandalism, and unless action is taken, improvements are likely to become too costly or simply beyond repair.

Unless recreation is re-prioritized to a higher level within agencies, particularly at the federal level, the capacity of agencies to manage recreation on public lands will continue to diminish. Cuts to recreation budgets impact visitor safety, accessibility, trail maintenance, construction

¹ Jones, Susan. "Even Before Memorial Defacement, Nat'l Park Service Was \$11.5B Short for Maintenance." *CNS News*. 26 July 2013. Online: <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/even-memorial-defacement-natl-park-service-was-115b-short-maintenance#sthash.WRGCNLnk.dpuf>.

and reconstruction of recreation facilities, programming and outreach, and the ability to hire seasonal staffing in the field. Without action, recreation sites and facilities will continue to deteriorate; or worse, agencies will close sites and thus remove access all together. Both options are unacceptable solutions for recreation management, and Montana residents and visitors expect and deserve more from our public lands.

The current downward trend in budgets and growing deferred maintenance costs are projected to continue. However, agencies also spoke of the need for better coordination among recreation providers, including resource sharing, partnerships, and a working together to set a higher priority for recreation management on public lands. Volunteers, friends groups, user groups, and an engaged citizenry are important partners in assisting with land management, especially during tough economic times, and all agencies spoke of the value volunteers add to service provision. This includes value in projects as well as supplementing gaps in staffing and resources. Coordination and oversight of volunteers and service groups will be necessary to grow their capacity to support recreation management goals, as well as to engage volunteers in meaningful projects that meet agency objectives and allow volunteers to make a difference.

These solutions speak to a new vision for outdoor recreation in Montana through integrated service provision through coordination and collaboration. Recreation management can no longer fall behind. There needs to be a higher level of funding and agency coordination to address budget challenges and maintenance backlogs, as well as to enhance the recreation landscape for current and future generations of Montanans and visitors alike.

Another common theme is the changing demographics and user preferences of recreationists. Agencies are still struggling with engaging youth and connecting children with public lands, particularly in urban areas like Billings and Missoula where issues like transportation, access, funding, and resources limit the ability to get youth outdoors and to recreation sites for activities and learning. Other agencies, like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are faced with decreasing participation in key activities like hunting and fishing, as demographics change and fewer young people are taking up these activities.. Youth and future generations continues to be a strong theme among agencies to develop the next generation of leaders, engage current youth to become stewards of our public lands, and create a modern culture of advocates for our national forests, parks, wildlands, and refuges. The path to the outdoors begins in cities and communities, and thus it is important to develop programs and offer opportunities to connect communities with public lands, both community parks as well as federal and state lands.

The following discussion is a candid look at recreation in Montana, provided by the agency's perspectives and using their own data. Narratives were developed by key representatives on the SCORP Advisory Committee, and key partners at agencies not on the Advisory Committee. For the local level, example discussions are provided by Montana Trails, Recreation and Parks Association and Missoula County. State partners including Department of Commerce, Department of Public Health and Human Services, and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation also provided narratives about how their programs support recreation.

FEDERAL AGENCIES

In the spirit of FICOR, Montana State Parks requested federal agencies in the state of Montana to engage in the SCORP process and provide collaboration and partnership in the development of the SCORP. All federal agencies managing recreation lands in Montana collaborated to develop the following agency narratives, a testament to the early commitment agencies are making to be engaged in recreation not just at the national level, but at the state level with the Montana SCORP.

US FOREST SERVICE

The mission of the Forest Service (FS) is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. This mission of sustainability provided the foundation from which the agency developed The Sustainable Recreation Framework (June, 2010). The framework describes the vision of the agency's recreation programs as: "Renewing Body and Spirit, Inspiring Passion for the Land." The framework further describes National Forest (NF) recreation as contributing to the health and vitality of communities and visitors while showcasing the rich and abundant natural and cultural resources.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES OUTLINED IN THE FS SUSTAINABLE RECREATION FRAMEWORK:

- Connecting people with their natural and cultural heritage to instill an appreciation for and stewardship for FS system lands.
- Promoting healthy lifestyles by contributing to improved physical, mental, and spiritual health.
- Ensuring that sustainability requires attention and contributions toward environmental, social and economic conditions.
- Facilitating community engagement and collaboration.
- Recognizing that FS system lands are part of a larger landscape and ensuring our actions consider the broader context.
- Integrating recreation with the larger agency mission by working with other program areas.

FOUR GOALS OF FS RECREATION PROGRAMS:

- Provide a diverse range of quality natural and cultural resource based recreation opportunities in partnership with people and communities.
- Protect the natural, cultural, and scenic environment for present and future generations.
- Partner with public and private recreation benefit providers to meet public needs.
- Perform and plan by implementing systems and process to ensure effective decisions, sound investments, and accountability; collaborative approaches to integrated solutions; and enhanced professionalism of our workforce.

PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

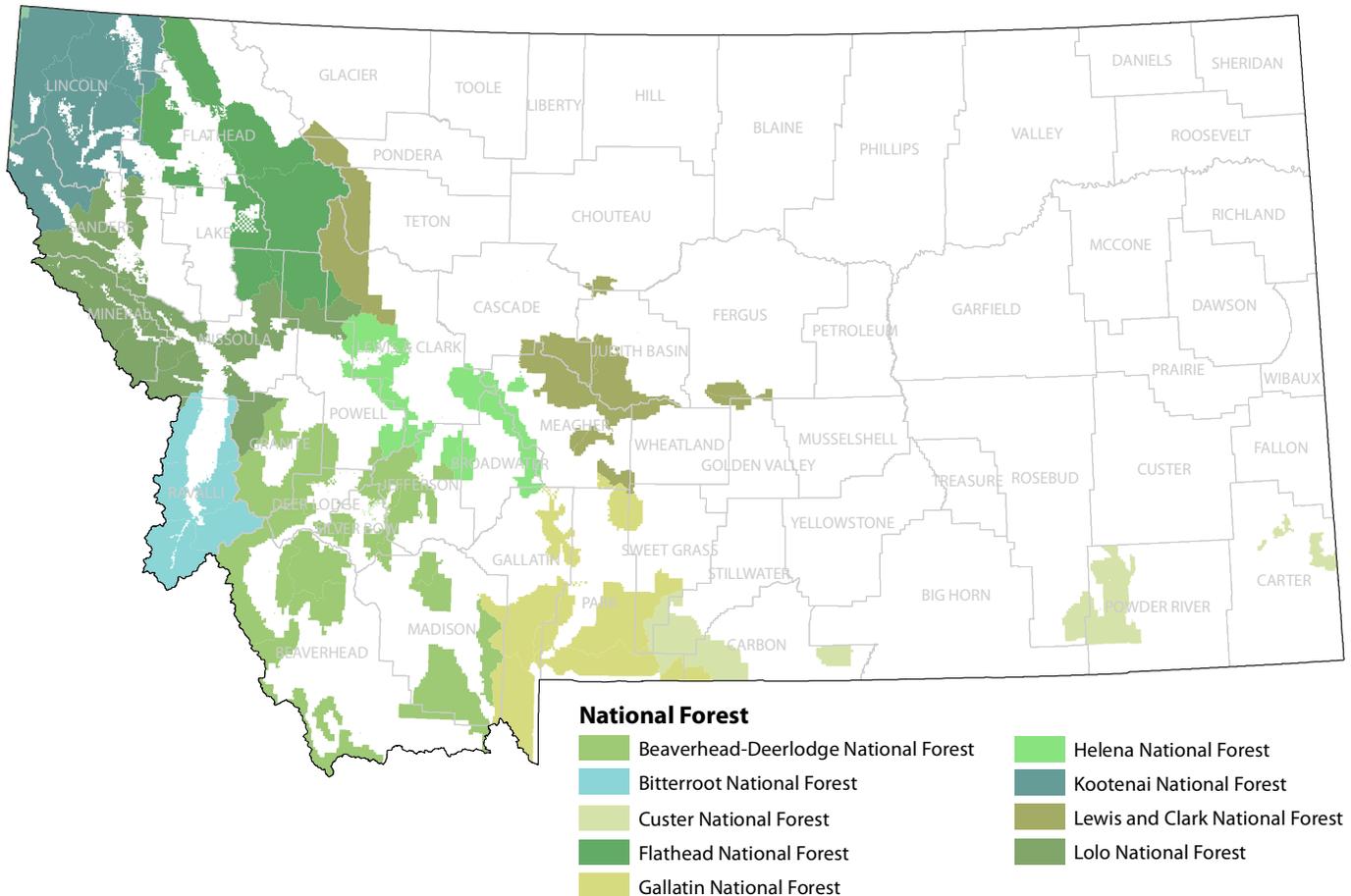
Nine national forests cover over 17 million acres of lands in the state of Montana. The rivers, mountains, wilderness areas and vast forests of NFS lands contribute significantly to the state's image and brand of unspoiled nature, spectacular landscapes, vast open spaces, and abundant outdoor recreation. Specifically the national forests of Montana contain 12 designated Wilderness areas covering over 3.3 million acres, over 18,000 miles of motorized and non-motorized trails, over 200 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers, and over 59,000 acres of National Recreation Area. See Table 1 for total miles of trails.

TBL 1. TOTAL MILES OF TRAILS ON NATIONAL FORESTS IN MONTANA

NATIONAL FOREST	MILES OF NON-MOTORIZED	MILES OF MOTORIZED	TOTAL MILES OF TRAILS
BEAVERHEAD-DEERLODGE	1,927	1,278	3,206
BITTERROOT	945	547	1,492
CUSTER	297	566	863
FLATHEAD	1,758	513	2,271
GALLATIN	2,040	682	2,722
HELENA	646	503	1,149
KOOTENAI	1,283	532	1,816
LEWIS AND CLARK	1,298	1,133	2,431
LOLO	1,457	1,085	2,542
TOTAL MILES	11,651	6,839	18,490

Source: US Forest Service, 2013

MAP 2. US FOREST SERVICE IN MONTANA



TBL 2. NFS DEVELOPED RECREATION SITES IN MONTANA

FACILITY	NUMBER OF FACILITIES
CAMPGROUNDS	238
CABINS/LOOKOUTS	120
TRAILHEADS	186
PICNIC AREAS	53
BOATING AREAS	56
INTERPRETATION & EDUCATION	46
FISHING AREAS	15
OTHER	39

Source: US Forest Service, 2013

There are over 750 developed recreation facilities on NF system lands in Montana. Facilities on NF lands are typically rustic, providing basic amenities to accommodate concentrations of use while highlighting and protecting the natural and cultural resources that visitors are drawn to. There are 238 campgrounds and 120 cabins and lookouts, making close to 360 different developed overnight opportunities in National Forests in Montana. National Forests also contribute to the state’s winter recreation opportunities with 11 alpine ski areas and three Nordic ski areas. The

major gaps on National Forests in Montana are linked to concentrations of use in undeveloped settings, including lack of on-the-ground agency presence, resource damage due to unmanaged use, and safety related issues.

VISITATION

Visitation data is gathered across all National Forests using protocols outlined in the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) program. The national survey is structured to complete all national forests across the country every five years. Two cycles have been completed, with the third underway (2010-2014). Since all forests in Montana have not completed cycle three, data collected between 2005 and 2009 was used in describing the use levels, demographics of our visitors, what activities they engage in, where they’re coming from and their satisfaction level.

There are approximately 8 million annual visits on Montana’s national forests. Most visitors are from surrounding local communities. Over 50% of forest visitors come from areas within 20 miles of the forest boundary, and over 80% travel less than 100 miles. About 65% of forest users are male, and 35% are female. There is a wide distribution of age groups using the forest, however 16-19 year olds only account for 3.5% of the visitors. Underserved populations are Native Americans, which account for only 1.3% of total use although comprise 6% of Montana’s total population.

Forest visitors primary activities are hiking and walking, hunting, viewing natural features, downhill skiing, and snowmobiling. Over two-thirds of the use occurs in undeveloped settings, while approximately one-third occurs in developed recreation sites such as campgrounds, picnic areas, and other recreation facilities. According to the NVUM, approximately 77% of visitors are very satisfied with their experiences on NF lands, while another 16% are somewhat satisfied. Only 3% of visitors are somewhat/very dissatisfied with their visits.

The average total trip spending per party to Montana National Forests is \$301, and the median total spending is \$25. When visiting a national forest, approximately 28% of visitors stay in a rented private home, while 21% stay at a NFS campground. Another 16% stay at home of family/friends and 12% stay at undeveloped/backcountry camping in the national forests. About 8% stay at another public campground or private campground.

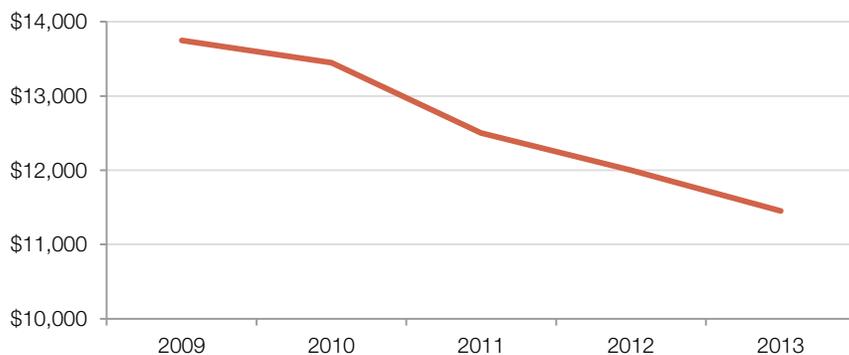
BUDGET

Budget trends for the Forest Service have been steadily declining with some program areas being more severely cut than others. In the past five years, allocation to Region 1 for recreation facilities has gone down 48% (Figure 7). In addition, trails funding has gone down approximately 20% and recreation program management (recreation planning, special use permits, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, etc.) funding has gone down about 10% over the last five years. In 2010, recreation funding accounted for only 14% of the total Region 1 program funding budget, behind vegetation management at 18% and timber management at 27%.

This is smaller than the recreation budget at the national level for the NF program, which was 21% in 2010, second to timber management at 24%.

These cuts will severely reduce the ability of FS to fund construction and reconstruction of recreation facilities. Available funds will focus on the operation and maintenance of existing facilities. Unless additional sources of revenue become available, units will be forced to either manage existing sites to below standard conditions or close sites. The forest's capacity to maintain trails is also diminishing, forcing management to make similarly difficult decisions about their infrastructure. The current downward trend in budgets is projected to continue.

FIG 7. USFS REGION 1 RECREATION FUNDING, 2009–2013



Note: Region 1 includes Montana, Idaho Panhandle, North Dakota, and small sections of Wyoming and South Dakota.
Source: US Forest Service, 2013

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A number of challenges exist for the Forest Service in regards to recreation management, including:

- Declining budgets (recreation, facilities, trails, and roads);
- Declining workforce numbers and a loss of professional skills in recreation planning, landscape architecture, and social sciences;
- Declining interest in recreation and public lands of the nation's youth;
- Increasing deferred maintenance backlogs (facilities, trails and roads);
- Increasing costs (workforce and materials);
- Increasing complexity associated with managing recreation programs (evolving toys, increasing demands and use conflicts, resource concerns, legal requirements, and visitor safety concerns).

There are also a number of strengths and opportunities for the agency. The Forest Service has strong partnerships with the private sector through the special use permit program that permits organizations and businesses to operate recreation facilities and programs on Forest Service land, including: ski areas, organization camps, resorts, boat launches and hundreds of outfitter and guides. Existing partnerships need to be nurtured and maintained, and opportunities for additional partnerships are a continuous priority for the agency.

As a response, the agency has initiated focused collaborative processes to develop restoration strategies and revised Forest Plans. This model is one in which people with diverse interests share knowledge, ideas, and resources while working together in an inclusive and cooperation manner toward a common purpose. There are opportunities for the agency to use this model in solving some of the issues and opportunities associated with delivering quality recreation opportunities and settings.

The agency has also excelled in developing and maintaining a strong volunteer program. Continued emphasis on the Forest Service volunteer programs is essential to delivering quality, sustainable recreation programs and facilities. Since 2010, over 7,400 volunteers have worked on recreation projects, totaling over \$7.9 million in value. About 84% of the volunteers do work in recreation, trails and wilderness.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) mission is "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The BLM's multiple-use mission, set forth in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, mandates that we manage public land resources for a variety of uses, such as recreation, while protecting a wide array of natural, cultural, and historical resources, many of which are found in the BLM's 27 million-acre National Landscape Conservation System."

The BLM is a member of FICOR which aims to reconnect American families with the outdoors that are vital to the health of our communities and economy. In Montana, the BLM is meeting its FICOR goals by:

SUPPORTING GREAT URBAN AND COMMUNITY PARKS:

the BLM is encouraging community-based recreation by developing regional partnerships with local communities, recreation interests, and others to provide places to be outside—both urban and rural.

CONSERVING AND RESTORING RURAL LANDSCAPES AND WORKING LANDS:

the BLM's multiple-use mission offers a model for landscape-level conservation that complements other Federal, state and private land conservation and resource management systems.

ENHANCING RECREATION, IMPROVING ACCESS AND RECONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE OUTDOORS:

BLM public lands offer the widest range of recreation opportunities of any public land agency. This spectrum of traditional and new outdoor recreation activities contributes to the health and well-being of millions of Americans.

PROVIDING CRITICAL TOOLS FOR CONSERVING, PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE GREAT OUTDOORS:

As a "Facilitator of Growth and Conservation," the BLM can purchase, sell, lease and exchange lands to consolidate public lands, assist local communities, improve access, address regional planning and growth, and partner with states and other agencies to achieve shared conservation or recreation goals.

EDUCATING, EMPLOYING AND ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION:

The BLM will continue to demonstrate its investment in America's youth and its commitment to providing opportunities for public service.

PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

TBL 3. BLM RECREATION FACILITIES IN MONTANA

FACILITY/AMENITY	NUMBER OF FACILITIES
CAMPING UNITS	400+
DAY-USE SITES	15
DEVELOPED RECREATION SITES	24
UNDEVELOPED RECREATION SITES	400+
BOATING ACCESS SITES	32
WATCHABLE WILDLIFE SITES	19
OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREAS	5
NATIONAL MONUMENTS	2
HISTORIC SITE	1

Source: Bureau of Land Management, 2013

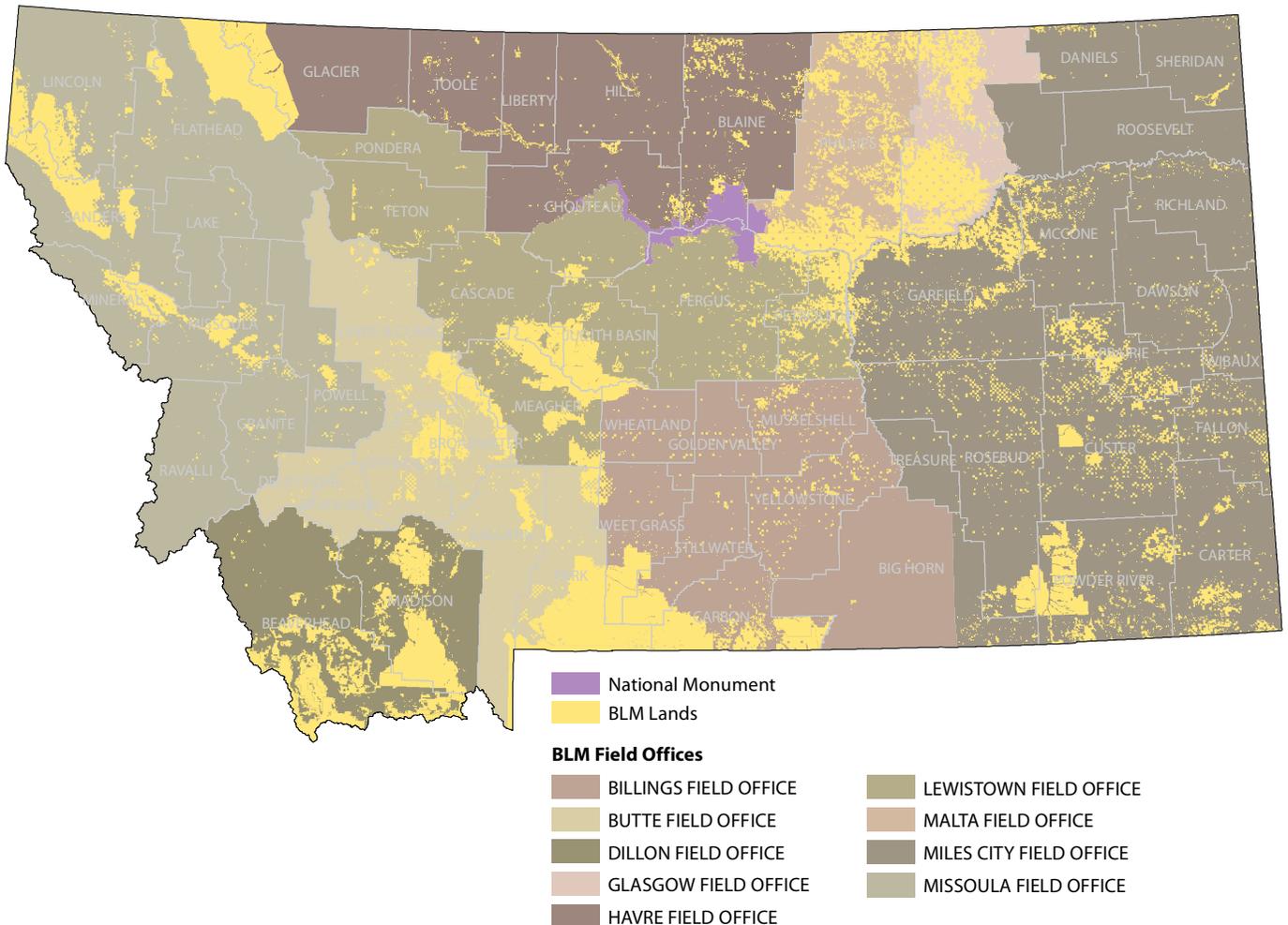
The BLM manages over 8 million acres of land in Montana. Among the destination sites include Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument and Wild & Scenic River, Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness, Pompeys Pillar National Monument, Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, and the Garnet Ghost Town. The BLM also manages 2,500 miles of streams, 60,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs, 185 miles of backcountry byways, and 149 miles of the Upper Missouri Wild & Scenic River.

Socio-cultural and related economic impacts have and will continue to profoundly affect the BLM's management of recreation use, which, in turn, affects both visitors and local communities and their residents. Every field office in Montana has requests for the BLM to open up public land blocked by private and public land scattered ownership in order to allow hunting and other recreational pursuits. The high fiscal cost of managing developed recreation areas

limits each field office's recreation budget and should be a serious consideration when proposing resource management plans and implementing project plans.

MAP 3. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT IN MONTANA

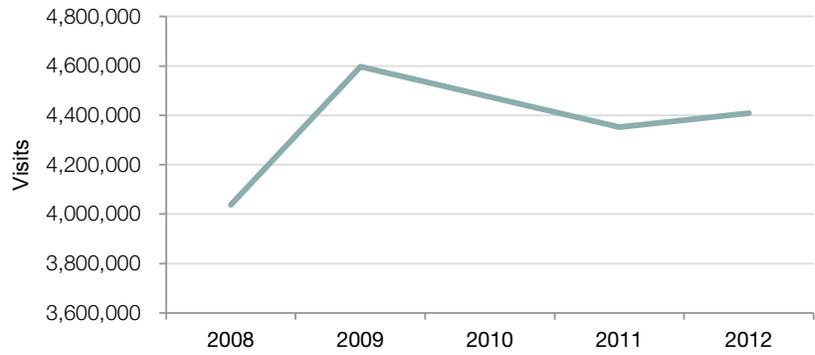
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VISITATION

Over the last five years, BLM-managed public lands have seen more than 4 million visitors annually. Visitation is predicted to rise in the eastern half of the state with the increase in population related to the recent energy boom. Recreational visits to BLM Montana lands over the last five years have increased 9% over 2008 levels, reaching a peak of almost 4.6 million visitors in 2009 before declining in visitors in 2010 and 2011. From 2011 to 2012, there was a slight increase of 1.29%.

FIG 8. BLM PUBLIC LAND VISITS, 2008–2012



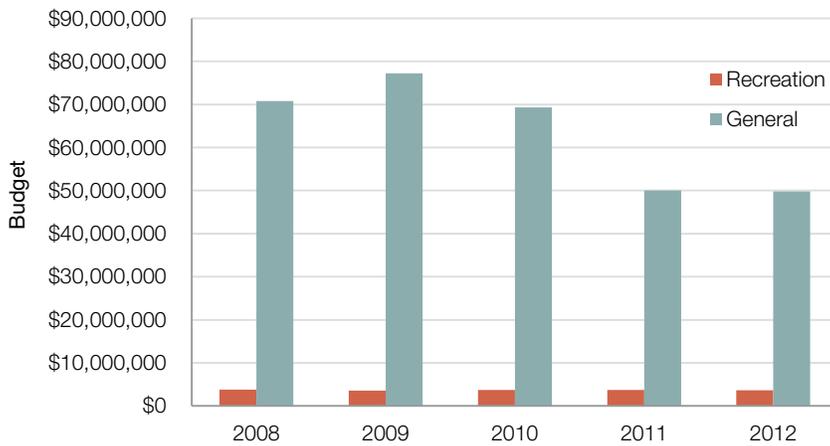
Source: Bureau of Land Management, 2013.

Dispersed recreational activities still make up the majority of visits on BLM-managed land. The top recreational activities in 2012 from highest to lowest participation were:

- Interpretation/Environmental Education/Nature Study
- Non-motorized travel (hiking, walking, snow shoeing, skiing, etc.)
- Camping/picnicking
- Viewing nature, scenery and wildlife
- Hunting – all types
- Driving for pleasure
- Fishing

These major trends in visitor activity are likely to continue over the next five years. The national trend is that access with motorized vehicles determines most recreational pursuits.

FIG 8. BLM MONTANA/DAKOTAS BUDGET, FISCAL YEARS 2008–2012



Source: Bureau of Land Management, 2013.

BUDGET

The BLM’s budget is responsible for establishing and coordinating the fiscal policy, guidance and implementation of the BLM’s congressionally mandated programs. As in all recreation programs, having the right budget to meet all the needs is always a challenge. Currently, the BLM is working hard to maintain facilities and services at its developed interpretive centers, campgrounds, boating areas and off-highway vehicle destinations and other resource and recreational programs. Most of BLM’s recreation budget is from appropriated funds. From 2009, the general BLM Montana/Dakotas budget has

decreased from \$77.1 million to \$49.7 million, a decrease of 35%. Meanwhile, the recreation budget has generally remained the same since 2008.

The BLM collected more than \$382,530 in recreation fees in 2012, down 6.4% from 2011. Still, the fees were up from 2009 levels by 8.4%. The fee funds collected at developed sites and through special recreation permits are reinvested into those same sites and field offices that administer these recreational driven programs. These funds supplement appropriated dollars and cover anywhere from 1 to 48 percent of all operating cost of developed fee sites.

Statewide, BLM Montana/Dakotas employs 23 full-time recreation staff and an average of 22 seasonal staff each year to manage developed and non-developed recreation sites and activities. This accounts for approximately 5% of their total permanent full-time staff and 33% of their total seasonal staff. In total, the BLM employed 459 full-time staff and 66 seasonal staff in 2012, with another 88 temporary and 47 interns, for a total of 660 staff in Montana.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The BLM Montana/Dakotas priorities are defined to assist the public in Montana while following national direction promoting recreational access, benefits and experiences for the general public. The following are some of the top priorities for the BLM:

- Define and communicate the BLM recreation niche in Montana and the Dakotas.
- In conjunction with the Montana Access Board, obtain access and sites in key locations through acquisitions, exchanges, partnerships and the use of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- Develop and implement travel management plans as specified in Resource Management Plans (RMPs).
- Expand and improve the Montana/Dakotas communication products, including the Access and Recreation web pages.
- Educate, advocate, and execute project planning for the Federal Lands Transportation Program (MAP-21 Grant Program). Ensure deferred/annual maintenance funds address mission critical priorities.
- Cooperation with state Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) for enhanced benefits from Block Management Areas that provide access to BLM land.

Learn more at www.blm.gov/mt.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The National Park Service's primary mission is to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. As the agency moves towards its second century of existence, it has become increasingly clear that the Park Service must give full consideration to the full mission and cooperate with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. Although park units are the most widely recognized aspect of NPS a number of other administered programs also fulfill this mission. These include the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program, stateside assistance for Land and Water Conservation Funds, National Register of Historic Places among others.

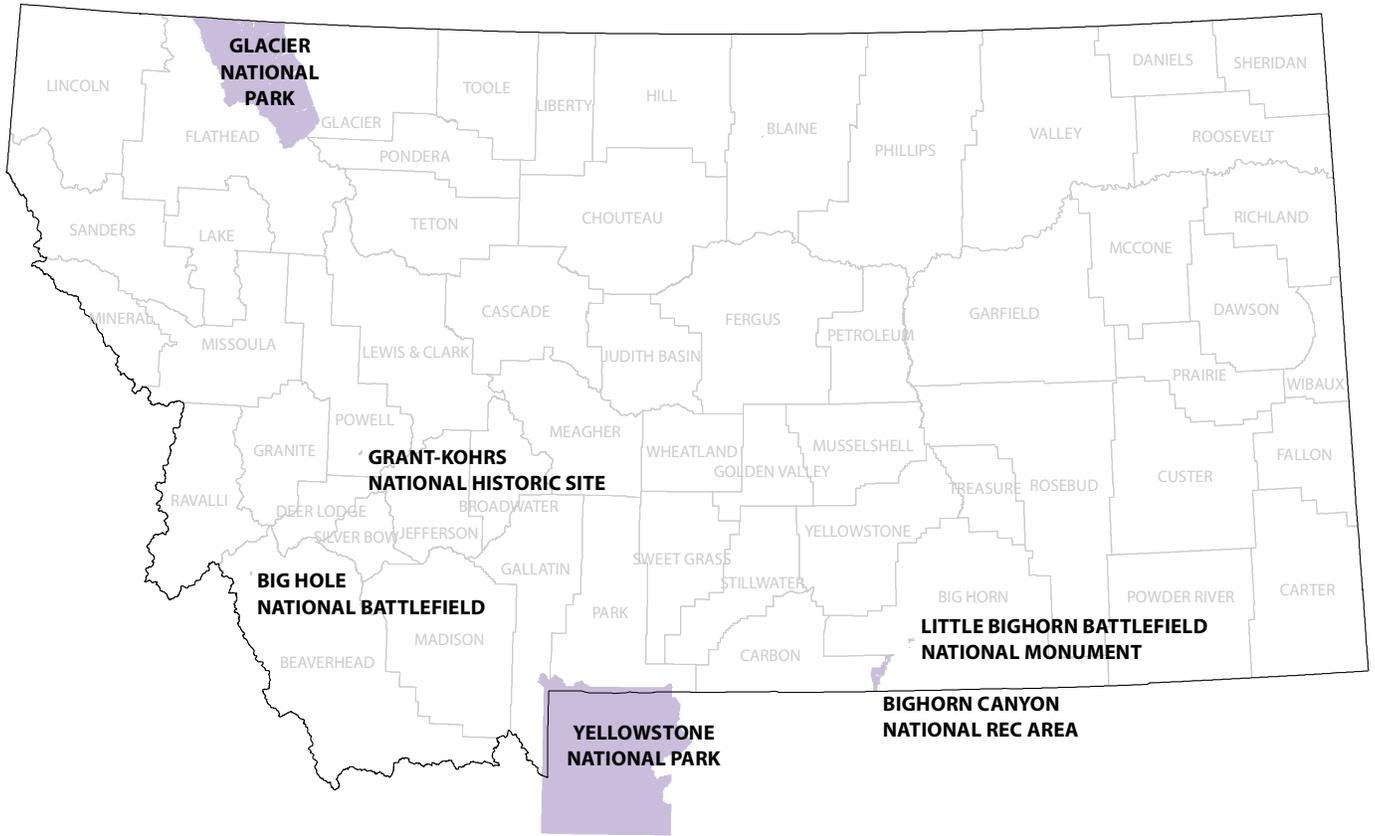
PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

The National Park Service manages 1.2 million acres of land within Montana. The agency is responsible for the Bear Paw Battlefield, Big Hole National Battlefield, Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Glacier National Park, Grant-Kohrs National Historic Site, Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, Nez Perce National Historic Trail, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, and Yellowstone National Park.

From the oldest unit to the newest unit—Yellowstone National Park to Bear Paw Battlefield—each park constitutes a unique resource type with compelling management considerations and opportunities. Many of these parks evoke the essence of how residents and non-residents perceive Montana. The grandeur of Glacier and the vast expanse of the prairie at Little Bighorn Battlefield represent the panorama of Montana's landscape in the minds of all visitors. These visitors come to see the expansive vistas of the Big Sky country and get in touch with a more elemental part of our shared human history. National park units provide opportunities for many traditional outdoor user experiences ranging from fishing and boating at Bighorn Canyon, to walking with the spirits at Big Hole, Bear Paw and Little Bighorn, or to view firsthand grizzlies and mountain goats in their natural settings in Glacier.

While Park Service resources do not provide opportunities for all types of outdoor recreation opportunities, the variety of opportunities available is still quite broad. Limits on recreation opportunities in a park are restricted by the enabling legislation of each park unit and by the organic act creating the agency, which mandates that the primary focus of the agency is to preserve resources for the enjoyment of future generations. The gaps that exist due to these legal delineations can be filled by other entities through cooperation and communication.

MAP 4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IN MONTANA



VISITATION

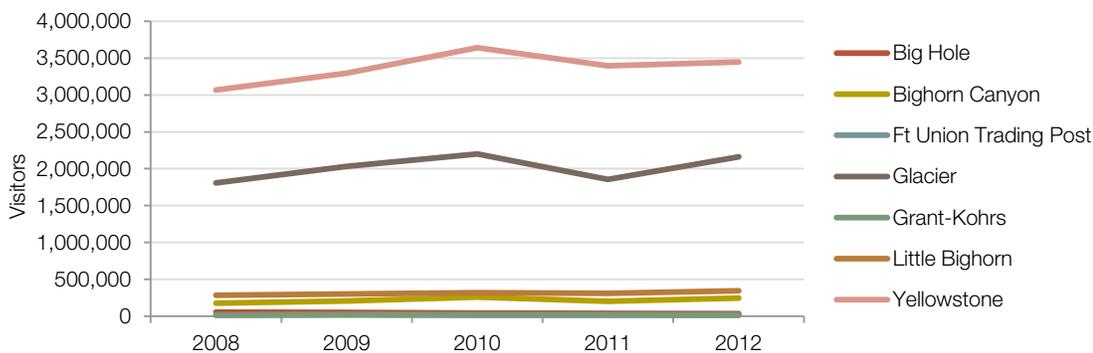
Visitation levels have been increasing at NPS units in Montana during the past five years, except for a one year decline from 2010 to 2011. Glacier and Yellowstone accounted for over 5.6 million visitors combined during 2012. From 2008 to 2012, Glacier increased by 16.4% and Yellowstone increased by 11.1%. The continued growth in visitation at these two parks drives the overall growth in visitation to NPS units in Montana as most park units also enjoyed increases in visitors during this time period. Only Big Hole National Battlefield experienced a decline in visitation during the past five years. All other parks experienced a combined 13.5% increase since 2008.

When visitation is viewed over the past ten and twenty years, the numbers are positive. Glacier and Yellowstone increased 11.9% and 13.7% respectively from 2002 to 2012. Glacier has decreased by 1.7% since 1992, while Yellowstone has increased 8.8%. Bighorn Canyon actually increased the most since 2002 with 31.7%, although the total number of visitors still remains under 250,000 visitors. There are also signs of problems. Three of the cultural

sites in Montana experienced declines in visitation since 1992 with visitor numbers down by over 73% at Big Hole National Battlefield, 128% at Ft. Union Trading Post National Historic Site and nearly 63% at Grant-Kohrs National Historic Site. It is not known why these units have decreased in visitation, especially since the national trend seems to reflect a growing interest in historic and heritage sites.

National Park Service units provide quality recreational opportunities for Montana residents. The high visibility and public recognition of parks such as Glacier, Little Bighorn and Yellowstone offers unique marketing opportunities to attract international visitors and visitors from across the country. Michigan State University completed a study of Economic Benefits to Local Communities from National Park Visitation in 2011. Based on these findings, national park units in Montana generated \$279 million in non-local visitor spending and created 4,492 jobs based on this visitor spending. The national parks positively influence the economy of the state and serve as a key industry for future growth and development.

FIG 10. NPS VISITATION BY UNIT IN MONTANA, 2008–2012



Note: Portions of Yellowstone, Bighorn Canyon and Fort Union Trading Post are located in adjacent states. Numbers reflect total visits to these park units, not just visits in the Montana portions of these park units. Source: National Park Service, 2013.

BUDGET

Funding for NPS units experienced across the board reductions of approximately 6% for FY2013 as Congress grappled with issues related to the overall federal budget. Projections for upcoming budgets anticipate additional cuts.

While the majority of park budgets are provided from the federal general fund to cover basic operational expenses, many parks receive revenue from the sale of entrance passes. Not all park units charge a fee as visitor numbers may not be sufficient to recoup the cost of collection at some units. The money collected from entrance fees is used to pay for improvements to resources and programs that directly benefit park visitors. Additionally, parks with concession operations are able to collect fees from private enterprise doing business in the park. Money from these concession fees are used to pay for upgrades to these businesses and to enhance programs and services for park visitors. Entrance fees and concession or permit fees are set through federal legislation. Rates for entrance fees and concession have not been increased for several years as Congress has explored questions related to the value and need for charging visitors for use of public lands.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The reduction in funding continues to be a major challenge for the NPS, particularly after several years with no increase in appropriations. This has led to reduced spending capacity in the light of increased costs for basic operations such as utility payments, vehicle fuel, ongoing maintenance and other operational expenditures. The decline in appropriations has also led to reductions in the hiring of seasonal staff, reduced travel for staff to meet with partners, deferral of maintenance projects along with other reductions in basic service to the public.

In light of funding challenges, a report from the Director has provided guidance for the next century of managing the national parks through “A Call to Action” outlining four specific steps the agency must take to “recommit to the exemplary stewardship and public enjoyment of these places.” The report further states that NPS “must promote the contributions that national parks and programs make to create jobs, strengthen local economies, and support ecosystem services. We must leverage and support a multi-sector workforce, parks community, and volunteer network to magnify all successes. We must use the collective power of the parks, our historic preservation programs, and community assistance programs to expand our contributions to society in the next century.”

The four steps share a theme common to other public land managing agencies. They direct agency staff to identify ways to:

CONNECT PEOPLE TO PARKS and help communities protect what is special to them, highlight their history, and retain or rebuild their economic and environmental sustainability;

ADVANCE THE EDUCATION MISSION by strengthening the NPS role as an educational force based on core American values, historical and scientific scholarship, and unbiased translation of the complexities of the American experience;

PRESERVE AMERICA'S SPECIAL PLACES and engage as leaders in extending the benefits of conservation across physical, social, political, and international boundaries in partnership with others; and

ENHANCE PROFESSIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE by adapting to the changing needs of visitors, communities, and partners; encouraging organizational innovation; and giving employees the chance to reach their full potential. All national park units and programs are being directed to focus efforts to tackle these themes.

National park units in Montana are addressing these themes through a myriad of programs and services. Glacier National Park has over 740 miles of trail, 13 campgrounds with over 1000 campsites, world class fishing and extraordinary scenic vistas. Big Hole National Battlefield, Fort Union Trading Post and Little Bighorn National Battlefield all offer interpretive trails allowing visitors to explore the connection of the natural and cultural worlds on an intimate basis. Yellowstone National Park has developed a program with its' partners that allows Native American youth from reservations in Montana to visit the park at no expense over several days to experience the outdoors and learn more about their connection to the park. Grant-Kohrs National Historic Site has special events and programs designed to educate and entertain visitors during their stay. The park offers a historic haying demonstration wherein volunteers are able to bring their teams of draft horses to the park and participate in historic haying demonstrations to better connect the land and the heritage of the area. Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area is finalizing a trails plan for the park intended to enhance existing trails within the park as well as expand the numbers and types of trail opportunities available to visitors.

Additionally, NPS provides technical assistance and planning support to local communities through the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA). The RTCA can assist communities with planning and design of walkways, riverways and other amenities that can allow greater citizen access to the outdoors while enhancing the quality of life for community residents and visitors. NPS also manages the stateside grants program for the Land and Water Conservation Fund which is a key funding component for recreation opportunities at the state and local level.

These and numerous other programs are examples of how NPS is attempting to serve the recreational interests of Montana residents and visitors while more effectively engaging youth and diverse audiences with Montana's great outdoors. These programs are key components to ensure the relevancy of the Park Service for future generations and underserved populations. They offer opportunities to advance the agencies educational mission while helping to preserve and protect these important national resources.

The National Park Service must reach out to younger users and diverse populations in new and unique ways if it is to retain relevancy for a changing national demographic profile. The agency faces many hurdles as it attempts to protect these traditional properties in the face of changes in traditions. Maintaining the spirit of these places while appealing to a diverging visitor base is the most complex and daunting challenge facing the parks.

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service.

The National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), managed by FWS, is the world's premier system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve America's fish, wildlife and plants. The System has grown to more than 150 million acres, 556 national wildlife refuges and other units of the Refuge System, plus 38 wetland management districts.

PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

There are 24 national wildlife refuges in Montana with over 1.2 million acres and six wetland management districts with over 209,000 acres, totaling over 1.4 million acres. The most well-known refuges in Montana are the Charles M. Russell NWR, Lee Metcalf NWR, and the National Bison Range. There are also two national fish hatcheries in Montana, which are popular both as an on-site fish viewing experience, and as a source for many species of fish stocked for angler recreational enjoyment.

The NWRS offers outstanding wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, including fishing, hunting, wildlife observation and photography, as well as environmental education and interpretation for present and future generations. A number of the refuges have self-guided auto tour routes that provide visitors with the chance to see the Refuge close-up and gain a better understanding of Refuge resources. Interpretive stops along the routes provide information on the wildlife, geology, and history of the Refuge. In 2011, Montana received from FWS \$8,625,634 for sport fish restoration, \$10,162,996 for wildlife restoration, and approximately \$850,000 for the State Wildlife Grants Program.

At the Charles M. Russell NWR, the largest refuge in Montana, approximately 250,000 people alone visit Refuge each year, making it one of the most visited national wildlife refuges in the United States. About 103,900 hunters come to the refuge annually, and of those, there are about 90,000 big game visits, 2,900 waterfowl and migratory bird visits, and 10,000 upland game visits reported annually. About 60,000 fishing visits are attributed to the refuge throughout the year as anglers participate in several fishing opportunities including bank fishing, fishing from boats, and also ice fishing on the surface of Fort Peck Reservoir and the Missouri River. The refuge receives approximately 20,300 photography visits a year. The auto tour route and elk-viewing area receives approximately 4,000 visitors during the elk rut.

A visitor satisfaction survey was conducted of the CMR, Lee Metcalf, and National Bison Range refuges in 2010 and 2011, among other refuges around the country.^{2,3}

CHARLES M. RUSSELL NWR: Charles M. Russell NWR is located around Fort Peck Reservoir, and is remote and primitive in nature. According to the survey, few visitors to the CMR Refuge (8%) lived in the local area (within 50 miles of the refuge), whereas 92% of visitors were nonlocal. For most local visitors, the Refuge was the primary purpose or sole destination of their trip (87%). For most nonlocal visitors, the refuge was also the primary purpose or sole destination of their trip (89%). Local visitors reported that they traveled an average of 32 miles to get to the refuge, while nonlocal visitors traveled an average of 369 miles. Approximately 80% of visitors travelling to Charles M. Russell NWR were from Montana. The top three activities reported were big game hunting (56%), freshwater fishing (56%), and wildlife observation (39%). The primary reasons for their most recent visit included hunting (48%), fishing (33%), and wildlife observation (10%).

LEE METCALF NWR: Lee Metcalf NWR is located in close proximity to Missoula, and is considered an urban refuge. Most visitors (85%) lived in the local area (within 50 miles of the refuge), whereas 15% were nonlocal visitors. For most local visitors, Lee Metcalf NWR was the primary purpose or sole destination of their trips (77%). For almost half of nonlocal visitors, the refuge was one of many equally important reasons or destinations for their trips (48%). Local visitors reported that they traveled an average of 15 miles to get to the refuge, while nonlocal visitors traveled an average of 694 miles. The average distance traveled for all visitors to this refuge was 68 miles, while the median was 12 miles. The top three activities in which people reported participating in were wildlife observation (71%), bird watching (69%), and hiking (69%). The primary reasons for visitors' most recent visits included hiking (27%), bird watching (23%), and wildlife observation (12%).

NATIONAL BISON RANGE: About 21% of visitors lived in the local area (within 50 miles of the refuge), whereas 79% were nonlocal visitors. For most local visitors, National Bison Range was the primary purpose or sole destination of their trips (83%). For almost half of nonlocal visitors, the refuge was one of many equally important reasons or destinations for their trips (46%). Local visitors reported that they traveled an average of 34 miles to get to the refuge, while nonlocal visitors traveled an average of 820 miles. The average distance traveled for all visitors to this refuge was 647 miles, while the median was 200 miles. About 29% of visitors traveling to National Bison Range were from Montana. The top three activities in which people reported participating were wildlife observation (88%), auto tour route/driving (80%), and photography (66%). The primary reasons for visitors' most recent visits included wildlife observation (66%), auto tour route/driving (19%), and photography (10%).

2 Sexton, N.R., Dietsch, A.M., Don Carlos, A.W., Miller, H.M., Koontz, L.M., and Solomon, A.N., 2012, National wildlife refuge visitor survey results—2010/2011: U.S. Geological Survey Data Series 685.

3 It is important to note that summary statistics based on a small sample size ($n < 30$) may not provide a reliable representation of the population.

BUDGET

In FY2010, Resource Management Budget for Service activities in Montana totaled \$21.6 million. It is difficult to determine the total expenditures FWS commits to recreation related activities, but in general the funding availability overall is diminishing, and is likely to continue to erode as the Nation struggles to shrink the budget deficit through sequestration.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The FWS is directed by federal statute to emphasize wildlife dependent forms of recreational opportunities, specifically hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, and environmental education. Shifting demographics (new generations, increasing urban populations, and ethnically diverse citizens and visitors) provide agency managers both opportunities and challenges to keep the National Wildlife Refuge System relevant in the 21st Century.

Increasingly, Refuge visitors are becoming more diverse in their expectations and desires, and creative new policies and programs are being developed by the FWS through the “Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation” planning initiative. This 21st-century strategic vision for the Refuge System acknowledges the broad social, political, and economic changes that have made habitat conservation more challenging since the agency last set comprehensive goals in 1999. For recreation, the vision calls for “A Connected Conservation Constituency” that focuses on people. Without the support of the American public, the FWS’ actions towards conservation will fall short. The FWS seeks to make wildlife conservation more relevant to American citizens and foster their engagement in and support of the National Wildlife Refuge System. As with the land protection efforts and management actions, FWS will be most effective in this area by both working with traditional partners and by embracing new ones. Recommendations for this vision include expanding community partnerships; encouraging volunteerism; embracing urban America; telling the conservation story in new ways with the help of technology; enhancing opportunities to connect people and nature; and embracing, elevating and holding interpretation and environmental education programs to the highest scientific standards.

The Charles M. Russell NWR Complex used to have a full time permanent Outdoor Recreation Planner on staff, but that position has been vacant for some time, and available funding to refill it are uncertain. Professional outdoor recreation specialists on the ground are important for Refuges to be successful in engaging new, diverse, visitors and cultivate strong citizen advocates to form “Friends of the Refuge” groups.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public. Reclamation owns, operates, and maintains dams and reservoirs throughout the State of Montana. Reclamation's Montana Area Office is responsible for operating and maintaining Reclamation's reservoirs in the State of Montana east of the Continental Divide. At most of the reservoirs in Montana, recreation is not an authorized project purpose, but rather an incidental benefit since water based recreation is a popular activity. The Montana Area Office has limited recreation authority, which is challenging when managing recreation. Reclamation participates in the FICOR Working Group.

PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

Reclamation provides recreation opportunities at several reservoirs throughout the State. Some of these locations include, but are not limited to Canyon Ferry Reservoir, Clark Canyon Reservoir, Hungry Horse Reservoir (managed by Reclamation's Pacific Northwest Region, Boise, ID), Tiber Reservoir, Fresno Reservoir and Nelson Reservoir. There are recreation opportunities provided at other smaller Reclamation reservoirs and numerous diversion dams not listed. Land based recreation opportunities are also available through Wildlife Management Areas typically managed by Fish, Wildlife and Parks under a Management Agreement. At Canyon Ferry Reservoir, there are a total of 133 day-use sites at the 12 designated day-use areas.

VISITATION

An accurate assessment of visitation number is difficult to ascertain. The Montana Area Office collects traffic counts, but these counts are not available at all of our facilities. Further, traffic counter data doesn't always have a direct reflection on recreation visitation. Visitation numbers and trends over the last 5 years at Reclamation facilities can be described in one word, steady. Reclamation has experienced steady recreation visitation numbers and steady recreation trends upward. Some reservoirs experience higher visitor use than others. The most common recreation use at Reclamation facilities includes camping, boating, and fishing. There are many other recreation activities that occur, but camping, boating, and fishing are the top three activities. The highest visitation use of a Reclamation facility in Montana (east of the Continental Divide) is Canyon Ferry Reservoir, which is estimated to receive about 259,000 visitors annually.

BUDGET

Reclamation's budget in regards to recreation changes year to year and recreation facility to recreation facility. In FY 2013, the Montana Area Office was appropriated roughly \$2.5 million for recreation facilities on the five largest reservoirs we manage for recreation. Canyon Ferry Reservoir received the majority of these appropriations. There are several other recreation areas associated smaller reservoirs and diversion dams that that receive no appropriated funding. These areas are where partners are needed to effectively manage the site.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The biggest challenge the Montana Area Office faces in the State of Montana east of the Continental Divide is limited recreation authority. This limited recreation authority authorizes Reclamation's Montana Area Office to provide minimum and basic facilities at many of the reservoirs under our jurisdiction; unless we have a managing partner. A managing partner allows the Montana Area Office to cost share projects and make recreation improvements that otherwise would be prohibited. The Montana Area Office has few recreation managing partners. Greater recreation opportunities exist by developing partnerships and working with managing partners.

US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Fort Peck Dam and Lake is one of 442 projects nation-wide managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) providing both land and water based recreation opportunities. Federal statute establishes Authorized Purposes for each USACE Project. For example, Fort Peck Project has the following eight authorized purposes: Flood Control, Hydro-power, Irrigation, Navigation, Fish and Wildlife, Water Supply, Water Quality, and Recreation. Through these authorized purposes, Congress appropriates money to fund development, management, and maintenance of facilities for the benefit of the nation, individual states, and the public.

Federal Statutes, Department of the Army Regulations, and the Fort Peck Operations Management Plan (OMP) provide guidance for specific recreation development at Fort Peck. Completed in August 2008, this OMP identifies visitor use trends for the Project as well as individual recreation sites. In addition, the OMP identifies existing facilities, site specific objectives, and future development needs.

In support of the FICOR Charter, USACE and Fort Peck Project have and will continue to work with available partners to provide multipurpose recreation facilities and visitor services. Currently, Fort Peck has eight lease agreements for management of recreation lands and facilities promoting public use and visitor services. These partnerships are with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and independent business owners (four) providing concession marina services. Other partnership programs include USACE campground reservations through the multi-agency, nationwide Recreation.gov website, membership of the Montana Dinosaur Trail, teaching water safety through cooperation with regional schools and the Fort Peck Tribe, and coordinated promotion of events and educational activities with Missouri River Country and Travel Montana.

PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

Fort Peck consists of over 590,000 acres, including the 240,000 acre Fort Peck Lake and 300 plus acres of dredge cut ponds adjacent and connected to the Missouri River. Combined with the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) who jointly manages a large portion of USACE lands at Fort Peck, almost 1.1 million acres of land and water are available for recreation opportunities in NE Montana.

Fort Peck Project includes fourteen recreation areas on the lake and an additional eight areas downstream of the dam on the Missouri River or Dredge Cuts. USACE manages 18 of these areas and their associated facilities which vary in development from Class A campgrounds to primitive camping areas with boat access. USACE also is the lead agency in the day to day operation and maintenance of the cooperatively managed Fort Peck Interpretive Center.

VISITATION

Nationally, USACE is the largest provider of recreation in terms of visitors at over 370 million. Between Fiscal Years 2008 and 2012, Fort Peck Project visitation averaged over 470,000 visitors, while 2009 was the lowest year at 430,393 visitors and 2011 the highest at 509,339. Higher visitation for 2011 resulted from runoff conditions dictating the operation of the Fort Peck Spillway. This event brought visitors from all over the region to view the spillway in operation.

Visitors to Fort Peck camp, picnic, fish, hunt, boat, sightsee, watch wildlife, and participate in water sports. The majority of visitation (81%) occurs in the vicinity of Fort Peck Dam and the three outlying cabin areas, where most developed facilities are located. The remaining 19% are fishermen and hunters accessing remote, primitive developed areas and recognize Fort Peck as a destination. The limited development and activities these visitors pursue, requires these users be well prepared and self-sufficient.

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BUDGET

Through FY11 USACE recreation budgets had been stable and typically keeping up with inflation. In FY12, Fort Peck's recreation program was reduced 8% with FY13 initially projected to be level with FY12. However, sequestration has resulted in a still uncertain budget outcome for FY13 for all USACE funding programs and future FY funding remains even more unpredictable. The budget reductions in 2012 and carry-over into FY13 has reduced some contracted services, increased response times to both minor and major repair maintenance, and reduced the number of seasonal employees hired, resulting in less visitor services and contact with the public.

Natural Resource/Recreation staff includes four permanent FTE Park Rangers, four temporary Park Rangers (1 FTE), three permanent maintenance staff with 1.5 FTE's funded under the recreation program, two temporary laborers (0.6 FTE), and one permanent FTE manager.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Budget uncertainties will remain and likely become an even greater agency challenge. Reduced or flat budgets will limit USACE's abilities to maintain aging infrastructure and prevent upgrades to or replacement of outdated facilities. Competition within agency missions for reduced funding will pressure USACE to further limit future recreation programs.

However, there remain opportunities to leverage appropriated dollars and USACE resources with partners that will benefit public access and enhance visitor experiences. Finding time to identify and cultivate those opportunities will also be a significant challenge.

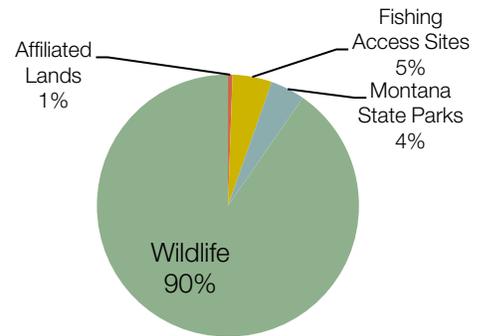
STATE AGENCIES

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is the main agency that manages parks and recreation at the state level. Montana State Parks is a division of FWP, and manages the state parks system as well as a number of recreation grant programs, including trails, OHV, and snowmobiles. Montana State Parks also manages the LWCF grant program for the state. In addition to FWP, the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is a partner in recreation and physical activity programs, as well as the Montana Office of Tourism for the tourism community and economic impacts of recreation. The following section discusses the role of these state agencies in managing or supporting recreation in Montana.

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

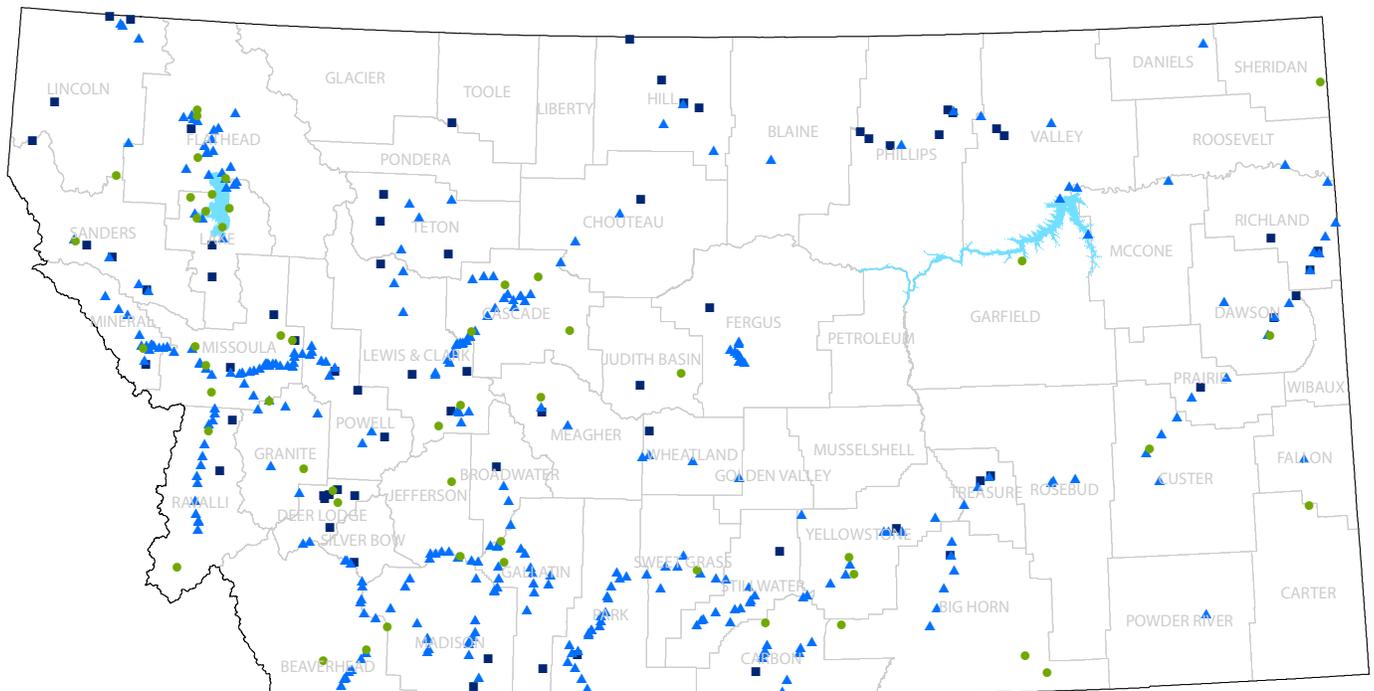
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is the primary recreation management agency at the state level for Montana. There are three divisions: Parks Division, Wildlife Division, and Fisheries Division. The Parks Division includes Montana State Parks, which is discussed in more detail in the section below. The Wildlife and Fisheries Divisions oversee hunting and fishing in the state of Montana, among other authorities to manage fish and wildlife. FWP manages just over 975,000 acres of fee title land and conservation easements in Montana, with the Wildlife Division managing 90% of it.

FIG 12. MONTANA FWP LANDS



Source: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 2013.

MAP 6. MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS



- MONTANA STATE PARKS (54 STATE PARKS)
- ▲ FISHING ACCESS SITES (333 SITES)
- WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS (70 WILDLIFE AREAS)

WILDLIFE DIVISION

FWP manages 84 wildlife management areas (WMA). WMAs are managed with wildlife and wildlife habitat conservation as the foremost concern, with close over 365,000 acres across Montana. They provide vital habitat for game and nongame wildlife, as well as important opportunities for hunting and wildlife viewing on public lands. In 2010, there was over 235,000 license sales for hunting. Much like national trends, hunting has decreased 15% since 2000, where sales were as high as 280,000 licenses. In 2011, hunter expenditures were over \$271 million. FWP also manages the Block Management Program, a cooperative program between private landowners and FWP. Block Management helps private landowners manage hunting activities on their lands, and provides the public with free hunting access to private land, and sometimes to adjacent or isolated public lands. For the 2012 hunting season, approximately 1,270 landowners enrolled about 8 million acres of land in the Block Management Program.

FISHERIES DIVISION

FWP manages over 300 fishing access sites (FAS) that provides access to Montana's scenic and plentiful rivers and streams for angling, boating, rafting, and other recreation opportunities. Anglers enjoy good access to blue ribbon streams and rivers, lakes and reservoirs in nearly every county across Montana. In 2010, there were over 393,000 license sales for fishing. While hunting has steadily declined since 2000, fishing has fluctuated up and down over the years, and has increased 4% since 2000. In 2011, anglers expenditures were close to \$312 million.

FWP PLANNING

The Fisheries and Wildlife Divisions maintain their own statewide management plans for fish and wildlife resources. As such, this SCORP will not go into detail on these resources. More information can be found in the 2013-2018 Statewide Fisheries Management Plan, as well as each individual species management plan.

NATURAL

- BEAVERTAIL HILL
- FISH CREEK
- GIANT SPRINGS
- PRAIRIE DOG TOWN
- LEWIS & CLARK CAVERNS
- LONE PINE
- LOST CREEK
- MAKOSHIKA
- MEDICINE ROCKS
- SLUICE BOXES
- WILD HORSE ISLAND

WATER-BASED

- ACKLEY LAKE
- BIG ARM
- BLACK SANDY
- BRUSH LAKE
- COONEY
- FINLEY POINT
- FRENCHTOWN POND
- HELL CREEK
- LAKE ELMO
- LAKE MARY RONAN
- LES MASON
- LOGAN
- PAINTED ROCKS
- SALMON LAKE
- SMITH RIVER
- SPRING MEADOW LAKE
- THOMPSON FALLS
- TONGUE RIVER RESERVOIR
- WAYFARERS
- WEST SHORE
- WHITEFISH LAKE
- YELLOW BAY

CULTURAL

- BANNACK
- BEAVERHEAD ROCK
- CHIEF PLENTY COUPS
- CLARK'S LOOKOUT
- COUNCIL GROVE
- ELKHORN
- FIRST PEOPLES
BUFFALO JUMP
- FORT OWEN
- GRANITE GHOST TOWN
- MADISON BUFFALO JUMP
- MISSOURI HEADWATERS
- PIROGUE ISLAND
- ROSEBUD BATTLEFIELD
- TOWER ROCK
- TRAVELERS' REST

In the Montana Code Annotated (MCA 23-1-101), the purpose of the State Parks system is to conserve the scenic, historic, archaeological, scientific, and recreational resources of the state and provide for their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of the people and their health.

The Parks Division goals and objectives for FY2014/15 include the following four principles:

SERVICE:

The Parks Division will provide high quality services to State Park visitors and recreationists, provide the strong and efficient program leadership to local Montana communities and agencies via education and grants programs, and provide camping, interpretive and other recreational opportunities across Montana.

STEWARDSHIP:

The Parks Division will promote stewardship of natural, cultural, paleontological and recreational resources for current and future generations.

SUSTAINABILITY:

The Parks Division will strive to enhance the long-term sustainability of the State Park System and maintain recreation opportunities in a manner that promotes long term resource conservation fiscally and operationally.

SAFETY:

The Parks Division will provide for public safety and reduced exposure to liability by improving management practices, critical incident responses, hazard reductions and improving visitor experiences.

PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

Montana State Parks manages 54 state parks totaling 46,906 acres. In addition to the state parks, Parks also manages seven National Historic Landmarks and numerous sites on the National Register of Historic Places. State parks offer a variety of recreation opportunities, including camping, hiking, boating, mountain biking, picnicking, and interpretation and education. While management differs depending on the unique characteristics of the park, there are generally three types of parks in the system: natural parks, water-based parks, and cultural parks.

Montana State Parks has over 50 miles of trails throughout the state parks. Many of the trails are developed, however quite a few are primitive and in need of better wayfinding and trail improvements. In addition to trails, Montana State Parks has a number of facilities and visitor amenities to support the visitor experience, including boat launches, picnic areas and shelters, group use areas, swimming areas, interpretive areas, and trailheads. Of the 54 state parks in the system, Montana State Parks has 25 parks with campgrounds. Currently, there are 20 campgrounds that accept reservations through the State Parks Campground Reservation System. There are approximately 900 campsites in the entire system. In addition to campgrounds, Smith River State Park has 31 boat camps along the 59 miles of the river. Montana State Parks also has three yurts, three cabins, and five tipis for overnight rental opportunities.

In addition to Montana State Parks, the Parks Division manages five recreation programs:

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM,

a federal grants program focusing on trail development, renovation, maintenance, acquisition, safety and interpretation for non-motorized and motorized trail users on local, state and federal lands. Approved RTP grants totaling approximately \$1.4 million to 53 sponsors in 2012.

MONTANA SNOWMOBILE PROGRAM,

a state grants program for grooming of snowmobile trails; maintenance of sheds, bridges, and signs; plowing of trailhead parking lots; and snowmobile safety and ethics education. Granted \$387,183 in winter grooming grants to 27 snowmobile clubs statewide in 2012.

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE (OHV) PROGRAM,

a state grants program for OHV trails for maintenance of existing trails; signing of trails; noxious weed control adjacent to trails; route mapping; and OHV safety and ethics education. Issued \$196,000 in grants for OHV projects to 12 groups statewide in 2012.

MOTORBOAT FACILITY PROGRAM,

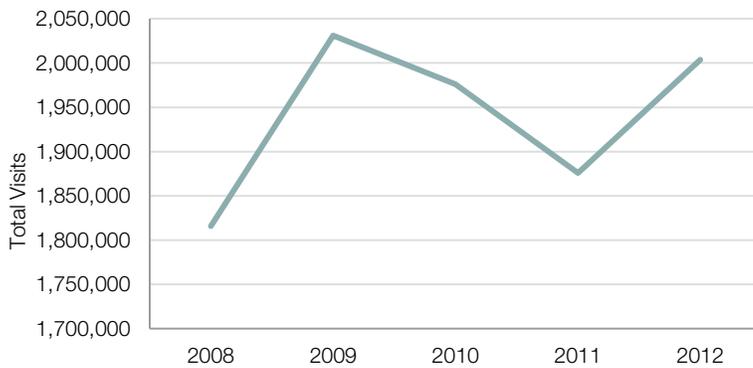
a state program to fund grants for motorboat use statewide in an effort to increase local public access to motorboating facilities.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF),

a federal grants program for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and outdoor facilities for all types of recreationists on state and local lands. Issued six Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants totaling \$249,318 to local communities in 2012.

A number of advisory committees exist to advise the Division on issues in Montana relating to the funding, development, maintenance, and management, including: State Trails Advisory Committee; Boating Advisory Committee; Snowmobile Advisory Committee; and OHV Advisory Committee. These committees are limited in scope but could be more valuable.

FIG 13. MONTANA STATE PARKS VISITATION, 2008–2012



VISITATION

Montana State Parks gets between 1.5 million and 2.0 million visitors a year. In 2012, Parks received 2,003,875 visitors, the second time in Division history that there were over 2.0 million visitors. This was up 7% from 2011 levels. During the peak season, from May to September, a record 1.29 million visitors frequented the parks, again up 7% from 2011 levels. Visitation was up 10% from 2008 levels for the year, and up 16% for the peak season. Visitation levels peaked in 2009 at 2,031,121 visitors, and decreased slightly to 1.875 million in 2011. For the 10 year period from 2003-2012, visitation increased 25% from 1.6 million to over 2.0 million visitors. The top three

most visited state parks are Giant Springs State Park, Cooney State Park, and Lake Elmo State Park, each one with close to or over 150,000 visitors annually. Giant Springs receives almost 300,000 visitors each year alone. From 2002 to 2010, resident visitation increased by 78%.

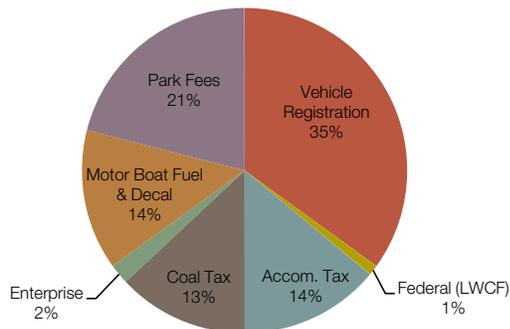
The campground reservation program was implemented beginning in 2011. In fiscal year 2013, there were close to 13,500 total reservations, up 15% from fiscal year 2012. This amounted to close to 52,500 number of camper nights, up from 51,000 camper nights. For the specialty overnight opportunities (yurts, cabins, tipis), there were 863 nights occupied in 2012, and 873 nights occupied in 2013. The tipis had the largest increase at 9% more nights occupied in 2013. The campground reservation program is expected to continue to grow as more people learn about Montana State Parks and the camping opportunities offered.

BUDGET

Montana State Parks receives no general funds, and no funds from the sporting and fishing licenses sold. The parks system is complete self-funded through a number of fees and taxes. The largest source of funding is the vehicle registration fee, which supports 35% of the Parks budget, followed by park fees (21%). The vehicle registration fee generated \$3.1 million in 2012, and is expected to continue to grow to \$3.6 million by 2014. The Accommodation Tax, also known as the Bed Tax, comprises 14% of the budget, as well as the motor boat fuel and decal tax. Other sources of funding include the coal tax, Enterprise account, and federal funds through the LWCF program.

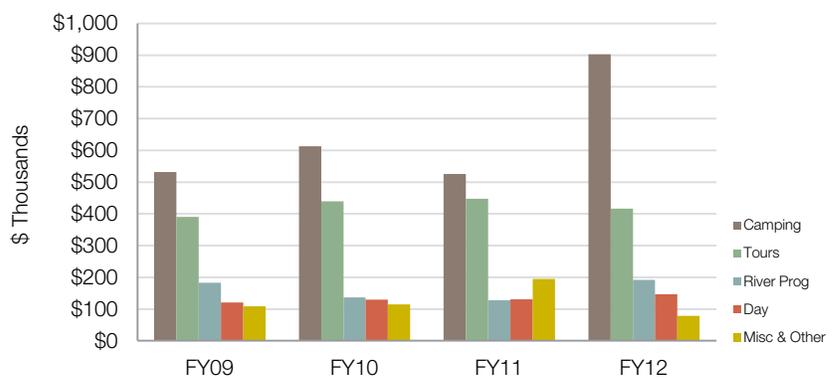
Park fees have continued to generate revenue, and camping revenues in particular have increased 40% since 2006. In 2012, camping generated over \$900,000 in park revenue, up 69% from 2009. Other large sources of revenue include tours, commercial guide permit programs, and day use fees. In general, funding is stable and trending upward with continued Legislature support.

FIG 14. MONTANA STATE PARKS FUNDING, FY2012



Source: Montana State Parks, 2013.

FIG 15. MONTANA STATE PARKS FEE REVENUES, FY 2009–2012



Source: Montana State Parks, 2013.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Looking forward, there are a number of Division priorities to promote and coordinate recreation in the State Parks system, as well as throughout Montana, including:

- Improve public and community understanding, appreciation and support of park and recreation values, resources, and opportunities
- Continue to provide a positive impact to Montana's economy and tourism-based industries
- Develop an organizational structure to meet the dynamic challenges and opportunities associated with recreation management
- Promote and coordinate effective recreation management throughout Montana

The newly established Montana State Parks & Recreation Board creates a big opportunity to address a number of outstanding issues, as well as further promote parks and recreation in Montana. The Board will set policies, direction, and rulemaking for state parks, heritage and recreational resources in Montana as provided under the authority of the Department. The Board will also address issues of statewide importance, and coordinate with local, state, and federal agencies to integrate and promote recreational opportunities across the state.

The Board is expected to deal with a diversity of issues, and will be providing guidance and policy-making that enhances and furthers recreation for both residents and visitors. Once established, the Department will embark on a strategic planning process with the Board to assess and evaluate the health of the state parks system, and provide an updated vision that works towards a more sustainable and stronger recreation landscape.

Likewise, a number of challenges continue to exist for the Parks Division. The parks system as a whole is falling short of its potential to educate, inspire, and inform park users of Montana's recreational and cultural opportunities and heritage, while contributing to Montana's economy. Major challenges facing Montana State Parks include:

- Deep backlog of infrastructure needs and improvements to sustain the park system and serve tourism economy.
- Limited ability to raise additional revenues but working on various solutions.
- Staffing for state parks is limited in comparison to other states and programs.
- Funding revenues via fuel tax proceeds which support the OHV and Snowmobile Programs have declined in recent years. A conservative approach to maintain the stable year-to-year grants is in-place.
- The RTP and LWCF are federally funded programs. In recent years the funding amounts have been unpredictable for both the amounts and timing of funding availability.
- The funding available for replacement and repairs of the snowmobile groomer fleet are a concern. Funding levels are stable, but costs increase annually and the fleet grows older.
- Support and enhance recreation on federal lands in a sustainable manner.

MONTANA STATE PARKS & RECREATION BOARD

In 2013, the Montana State Parks & Recreation Board was established during the Legislative Session to provide more oversight and direct authority for State Parks, the Parks Division, and to advocate for parks and recreation issues across the state. The Board's duties include:

POLICIES & DIRECTIONS

- Management, protection, conservation, and preservation of these properties, lands, and waters and their appropriate role relative to tourism and the economic health of Montana
- Coordinate, integrate, promote, and further opportunities for education and recreation, including but not limited to camping, hiking, snowmobiling, off-highway vehicle use, horseback riding, mountain biking, boating, and swimming

RULEMAKING

- Establish rules for use of these properties and lands in the interest of public health, public safety, public welfare, and protection of property and public resources in regulating recreation

COORDINATION & ENGAGEMENT

- Work with local, state, and federal agencies to evaluate, integrate, coordinate, and promote recreational opportunities statewide
- Encourage citizen involvement in management planning for state parks and other properties, lands, and waters
- Work with the Fish & Wildlife Commission to maintain hunting and angling opportunities on these lands and waters

REVIEW & APPROVAL AUTHORITY

- All acquisitions and transfers of properties, lands, and waters by the Parks Division
- Parks Division budget prior to transmittal to the office of budget and program planning
- Construction projects with estimated cost of more than \$5000

The Montana State Parks & Recreation Board is a citizen-led board appointed by the governor that consists of five members from geographical districts. The appointments are made solely for the wise management of state parks and outdoor recreational resources, and each board member must be informed or experienced in the conservation and protection of state parks, heritage resources, natural resources, tourism promotion and development, or outdoor recreation. The Board reflects a diversity of perspectives, expertise, backgrounds, and ages in order to best represent the diverse needs and desires of recreationists in Montana. The work of the Board is expected to address opportunities and challenges related to Montana State Parks, as well as look at recreation, tourism and heritage issues statewide.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The mission of the DPHHS Public Health and Safety Division Nutrition and Physical Activity program (NAPA) is to make active living and healthy eating easier and more accessible where Montanans live, work, learn and play.

Montana NAPA is one of 25 similar state health departments funded by the Centers for Disease Control and exists to take population-based approaches (as differentiated from working person by person). The program focuses on environments where government can support communities through their local hospitals, schools, and local governments. Their focus is mostly citizen-led efforts to create better daily opportunities for physical activity and healthful eating.

NAPA's agreement with the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) maintains the program will:

- Work for effective policy and environmental changes,
- Develop and maintain strategic partnerships to leverage this important work, and
- Develop capacity to monitor and share relevant obesity-related, nutrition and physical activity data in Montana.

The program works to prevent chronic disease such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease through policy and environmental changes that promote healthful eating and physical activity. Current points of focus include developing local policies that encourage more active living and transportation choices, as well as healthy worksite policies.

SUPPORTING RECREATION IN MONTANA

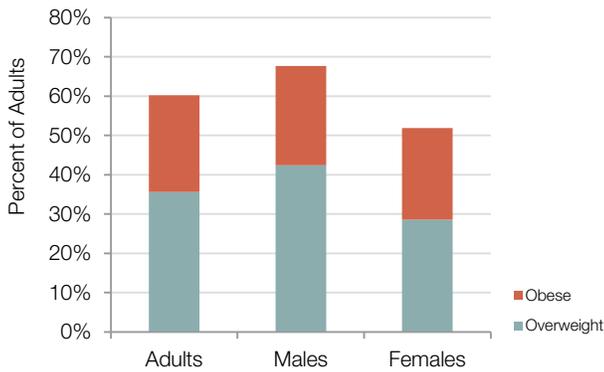
NAPA's involvement with recreation is primarily through its *"Building Active Communities"* Initiative aimed at helping localities adopt local standards and policies that promote activity in all settings from home, neighborhoods, schools, worksite and recreation sites and facilities such as parks and connective trails. NAPA's focus is on promoting routine, daily physical activity as part of everyday activities and walking, biking or rolling to and from various destinations on a daily basis.

Parks provide one very important setting and location for Montanans to be physically active. Parks are considered part of the built environment, which is "those settings designed, created, and maintained by human efforts—buildings, neighborhoods, public plazas, playgrounds, roadways, and more." According to NAPA, parks are often part of the built environment because they have been sited, designed, and constructed by people. The built environment depends on supporting infrastructure systems for such necessities as energy, water, and transportation, so these systems are also considered part of the built environment.

There is growing recognition that the built environment – the physical structures and infrastructure of communities – has an impact on the health of Montanans. Chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity and asthma are leading health concerns influenced by environmental conditions. Policy decisions about transportation, zoning, land use and community design influence many aspects of daily living: the distances people travel to work, school, parks, shops, and other destinations; the choice of transportation options (walking, biking, taking transit, driving); the convenience of purchasing healthy foods, establishing community gardens and farmer's markets; and the safety, convenience and attractiveness of neighborhoods for active living.

HEALTH DATA AND RELEVANCE TO RECREATION

FIG 16. MONTANA OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE ADULTS



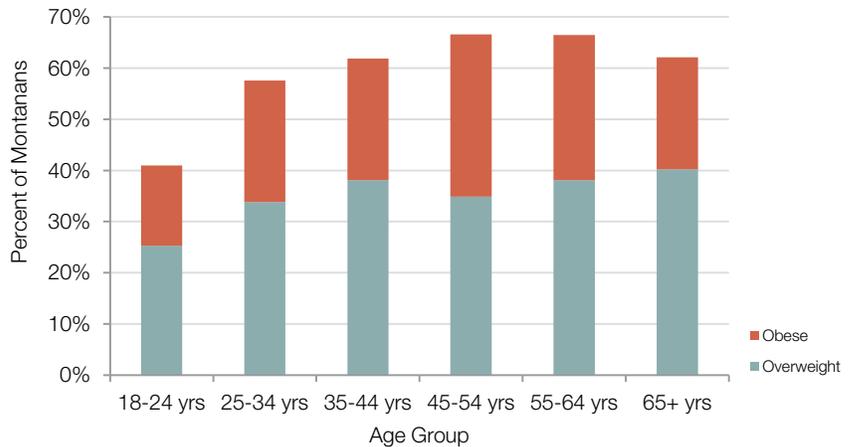
Source: DPHHS Napa, 2013.

Montana adults are reaching a critical point where the percentage of overweight, obesity, and physical inactivity is increasing. In Montana, 35.6% of adults are overweight, 24.6% are obese, and nearly two-thirds (60.3%) are overweight or obese. Males tend to be more overweight/obese than females, with nearly 70% of Montana adult males overweight or obese, while 51.9% of females are overweight or obese. Related, almost a quarter of Montana adults (24.4%) have reported no physical activity or exercise in the past month. This is similar when broken out by males and females.

When breaking the statistics out by age, adults age 65+ years have the highest percentage of overweight adults at 40.2%, followed by age 35-44 years at 38.1% (Figure 17). Ages 18-24 years has the lowest percentage of overweight adults, as well as obese

adults. Ages 45-54 years has the highest percentage of obese adults at 31.7%, followed by ages 55-64 years at 28.4%. Overall, the age group 45-54 years has the highest percentage of adults that are overweight or obese in Montana. For physical activity, as Montana adults get older, their physical inactivity increases, from 16.3% for ages 18-24 years to almost 33% for ages 65+ years. This trend is typical of the aging population nationally as well.

FIG 17. MONTANANS OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE BY AGE



Source: DPHHS Napa, 2013.

In regards to supporting physical activity and overcoming the obesity epidemic, NAPA faces two gaps in meeting the needs of its programs:

1. The level of staffing for the Building Active Communities initiative is small in relation to what seems to be high citizen interest (one measure of this citizen interest is the sheer number of media stories about obesity prevention, physical inactivity, and related issues of the poor nutrition environments that make up a dual epidemic of physical inactivity and poor nutrition). Outdoor recreation resources, facilities and programs are among the key settings we pay attention to in this area of public health – particularly in community settings as those settings relate to designs of streets and sidewalks and facilities conducive to biking and walking. An estimated 2 FTE are devoted to the Building Active Communities initiative at this time including portions of staff members such as the epidemiologist, the program manager, and senior consultant and other county health department contracted staff).
2. The low level and type of funding for these NAPA programs (fully reliant on federal funds, no state general fund, and relatively low investment at just over \$1 million per year currently) is a gap in the DPHHS 'supply of programs'.

NAPA does not currently collect or track any visitation data in regards to physical activity. The following data are from a policy survey that was conducted in 2010 through the Montana State University NAPA program. It was conducted in all Montana communities with a population of over 1,000. These data could be used to make community design enhancements which could impact visitation trends.

- 38% of all Montana communities (with populations of 1,000+) have a “gold standard” sidewalk policy for all new development projects (i.e., sidewalks at least five feet wide required on both sides of the street with a boulevard strip between the sidewalk and the street). However, when communities are broken down by size, the percentage ranges from 20% to 83%.
 - 83% of large communities (20,000+ residents) have a sidewalk policy.
 - 56% of medium communities (5,000-19,999 residents) have a sidewalk policy.
 - 20% of small communities (1,000-4,999 residents) have a sidewalk policy.
- Number one barrier of completing a bicycle and pedestrian network was “lack of support to incur additional costs”
- 41% of communities (with populations of 1,000+) had zoning regulations that allowed mixed-use development

BUDGET

The NAPA budget devoted to the Building Active Communities initiative currently totals approximately \$209,000 per year. This includes the following annual amounts as of June 2013. Only the CDC Community Transformation Grant (CTG) funding is included since the CDC Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (CDC DNPAO) is ending a non-renewable five-year grant cycle on June 30, 2013. The CTG is expected to continue until September 30, 2016. No state funds currently support the NAPA program.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

DPHHS is focused on making sure that public health interventions are evidence-based – that there is hard evidence that the investment in the intervention will ‘move the needle’ on the chosen metric. In this case the metrics relate to physical inactivity, and, over the long term, overweight and obesity trends statewide. One significant challenge is that the evidence base showing the connection between built environment changes and peoples’ physical activity levels is not yet considered very strong.

MONTANA OFFICE OF TOURISM (DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE)

The Montana Office of Tourism (Montana Office of Tourism and the Montana Film Office) is the statewide film and tourism promotion and development program of the Montana Department of Commerce. Its programs promote and help develop Montana as an attractive destination for visitors from around the world. The office works with statewide partners to support a tourism and recreation industry that provides positive benefits for Montana's economy, its communities, and its people. The Montana Film Office promotes the state as a location for feature films, commercials, television, documentaries, music videos, and still photography by providing information, scouting, and support services to the film and commercial production industry.

The Montana Office of Tourism's annual marketing plan outlines its program priorities. The Montana Office of Tourism is also a core stakeholder in the statewide Montana Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan 2013-2017. Both of these plans are available on the intranet site: www.travelmontana.mt.gov.

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PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

The Montana Office of Tourism doesn't manage or own any recreation facilities or services. It is an information provider about recreation opportunities statewide. It promotes these services through electronic marketing (websites, social media, e-magazines), print publications, publicity efforts, and visitor information services.

As a public agency financed by a dedicated funding source – the Montana Lodging Facility Use Tax or tourism “bed tax” – we are able to provide no cost promotion services in most instances, and very low cost when cooperative/partnership funds are required. We rely on tourism and recreation facility and service providers to share their information with us. Once in our database, we conduct annual surveys requesting updated information for the tourism or recreation listing.

The Montana Office of Tourism has worked with a number of federal and state land management agencies on regional and community tourism-related projects. These include:

- Crown of the Continent Geotourism Project (BLM, USFS, NPS, NPCA)
- Greater Yellowstone Geotourism Project (BLM, USFS, NPS)
- Montana Dinosaur Trail (MT State Parks, US Army Corps of Engineers, BLM)
- Gardiner Gateway Project (NPS, USFS, NPCA, WLFHD).

The Montana Office of Tourism has provided funding through its tourism grant programs for recreation facility improvements at a number of state parks, National Historic Landmarks and U.S Forest Service visitor facilities.

VISITATION

In 2012, Montana hosted a record 10.8 million non-resident visitors who spent \$3.27 billion during their travels here. This was a 2% increase in visitor numbers, but a 15.5% increase in visitor spending over 2011. Over the last five years (2008-2012) Montana's non-resident visitation and spending were negatively impacted by the global economic recession but has been steadily improving since 2010.

Of the top five sites visited by Montana's non-resident travelers in 2012, the top three are National Park sites (Yellowstone, Glacier and Little Bighorn Battlefield) and the fifth is Montana State Parks led by Flathead Lake State Parks. The top five visitor activities include scenic driving, wildlife watching, nature photography, day hiking and recreational shopping.

BUDGET

In FY 2013 (July 1, 2012-June 30-2013), Montana Office of Tourism's budget is \$14.6 million. These funds are generated by the 4% Montana Lodging Facility Use Tax assessed on room rates at lodging facilities around the state. This is a dedicated funding source established in Montana state law. Funding from the tax has been stable and/or increasing since its creation in 1988. The Montana Office of Tourism, with its 28 full time staff, is one of a number of state agency and regional/community tourism programs that receive lodging or accommodation tax funds (Table 4).

The Office of Tourism's \$14 million budget is allocated among its eleven programs like this:

- 44% Consumer Marketing
- 13.5% Industry Services and Administration
- 11% Montana Film Office
- 7% Tourism Development
- 6% E-Marketing
- 4% International Marketing
- 4% Publications
- 4% Publicity & Public Relations
- 4% Visitor Information Services
- 2% Montana Brand
- 0.5% Group Marketing

TBL 4. ACCOMMODATIONS TAX DISTRIBUTION, 2013.

DEPARTMENT	PERCENTAGE OF TAX	2013 FUNDS RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PROGRAMS	64.9% MONTANA PROMOTION DIVISION	\$14,631,056
STATE PARKS	6.5% (OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE)	\$1,465,360
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM	2.5% (TOURISM & RECREATION RESEARCH)	\$563,600
HISTORICAL SOCIETY	1% (HISTORICAL SITES & SIGNAGE)	\$225,440
REGIONS/CVBS MARKETING	22.5%	\$5,072,400
HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION	2.6%	\$586,144

Source: Montana Office of Tourism, 2013.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The strength of the Montana Tourism and Recreation Industry and the Montana Office of Tourism as one of the partners is having a generally unified vision and goals, and a willingness to join as partners in cooperative efforts. A stable, dedicated funding source has specifically benefitted the Montana Office of Tourism and its tourism promotion partners.

Staying current with national and global travel trends and the growing number of communication channels with which to inspire visitors to choose Montana as their travel destination is an ongoing challenge. Staying current, accurate and relevant with Montana's visitor attraction and services information is another. Also, finding effective, consistent ways to communicate and coordinate with state and federal agencies on tourism-related matters is a recurring challenge.

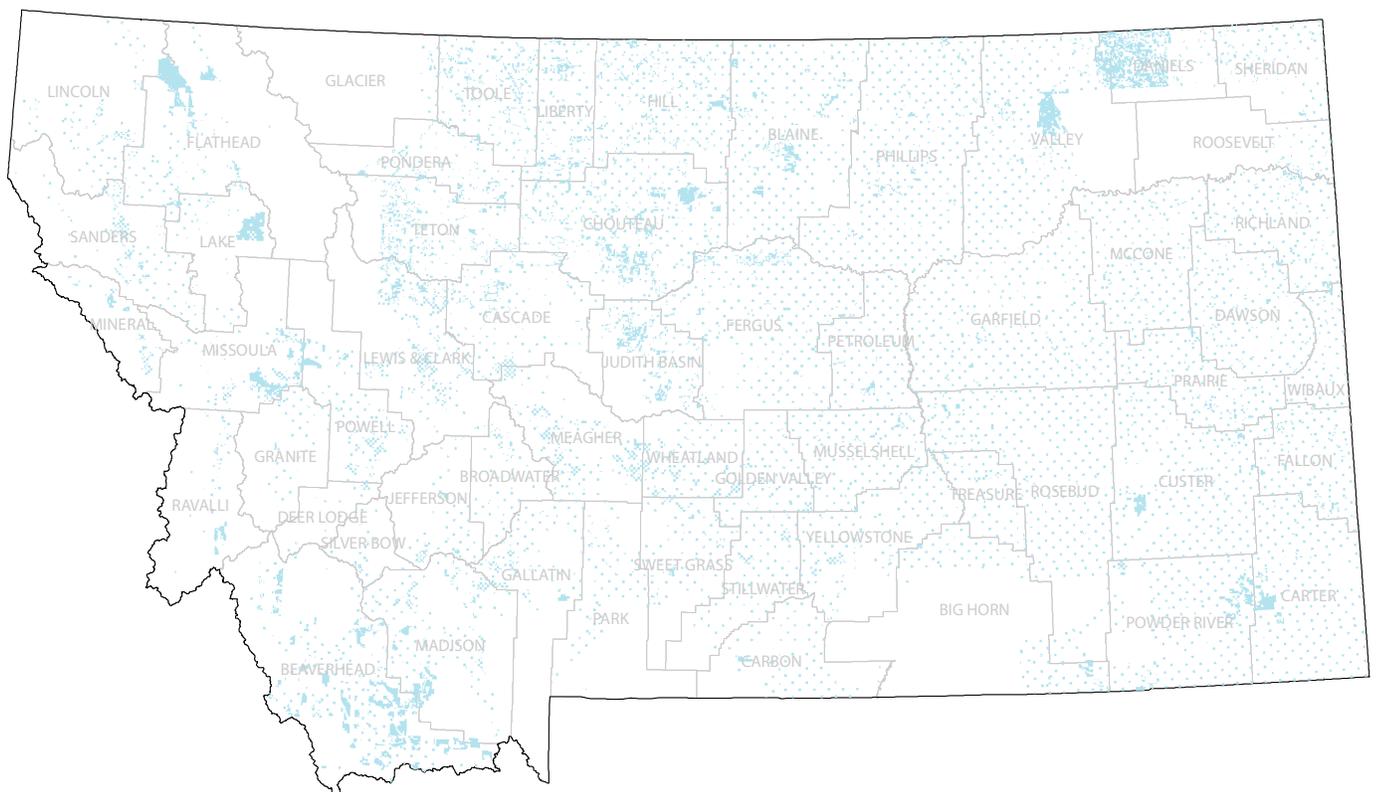
Opportunities for improving Montana's visitor experience and the benefits tourism provides our state, communities, businesses, organizations and agencies are many. Montana Office of Tourism is a ready partner in tourism-related projects agencies or organizations are interested in pursuing.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & CONSERVATION

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) manages more than 5.1 million acres in state school trust land. The purpose of the school trust land is to produce revenue to help support the State's public schools. Trust lands were granted to the state by the federal government at the time of statehood specifically to support the state's public schools, and originally included Sections 16 and 36 in each township. Since that time, many of these lands have been sold or exchanged.

DNRC's mission is to help to ensure that Montana's land and water resources provide benefits for present and future generations.

MAP 8. MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & CONSERVATION SCHOOL TRUST LANDS



PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

The Department's Trust Land Management Division manages approximately 5.1 million acres of trust lands statewide to support public schools, universities and institutions who are the beneficiaries of those lands. Legally accessible trust lands are open to hunting, fishing and general recreational use, and it's estimated that 60 to 65% of the lands are available for those uses.

The Water Resources Division manages state water projects, many of which offer developed recreational opportunities that are managed by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Those include Deadmans Basin, Cooney Reservoir, Tongue River Reservoir, Willow Creek, Ruby Reservoir, Painted Rocks, Ackley Lake, Nilan Reservoir and Martinsdale Reservoir.

VISITATION

Actual use and visitation numbers are not available for trust lands. While hunting is by far the predominate use, fishing, hiking and other dispersed recreation occur as well. The sale of general recreational use licenses has remained steady over the last several years.

Visitation information for state water project lands should be available from the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

BUDGET

The recreational use program on trust lands is managed with ¼ staff position and an operating budget of \$26,400, although other Division and Field Office staff is engaged and spend time in the program. Additionally, the Division funds 2 Game Wardens at the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to assist with enforcement of the laws and regulations on trust lands.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Giving the staffing and mission of the agency, we will continue to focus our efforts on improving access to our lands and educating the public about recreational opportunities they provide. The Department will also consider opportunities to partner with other agencies and organizations to promote and enhance recreation for the public.

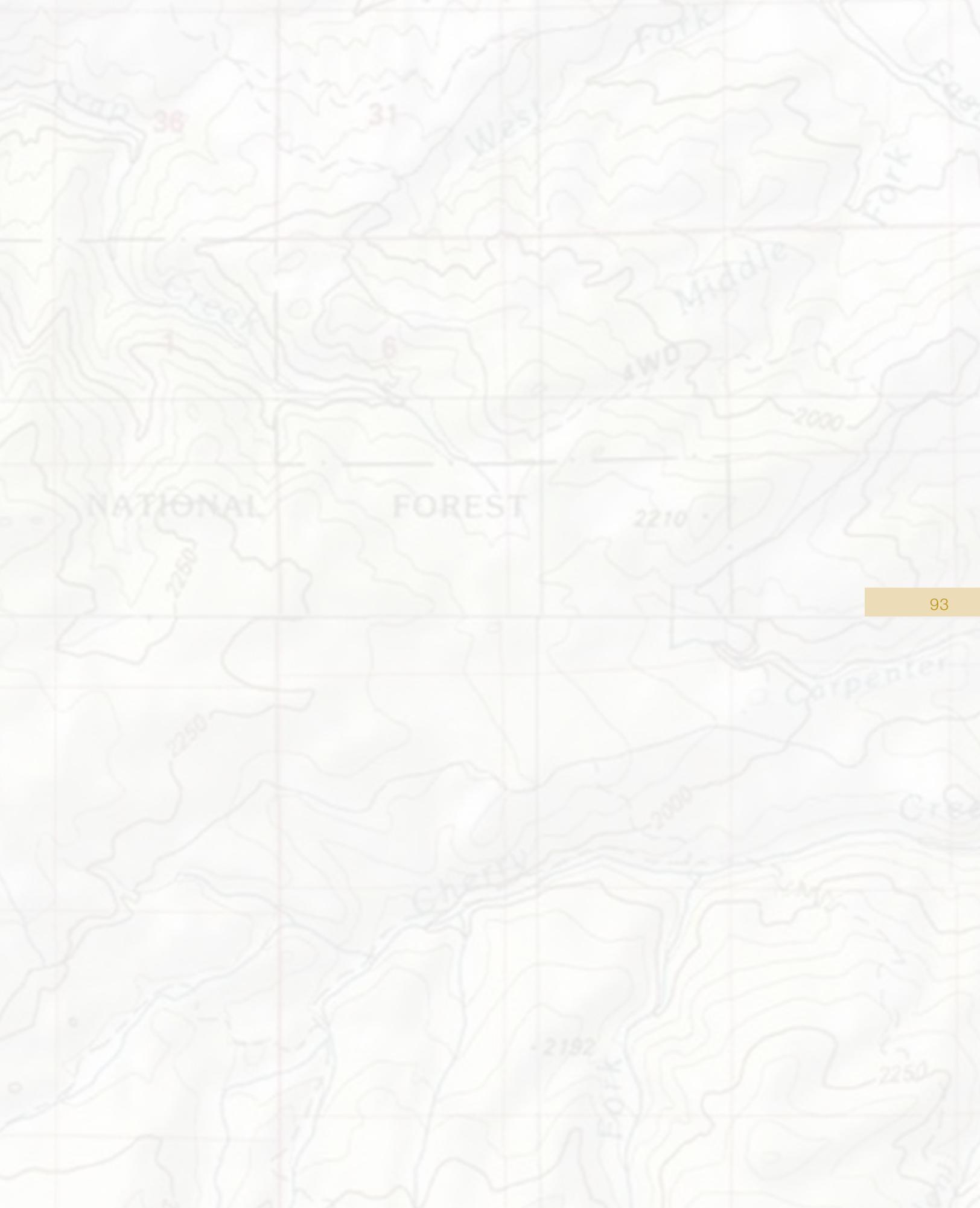
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The mission of Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment. MDT is primarily responsible for the following duties related to transportation, including planning and design, public transportation and rail programs and planning, and general transportation planning.

MDT specifically manages two programs that have impacts on parks and recreation, as well as the health and wellbeing of Montana residents: the Safe Routes to School Program and MAP 21.

The Safe Routes to School Program is a federally funded, competitively awarded, reimbursement program that encourages and enables children, including those with disabilities to walk and bicycle to school makes bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative. In 2012, the program funded 24 projects around the state to improve routes to school or develop walking/biking programs for a total of \$691,103.

MAP-21 establishes a new program to provide for a variety of alternative transportation projects, including many that were previously eligible activities under separately funded programs. The Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program replaces the funding from pre-MAP-21 programs including Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails (administered through Montana State Parks), Safe Routes to School, and several other discretionary programs, wrapping them into a single funding source. The law requires selection of projects through a competitive process, and provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities.



LOCAL AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

Cities and counties at the local level also manage parks and recreation. Cities are more prominent in recreation management than counties. Not many county parks exist in Montana, and as such, there is a large gap in services between the federal/state level and the city level. Counties are beginning to become more engaged in parks and recreation, and in the 2013 Montana Legislative session, House Bill 245 passed authorizing dedication of park land by counties. The legislation enabled the board of county commissioners the authority to dedicate county land to the public use as county park land.

Cities, on the other hand, do actively manage parks and recreation, however there a minority of cities or communities have a formal parks and recreation department. The major cities in Montana, those typically over 20,000 people, have formal parks and recreation departments. Some smaller cities like Whitefish also have formal departments depending on the level of city land available and the community interest in parks development. Still, even cities that have formal departments may only have a handful of staff dedicated to recreation management. Other communities may have a planning/public works department that manages park land, or may not even have park land other than the local school playground. This is similar with counties; few counties have a formal parks and recreation department while others have public works departments that manage park land, or simply do not actively have/manage park land.

This gap at the local level can put more emphasis on federal and state resources in order to provide the day-to-day recreation needs that otherwise would be met at the local level. Many communities use federal and state land as a community resource, and incorporate the land and trails into their own community network of recreation.

The following section discusses the role of local agencies in managing parks and recreation, as represented by the Montana Trails, Recreation & Parks Association as well as an example of county management provided by Missoula County.

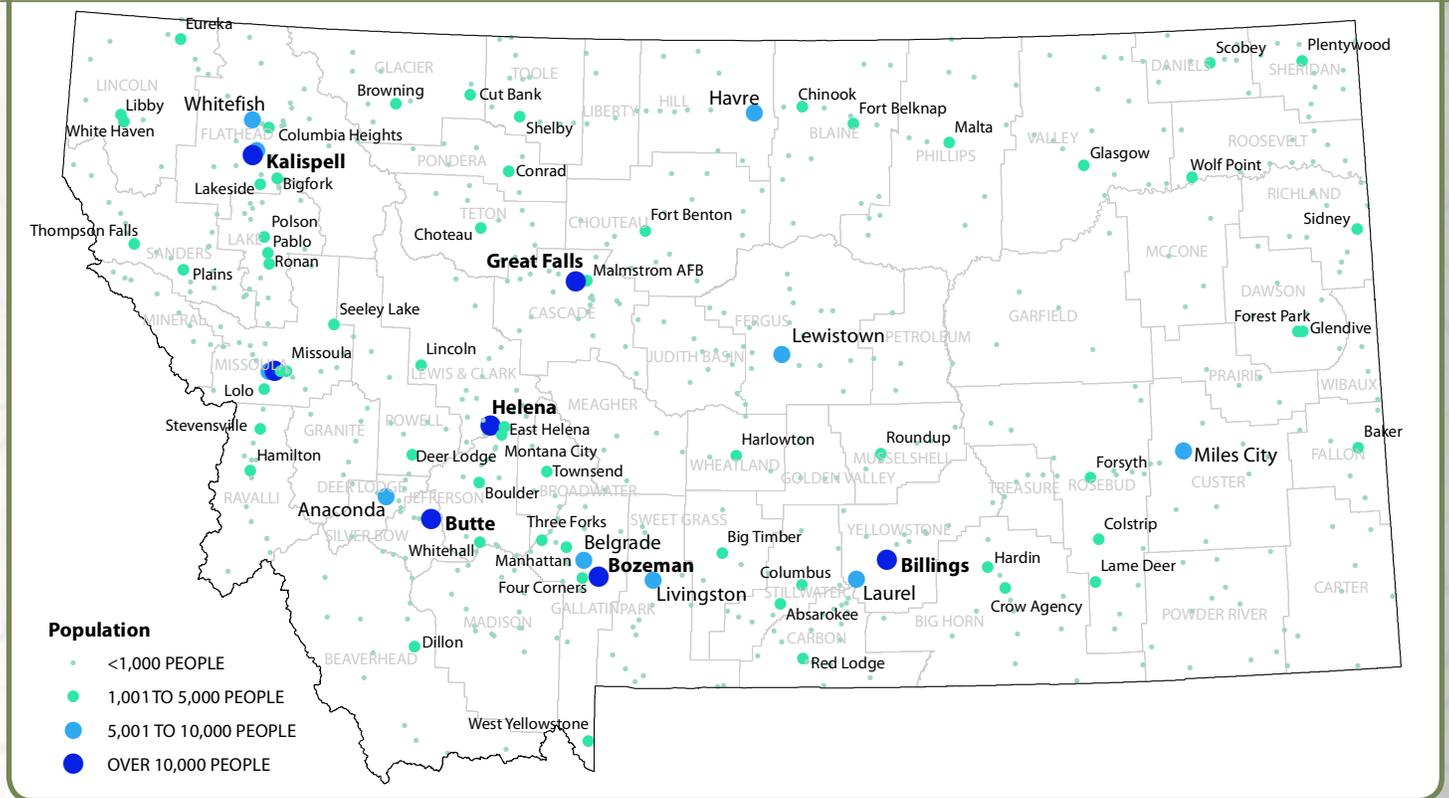
MONTANA TRAILS, RECREATION & PARKS ASSOCIATION

The mission of the Montana Trails, Recreation & Parks Association (MTRPA) is to improve the quality of life in Montana through parks, recreation, natural resources, and tourism. The goals of the agency are to strengthen MTRPA and enhance the professionalism of its' members through training, education, and networking, as well as enhance the public awareness of the benefits and value of leisure services, parks, and natural resources.

MTRPA is a network of professionals, educators, citizens, businesses and others who share a common vision for Montana. Planning documents range the gamut of the profession from comprehensive and growth plans to natural resource management, site plans, etc. Municipal planning involves significant public input and requires public involvement for implementation. Best practices, codes, and regulates are used in day to day management.

It is through local (municipal, county, district) parks and recreation that most citizens engage in their outdoor environment, maintain their wellness, and become future stewards (volunteers and advocates) of Parks and Recreation at all levels. Local parks and recreation agencies and departments manage and maintain the bulk of Montana's recreation infrastructure in the form of developed parks, playgrounds, trails, picnic areas, indoor and outdoor events centers and plazas, swimming pools, golf courses, and fitness centers. Additionally, local parks and recreation typically maintains the urban forests, the riparian areas, and open spaces where impacts and use by residents and tourists is greatest. Finally, local parks and recreation is critical to Montana's economic vitality via events, tournaments, and cultural opportunities.

MAP 9. MONTANA CITIES AND TOWNS



PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

MTRPA is an over 120 strong membership organization representing Montana's recreation and parks professionals working across the private sector, non-profit organizations, and all levels of government including tribal councils, academia and students. Our diverse membership includes representatives from nearly all private, non-profit and government agencies involved in public lands management, delivery of outdoor recreation activities, as well as those promoting tourism and economic development across the entire State of Montana.

MTRPA is the primary network for professionals working in municipal and state parks, recreation, trails, natural resources and education. As a professional organization, MTRPA often speaks on behalf of all municipal parks and recreation departments, agencies or volunteer programs. For the purposes of this report, Missoula and Billings have provided specific data. Of note, the 15 largest cities in Montana, make up nearly half of the population of Montana. Almost all of these cities have active parks and recreation departments or at least some major aspect of a typical parks and recreation department (trails, programs, playgrounds).

Our membership serves all ages, incomes, races, genders, abilities, and interests. Many of our member organizations and individuals are intrinsically involved in efforts to provide healthy activities, connect people with nature, advance environmental stewardship of natural resources, and socially engage and empower the individuals, organizations, users, and members of our respective communities from Anaconda to Wolf Point.

The most frequently identified gaps in our member organization's supply of recreation resources, facilities and programs are:

- Reliable transportation for programs serving youth, seniors, and people who do not drive.
- Subsidies to provide affordable recreation programs and services to people and families on low or fixed incomes.
- Stable funding sources to replace aging, outdated, undersized and inefficient facilities and infrastructure.
- Knowledgeable, dedicated volunteers to help provide affordable programs, teach skills, and mentor youth.
- Quality and quantity equipment, supplies and facilities necessary to introduce individuals to the wide range of healthy lifetime activities and interests available throughout the state.

VISITATION

MTRPA member organizations are estimated to represent 70% to 90% of all outdoor recreation activities and facility visits throughout the state.

A 2011 public opinion survey conducted by Missoula County Parks and Trails and Missoula City Parks and Recreation demonstrates the immense use, as well as support that local parks and recreation agencies receive from residents. Caras Park in downtown Missoula is used extensively as an events site to promote Missoula business and tourism. The park receives more than 500,000 visitors each summer season. Splash MT, Missoula's municipal water park, receives 100,000 visitors each summer. The Missoula Marathon, which uses City trails and parks, generates more than \$1.5 million dollars with the annual marathon.

In Billings, a study and survey was done in 2008 that determined how many people used and visited the local parks. Pioneer Park is a flagship urban community park hosting the majority of the city-wide community events, including Symphony in the Park, Saturday Live (school fundraiser) and the Big Sky State Games. Conservatively, the annual visits are estimated at 966,000. Riverfront Park is a premier natural park consisting of over 600 acres along the beautiful Yellowstone River. Users can enjoy river activities along with two lakes and miles of soft surface trails with an estimated annual visitation of 935,000. Billings has two major athletic parks, Amend and Stewart Parks, hosting a variety of sporting event and tournaments including soccer, baseball, softball, lacrosse and football. The estimated annual attendance at these two parks is 733,000 visits. The municipal pools in Billings receive over 50,000 visitors during the summer.

BUDGET

Most MTRPA members and organizations report declining budgets and increasing demand for services that can be directly attributed to the poor health of the national economy. At all levels of government, curtailed tax revenues associated with a general decline in property values have put pressure on agencies to do more with less. The result has caused many agencies to increase user fees, delay or reduce services and modify maintenance standards. Where communities are growing rapidly due to energy development, rural flight, or job creation, agencies generally lack physical, personnel and budgetary resources to meet demands from new residents for services, to maintain facilities experiencing increased usage, and to manage people for the protection, quality and sustainability of resources.

Billings Parks and Recreation general fund budget is \$4.2 million. In addition to the general fund, the department receives \$2.7 million in park district funding from both a city-wide district and 36 individual parks maintenance districts. Likewise, the Missoula Parks and Recreation budget is \$3.4 million. For both communities, capital investments are reliant upon federal grants or referendums. Municipal Parks and Recreation budgets rely heavily on cost recovery, sponsorships, donations and volunteerism.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Montanans value recreation and often support programs and facilities they most enjoy. Staff is knowledgeable and extremely committed to the health and wellness of the community and the environment. Local Parks and Recreation is positioned to have a significant impact in reconnecting children and their adults with nature, changing our obesity trends for the better, and enhancing our local and state economic picture. Parks and Recreation serve and engage all demographics leading to a healthier, more engaged, and safer community.

There are a number of influences for recreation management at the local level.

POLITICAL

Since the 1980's parks and recreation has too often been viewed as non-essential and more recently has become a red vs. blue debate.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Aging infrastructure, user/visitor expectation, and changing codes and regulations require parks and recreation managers be ever more vigilant, knowledgeable and better able to manage triage.

ECONOMIC

tight economic times combined with the two factors noted above, forces hard decisions such as facility closures and, reduced services.

PARTNERSHIPS AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Never has the opportunity to engage citizens and build partnerships been better, but these partnerships and civic engagement is more complex requiring professional management and facilitation.

A number of challenges also exist. Municipal parks and recreation agencies greatest challenges are repair, renovation and replacement of existing aged infrastructure, a declining urban forest, and overuse of nearly all facilities which further causes decline of the infrastructure. At the same time, parks and recreation must meet the ever increasing demands of new sports and recreation trends and be more exciting than what is seen on the "screen".

In Eastern Montana, an influx of new residents from the Bakken oil boom is creating a demand on public services, and many cities and communities are seeing an increase in the usage of local parks, trails, and open spaces. Only time will tell how these impacts are truly felt in the communities, but there will undoubtedly be some challenges faced with providing recreation at the local level in the coming years.

MISSOULA COUNTY

The vision of the Missoula County Parks and Trails Program is to promote personal health, social well-being, and economic benefits that improve the quality of life in Missoula County. It is our mission to provide and maintain a sustainable system of parks and trails that protects a diversity of habitats and open space where people of all ages may participate in activities blending passive and active outdoor recreation.

MISSOULA COUNTY has provided a narrative discussion on recreation as an example of a county in Montana. Missoula County does not attempt to represent all counties, but serves as a discussion point for county level recreation management and service provision.

PROVIDING RECREATION IN MONTANA

The Missoula County Parks & Trails Program plays a role in the network of recreation providers in Missoula County, which includes the City of Missoula, the State of Montana, federal land managing agencies and non-government organizations. Missoula County Parks & Trails Program oversees 645 acres of developed and undeveloped park and recreation land. Many County parks are located in the unincorporated communities within Missoula County and several of the developed parks serve as community gathering places.

In cooperation with the Missoula County Public Works Department, the Parks & Trails Program oversees over 44 miles of natural surface and paved trails in Missoula County. Natural surface trails are primarily located within regional, community and conservation parks. The County's network of non-motorized paved trails is located within the Missoula Urban Area, as well as in several of the County's unincorporated communities.

While the County owns and/or oversees major assets in most local communities in Missoula County, the 2012 Missoula County Parks & Trails Plan outlines the following gaps in program service:

- Trail systems to improve connectivity within communities, connections from communities to adjacent public lands, and regional trails.
- System-wide need for facility and site maintenance.
- Recreational assets (playgrounds, picnic areas, sports fields, etc.) to support community needs.

VISITATION

Visitation data are not available for most Missoula County parks and trails. However, the County's two regional parks—the Fort Missoula Regional Park (FMRP) and Big Sky Park—have some documented visitation information. FMRP, designated an “America's Great Outdoors Project,” has the largest park visitation of the County system. Missoula County contracts with the City of Missoula to manage and maintain the County's 63-acre portion of the FMRP. City data suggest that the FMRP receives over 500,000 visitors annually. As a regional park, the FMRP draws visitors from within and beyond the Missoula community. Numerous tournaments, camps and events are scheduled throughout the year at FMRP. Sports activities include softball, soccer, rugby, tennis, and lacrosse. The FMRP also includes facilities for self-directed recreation including picnic areas, hiking trails, open fields, horseshoe pits and a dog park. The park's proximity to the Community Medical Center campus provides easy access for CMC patients and employees. Use at the park is increasing, and demands for field use outpace capacity.

Big Sky Park is located approximately one-half mile from the FMRP. The County owns 155 acres of land which it leases to not-for-profit organizations offering recreational opportunities for the community. Big Sky Park is home to American Legion Baseball and the Missoula Mavericks; the Missoula Equestrian Park; Westside Little League and Missoula Fastpitch. Most of the lessees at Big Sky Park host several regional events at the park, and draw visitors from across the region. Big Sky Park hosts regional biking and running events – some drawing close to 4,000 participants and spectators.

Empirical data, received through the 2012 County Parks & Trails Plan process, suggest that County trails and developed community parks, located within Missoula County's rural communities, are well-visited and used. Many of the parks are managed and maintained by local service clubs as community gathering places with picnic and playground facilities.

BUDGET

The Missoula County Parks & Trails Program is funded through a variety of sources. A County-wide mill, generating approximately \$245,000 in tax revenue, is the Program's most significant and stable source of funding. The County occasionally receives cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication, through the subdivision platting process. Cash-in-lieu funds are not predictable, are not a significant portion of the Program budget and have decreased since 2008. The County Parks & Trails Program receives lease payments from two communication cellular towers, which provides development funds for the County's Big Sky Park. The Parks & Trails program employs 1.65 FTE. Tax revenue has been relatively stable over the period from 2008-2012, with an approximate 2-3% annual increase.

Missoula County provides limited maintenance and capital funding for parks and trails in the system. Partnerships with local service organizations have enabled the County to stretch limited tax revenue. However, County-wide park and trail needs far exceed available funding. Citizen interest in trails has grown significantly and many Missoula County communities have launched community initiatives for local trail planning. While the County has worked steadily to increase trail mileage throughout the County, many projects remain unfunded.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A cornerstone and strength of the Missoula County Parks & Trails Program is partnerships with other public land managers, service clubs, non-profit organizations and others to provide recreational opportunities to Missoula County residents and visitors. These partnerships take many forms and include cost-sharing, shared-use, maintenance and management agreements and leases. Service organizations provide a significant amount of support to the County park system and in many cases provide community park maintenance. In recent years, some clubs have noted a decline in membership and volunteer resources. This changing volunteer landscape creates challenges for the clubs, and for the County, to find alternative ways to meet park maintenance needs.

The 2010 County-wide parks and recreation survey, conducted in partnership with the City of Missoula, and the 2012 Parks & Trails Plan provides guidance, direction and priorities for the Program. For example, survey data suggest significant opportunity and interest exists to develop trails in most communities in the County. Eighty percent of survey respondents noted they had a need for hiking and biking trails. A challenge for the County is to secure a stable funding mechanism to develop and maintain trails. Given current program funding, and a reduction in federal funds for trail projects, new trail facilities, and associated maintenance, poses a challenge to the Program. Nonetheless, trail development remains a priority need for parks and recreation in Missoula County.

One challenge for a program with limited staff and budget is on-site park assessments of the 92 parks within the County parks system. Staff is often reacting to parks and trails issues, with limited time available to develop initiatives and proactively pursue opportunities.