

**MISSOURI-MADISON RIVER FUND  
RECREATION PROJECT**

**APPLICATION FORM 2009**

Project Name: Missouri Breaks Interpretive Center Education Development Position

Reservoir or River Segment: Great Falls segment, Cascade to Fort Benton County(ies): Cascade and Chouteau Counties

Site Name and/or Legal Location: Missouri Breaks Interpretive Center, Fort Benton, MT

Applicant Name Connie Jacobs

Position (if applicable) Interpretive Center Director

Address P.O. Box 1389 Fort Benton, MT 59442

Telephone # 406-622-4020

E-mail Address Connie.Jacobs@blm.gov

**Project Sponsors:**

A submitted application will need a Project Sponsor. Project sponsors serve on Missouri-Madison Regional Working Groups, and include representatives of the U.S. Forest Service; Bureau of Land Management; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; local government; Madison, Gallatin, Broadwater, Chouteau, Lewis and Clark, or Cascade Counties; PPL Montana and the Bureau of Reclamation. See page 1-9 of the Comprehensive Recreation Plan for a list of 2009 members of the Regional Working Groups ([www.apleco.com/mmcrp.asp](http://www.apleco.com/mmcrp.asp)).

Project Sponsor Name N/A

Position (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

	<u>Financial Support</u>
Total Project Cost:	\$ <u>176,000.00 for Term Position (4 yr NTE)</u>
Applicant Contributions:	\$ <u>88,000.00 (BLM)</u>
Other Contributions (Please list by source):	
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____

PPL Montana Match Request: \$ 44,000.00

River Fund Request: \$ 44,000.00

Proposed Project Period: May 2010 – May 2014 (grant funds 2 yrs)

Please note: Document all in-kind support and contributed services from project partners under Scoring Criterion #1 on page 3.

Has this project been previously submitted for funding consideration by the River Fund Board, either as a separate project or part of another project? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_  No. If "Yes," please identify which years the application was submitted and, if the project was previously funded, list the amount funded by year.

## **Project Description:**

The Missouri Breaks Interpretive Center (MBIC) in Fort Benton, MT opened in October 2006. This center interprets the natural, historical and cultural history of the UMRBNM and the Wild and Scenic River. The Center's education programs include various school curricula, including cultural and Native American history, earth sciences/geology and natural history. An increasingly popular program prepares schools to take their students on multi-day river trips in the area. These trips combine Leave No Trace practices with various programs about Lewis and Clark history, local cultural and Native American sites, geology, aquatic ecology, botany, journaling and art. They also learn to measure turbidity and water flow (volume and speed) and map a streambed. This river trip program has become quite popular among area schools, spreading quickly by word of mouth only.

At MBIC, teachers and students learn about benthic macro invertebrates, their classification and use in determining water quality. In 2009, MBIC received a MT DEQ grant for an aquatic ecology workshop for teachers. The goal of the workshop was to increase aquatic ecology programming for students throughout the region.

Requested funding from the Missouri/Madison River Fund will enable BLM's Missouri Breaks Interpretive Center to reach countless students along the Upper Missouri River region through an educational development position. With a dedicated education position, the center could easily reach thousands of children per year – and a number of those students could float the Missouri River through school programs. Current school programs reach between 500 and 800 students per year, representing primarily rural school districts in North Central Montana.

This one-time only request would fund two years of a four- year term (not to exceed four years), seven months per year education development position at the center. This position will provide educational development and support as well as outreach to regional schools at the Center and along the Missouri River from approximately Cascade, MT to Fort Benton, MT.

The educational programs at MBIC are a high priority for BLM's Lewistown District Office and the BLM's Washington Office's Take it Outside and outdoor youth initiatives. BLM anticipates that sufficient funding will be in place from BLM's newly formed youth initiatives to fund the education development position directly in the future.

**1. Identify project partners, if any, and describe their participation, including in-kind labor, financial support or additional sources. If there are no project partners, explain why.**

FWP supports this project and is willing to partner with BLM by contributing in-kind with the possibility of financial support for Great Falls schools river trips.

Additional partnerships include the City of Fort Benton for site maintenance, the Fort Benton Chamber of Commerce for educational programming and volunteer recruitment assistance, and the River and Plains Society for front desk staff during the summer months. The center and the Missouri River Conservation District Council have partnered for aquatic ecology education programming and grants.

The primary source of in-kind labor for educational services comes from (volunteer) education docents within the community of Fort Benton. In FY 2008 MBIC recorded 2,643 hours of donated time, including education programs, front desk assistance and light maintenance.

BLM will provide all administrative oversight and one-half of the funding for the position. BLM will spread PPL funding awarded over two years.

**2. Describe and document the need for this project. Discuss consequences if the funding request is unsuccessful.**

“Man’s heart away from nature becomes hard; the Lakota knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans too”. Luther Standing Bear (1868-1939)

Until recently, outdoor education virtually disappeared from our educational landscape. Childhood obesity, diabetes and a complete lack of awareness of natural systems have now been documented across the country. This condition is generally referred to as “nature deficit disorder”.

Many think “nature deficit disorder” is found only in large cities. However, many of the underserved and rural areas along the Missouri River have just as much need for outdoor education. To date, almost none of the students who have participated in the center’s river trip programs have been on an overnight river trip of any kind. Many have never been camping or have ever been in a canoe. Some cannot describe where the Missouri River flows to or how water quality impacts their lives. Students living along the Missouri River have yet to learn about the ecology of the pallid sturgeon (a T&E species) and paddlefish which have been plying these waters since the age of dinosaurs.

The projected increase of requests for programs at the interpretive center or in schools, river trips, outdoor youth initiatives and the management of the center’s education docents (volunteers) has become a difficult task with only the Center Director available to develop, promote and fundraise for these activities. Without additional staffing, limited opportunities exist to contact more schools that might be interested in this kind of programming and opportunity for their students.

**3. Identify how the project provides a benefit to public recreation. Describe how specific issues and goals of the CRP would be supported.**

*Goal: Public safety, vandalism prevention, resource protection.* Much destruction and degradation is rooted in ignorance. When students learn about and come to know a place, they put a value on that resource. Students, our future recreationists and stewards, cannot value what they do not know.

*Goal: Promote responsible outdoor recreation thru LNT.* Leave No Trace principles are discussed and employed throughout the river trip outing and during other educational programs offered at MBIC. Safe boating procedures are an integral part of the river trip program.

*Goal: 1996 and 2004 CRMP identified the need for more developed interpretation.* The chief aim of interpretation is to form an emotional and intellectual connection between the interests of the audience and the inherent meanings in the resource. When interpretive techniques are applied in educational settings, lessons come alive by finding relevance between the subject and our lives. Missouri Breaks Interpretive Center programs go beyond the classroom intellectually and emotionally for the students, instructors and chaperones alike.

**4. Describe how the project would support O&M needs at an existing recreation site that are over and above day-to-day site maintenance.**

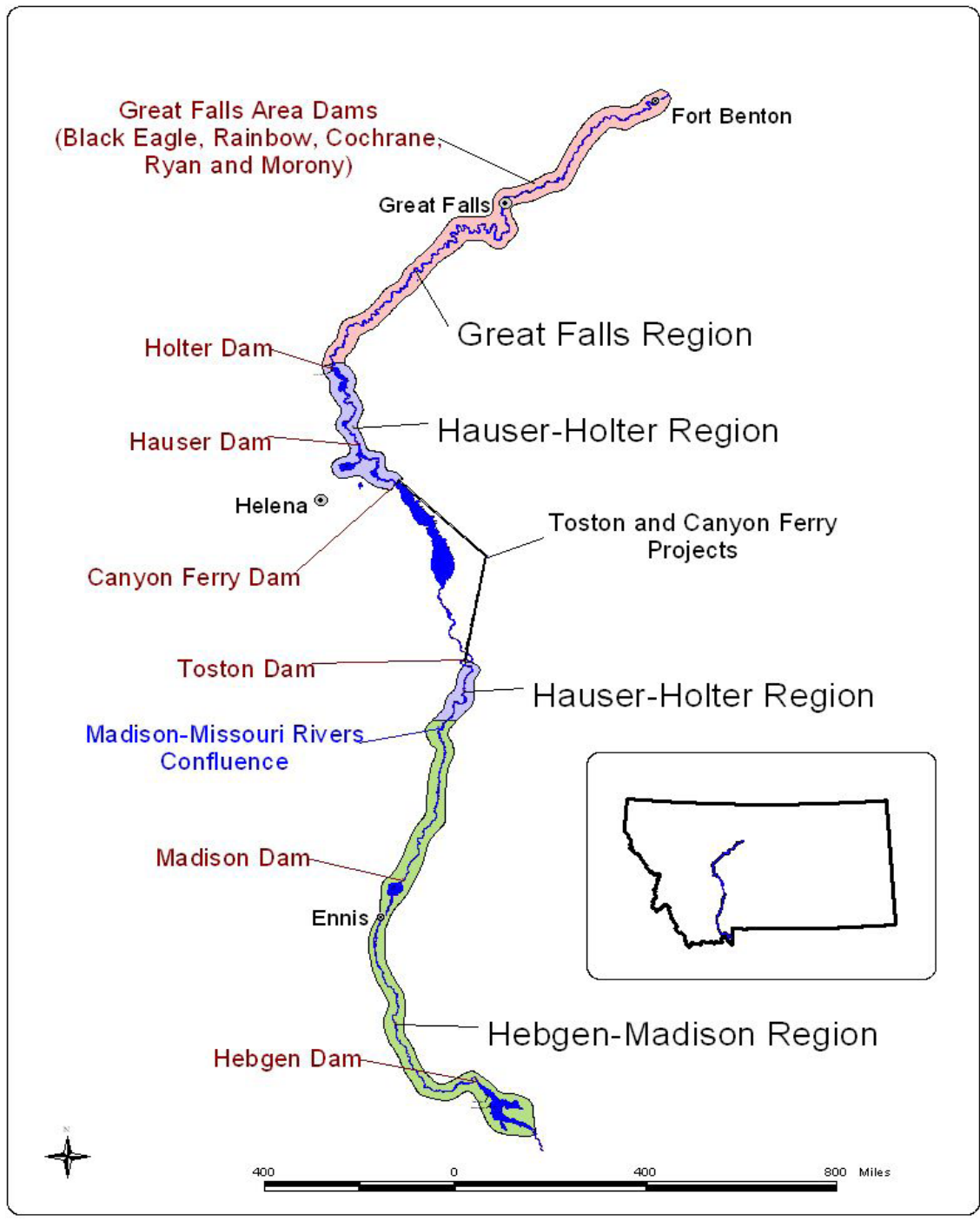
This education development position will reach many school children, develop and cultivate community relationships, as well as promote resource protection which is vital to the continued support of a recreation system. This position will work toward priorities for recreation, education and interpretation of BLM and PPL Montana.

**5. In addition to project-related benefits under #3 above, describe how this project will protect resource values (such as public access, water quality, fisheries, wildlife, habitats, and cultural resources) and support other resource plans in the Corridor.**

School children in the greater Great Falls area often learn about distant places such as the Oregon coast or Washington D.C. Almost none of the students I have encountered through my education outreach thus far have been on a Missouri River trip with their families.

The positive effects of involvement with outdoor-based education can develop into a foundation for resource stewardship for the future. Without a sincere effort to reach school age children now, management and oversight of our natural resources will fall into precious few hands.

Education programs at MBIC impart the wonder of nature, the excitement of exploration and the joy of learning to those who have participated. River trip students often speak of returning to float the river again with their families. These students will become the next generation of stewards for the local treasure we call the Missouri River.



**Map illustrating the Great Falls region (in pink) of the Missouri River. Target region for education development position extends from approximately Cascade, MT to Fort Benton, MT.**



Fort Benton students enjoying a break on their river trip.



Aquatic ecology program, looking for and learning about invertebrates.



Teachers participating in aquatic ecology workshop at Missouri Breaks Interpretive Center, 2009. “Migration Headache” program, one of many presented during the workshop, helps students visualize habitat requirements for waterfowl along their annual migration.



Students measuring and learning about water turbidity.