

**MISSOURI-MADISON RIVER FUND
RECREATION PROJECT**

APPLICATION FORM 2009

Project Name: **Madison River Special Recreation Permit Program Expansion**

Reservoir or River Segment: Entire Madison River from the Forest Service Boundary below Quake Lake to the confluence with the Jefferson River at Three Forks.

County(ies): Madison and Gallatin Counties

Site Name and/or Legal Location: Entire Madison River from the Forest Service Boundary below Quake Lake to the confluence with the Jefferson River at Three Forks.

Applicant Name: Jerry Walker
Position (if applicable): Regional Parks Manager
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Project Sponsor Name: Jerry Walker
Position: FWP Regional Parks Manager
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	<u>Financial Support</u>
Total Project Cost*:	\$ 76,400
Applicant Contributions:	\$ 33,200
PPL Montana Match Request:	\$ 8,300
River Fund Request:	\$ 34,900

Proposed Project Period: January 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

*Total Project Cost reflects the expansion component of the SRP Program and not the total SRP program.

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 The Missouri-Madison River Fund contributed \$69,000 to initiate the Madison River Special Recreation Permit Project (January 1, 2007 – December 31, 2008).

MISSOURI-MADISON RIVER FUND RECREATION PROJECT

Project Description:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is applying for \$43,200 to expand the Special Recreation Permit program (SRP program) on the Madison River. In particular, the funds would be used to establish a year-round river ranger position (currently a seasonal position) and provide watercraft for conducting river patrols.

In 2007 FWP and the BLM initiated the SRP program, which requires a permit for commercial use, competitive events, and organized groups on FWP and BLM lands and associated waters within the Madison River corridor (with the exception of the Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness Area). The agencies received River Fund and PPL Montana monies to help support the program during its critical start up phase (the first two years). The expectation was that revenue from permit fees would eventually help to sustain the program over time. Thus far it appears that program income comes close to covering the personal service costs of a permanent river manager and a seasonal river ranger.

The Madison River is the most popular river in the state in terms of number of angling days. The river also supports a thriving outfitting and guiding industry, which in turn plays an important role in the local and regional economy. It is critical for the agencies to carefully manage this industry along with other types of commercial use, competitive events, and organized groups to ensure compatibility with the recreating public and protection of resources and access facilities.

Prior to initiating the SRP program, FWP and BLM estimated that 150 outfitters used the Madison River. In 2008 FWP issued 187 permits to outfitters, which equated to over six thousand commercial trips on the Madison that year. After two years of administering the program FWP has concluded that the volume of commercial use is exceeding original projections and the workload of administering permits and managing commercial use warrants increasing the amount of staff time devoted to the program.

Expanding the Madison river ranger position to year-round will enable FWP to provide better services to the outfitting and guiding community. It will also enable staff to spend more time in the field on the following tasks: responding to public safety incidents; maintaining access sites and facilities; enforcing SRP requirements and other FWP regulations. Watercraft is needed to conduct patrols, monitor for compliance, and interact with the recreating public on the water. FWP anticipates that as the SRP program matures, outfitter compliance with permitting requirements will improve and permit revenue will increase, which in turn will help to sustain the expanded program. The River Fund and PPL Montana can play a key role during this expansion phase.

Scoring Criteria

1. Project involves collaboration with other agencies or organizations.

The Madison River Special Recreation Permit Project is a cooperative venture between FWP and BLM. Both agencies require permits for commercial use, competitive events, and organized groups. In the interest of providing better services to the permittees and in the interest of streamlining the permitting process and reducing costs, FWP and the BLM established a cooperative management agreement under which FWP administers the permit system for FWP and BLM sites along the Madison River. The two agencies continue to collaborate on oversight for the program and expenditure of permit revenue. FWP projects that the Madison SRP Program Expansion Project would cost a total of \$76,400. FWP would fund one-half of the ranger position (\$22,700) and one-half of the operations costs (\$10,500) for a total of \$33,200. FWP is requesting \$43,200 to expand the program (\$34,900 from the River Fund and \$8,300 from PPL Montana). This would pay for one half of the ranger position (\$22,700), one half of the operations costs (\$10,500), and watercraft (\$10,000). Note: These costs reflect only the expansion portion of the SRP program. BLM contributes to the overall program in that FWP collects permit revenue from use conducted on BLM sites.

2. Project responds to a clearly identified need.

With over one hundred thousand estimated angler days per year, the Madison River is the most heavily fished river in Montana. The river also supports a thriving outfitting and guiding industry, which in turn plays an important role in the local and regional economy. The SRP program and its fees provide compensation for conducting business on public lands and help to offset impacts to public access sites and facilities. The proposed expansion of the program, which would include a year-round river ranger devoted to the Madison River and watercraft for conducting patrols, is in direct response to the volume of commercial use that uses the Madison River and the importance of providing good customer service and having a strong presence in the field. This would include the purchase of watercraft for conducting river patrols. Staff currently borrows watercraft from other divisions of the agency, which is both inefficient and unsustainable over time.

3. Project provides a benefit to public recreation in the Project Area and addresses specific issues and goals of the Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan (CRP).

The commercial users, competitive events, and organized groups affect the general recreating public on the Madison River. All three types of use can provide desired benefits to the public. They also can result in impacts on the resource, public sites and facilities. The public benefits from the SRP program in that it is a means to regulate these types of use and collect a fee to offset impacts. Expanding the program would result in a stronger staff field presence at access sites and on the water, which benefits the recreating public by helping to reduce social conflicts and ensure compliance with rules and regulations. These benefits are consistent with the goals of the Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan.

4. Project is for operation and maintenance of an existing recreation site.

The expanded SRP program focuses primarily on expanding the staffing for the program. A year-round river ranger position would mean more staff time dedicated to operation and maintenance of public access sites along the river.

5. Project supports or protects other resources and is consistent with or supports resource plans in the Project Area.

The expanded SRP program would continue the collaborative approach FWP and BLM use to manage recreation on the Madison River. The SRP program fees help to support access site maintenance and improvements. The SRP terms help to prevent or mitigate impacts to resources and facilities.