



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
406-444-4585
April 9, 2024

Dear Interested Parties:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) is pleased to announce awards for the 2024 Montana Trail Stewardship Program (TSP). Thirty-six trail organizations, clubs, communities, and various land-managing agencies throughout Montana will receive awards to support trail projects. These projects contribute positively to local economies, community and environmental health, and individual wellness pursuits.

Awards for the 2024 grant cycle totaled approximately \$2,000,000. The program is funded through a portion of Montana's light motor vehicle registration fee and from the taxation of recreational marijuana. Since 2021, TSP has awarded approximately \$5.6 million in funding to 140 trail-related projects across the state.

Grant funds are allocated to the highest-scoring projects based upon scoring and State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC) recommendations. Please find the attached decision notice to learn more about the review process and to view a full list of successful 2024 TSP grant recipients.

On behalf of Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, congratulations to all this year's Montana Trail Stewardship Program recipients.

Sincerely,

Deb O'Neill
Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division Administrator (*acting*)



MONTANA TRAIL STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM AWARDS RECORD OF DECISION

April 9, 2024

Trail Stewardship Grant Program Authority and Scope

The Trail Stewardship Grant Program (TSP) provides funds for the development, renovation, and maintenance of land for recreational trails. Part 109, Chapter 2, Title 23, Montana Code Annotated, establishes TSP as a trails and recreational facilities grant program administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). The Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division administers the program on behalf of FWP.

TSP was authorized by Senate Bill 24 in the 2019 Legislative Session. The program is funded by \$1.37 from each \$9.00 light vehicle registration fee, as well as tax revenue from recreational marijuana sales. Approximately **\$2,000,000** is available for grants in the 2024 cycle. Pursuant to 23-2-109, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), the State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC) met March 5-6, 2024 to review applications and make recommendations to FWP for the 2024 grant cycle.

Grant Application Process and Awards

For 2024, TSP received 40 applications requesting \$2,388,723.07. Of the 40 applications, 28 were selected for full project funding and nine were selected for partial project funding. Altogether, 36 projects will receive funding from the 2024 TSP grant cycle totaling \$2,000,000. The TSP application review process considered eligibility requirements, application scoring, environmental review materials, STAC discussion and recommendations, diversity in opportunity type and location, and funding availability. Table 1 (attached) reflects the approximate funding amount to be awarded to each grant recipient in FY 2024.

FWP distributed press releases regarding applications and award recommendations and held a 15-day public comment period between March 20 and April 3, 2024. Grant applications were also made available in the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division Office in Helena, MT for interested parties to review.

Environmental Review of TSP Applications

Each of the 37 recommended TSP projects must satisfy environmental review for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). Each proposed project included supplemental environmental review documents within its TSP application to aid in the review process. Projects were categorized to have either Routine Resource Impacts (e.g., clearing of an existing trail corridor) or Unique Resource Impacts (e.g., construction of new trailhead facilities). There were 23 projects with Routine Resource Impacts and those were examined using a standard checklist review form that was shared with the public during the public comment period. The 14 projects that were categorized as Unique Resource Impacts were reviewed using an extensive checklist review form that was also posted for public comment.

FWP has approved all recommended 2024 TSP projects for Categorical Exclusion under NEPA (23 CFR 771.117(c)(23)) and the applicable requirements of MEPA (75-1-101, et. seq, MCA; ARM 12.2.429, et. seq; and ARM 18.2.261(2)(w)). The major categories for which impacts have been reviewed include the following:

Soils: Maintenance and renovations of existing trails will have immediate short-term adverse impacts during the time of on-ground maintenance but will result in beneficial impacts in the long-term. Soil erosion will be reduced, and water runoff gradually will be diverted off trail surfaces.

Vegetation: The primary potential impact from trail projects is from import and spread of noxious weeds. There are always potential impacts to threatened and endangered plant species, however no significant impacts were identified for any of the approved projects.

Water Quality, Hydrology, Fisheries: Maintenance and renovation of existing trails will have immediate, short-term adverse impacts because of disturbance of soils during the “construction” phase, with potential for localized run-off and sedimentation. However, the long-term impact of projects included in this year’s grant program that reduce or mitigate impacts to soil and vegetation resources are expected to have beneficial impacts on the affected environment.

Wildlife: Almost any type of unusual or intermittent disturbance, including trails and trail use, may have adverse impacts on wildlife species and perhaps wildlife habitat. Environmental reviews completed for grant projects analyzed these potential impacts and the effects were determined to be minor.

Land Use: The selected 2024 TSP grant cycle projects will not change the existing types of use on affected trails, as noted by land managers during review of applications.

Economic Impacts: Numerous studies conclude that public trails benefit local economies. A strong trail system helps preserve natural amenities and provides greater opportunities for public recreation. Trails provide economic benefits that attract businesses, draw tourism, create jobs, and increase property values. Trails may also result in adverse economic impacts, including the potential spread of noxious weeds. Projects approved through the 2024 grant cycle are anticipated to generally have beneficial economic impacts.

Outdoor Recreation Impacts: The selected 2024 TSP grant cycle projects will have beneficial impacts to outdoor recreation. Maintenance and renovation of trail systems will enhance user experience while protecting resources. The public comment opportunity offered through the grant application process is intended to reduce the possibility of funding projects of questionable merit or with the potential to increase conflict.

Cultural Resources: No adverse impacts on cultural resources were identified by the individual project environmental review process or through public scoping.

Cumulative and Irreversible Impacts: No significant cumulative or irreversible impacts are anticipated from the selected 2024 TSP grant cycle projects.

Public Comment Summary

FWP held a public comment period for all 2024 TSP proposed awards March 20 through April 3, 2024. The comment period was used to gather comments related to environmental impact concerns. During the public comment period, FWP received five comments. Comments were solicited by press release and submitted through FWP’s website.

The public comments received during the comment period provided notes of support for specific projects and ranged in length. Notes of support addressed trail projects in Anaconda and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. Comments emphasized support for the collaborative nature of these projects, as well as the increased connectivity to existing trail systems and public safety that will result from project implementation. FWP responded by thanking the commentors for their involvement and support of the TSP.

Decision

Based on review of the project applications and environmental review materials, eligibility requirements, application scoring, STAC discussion and recommendations, diversity in opportunity type and location, funding availability, and public comments received, it is the decision of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, to approve the 2024 awards for Trail Stewardship Grant Program, as listed in Table 1 (attached).

Please direct questions to:

Deb O'Neill
Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division Administrator (*acting*)
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
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Table 1: 2024 Trail Stewardship Grant Program Awards

Organization	Project Title	Award Amount
Anaconda Trail Society	Washoe Park Trail Improvements	\$38,736.57
Beaverhead Trails Coalition	Normal Street Shared Use Bridge Replacement	\$62,330.00
Billings, City of	Stagecoach Trail on the Marathon Loop - Climbing the Billings Rimrocks (Upper Climb)	\$100,000.00
Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club	Grooming for XC skiing and other winter activities at Chief Joseph Pass and Lake Como	\$45,000.00
Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation	Facilitating Employment Pathways through Trail Maintenance in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex	\$42,000.00
Bridger Ski Foundation	Bridger Ski Foundation Community Nordic Trails	\$22,380.00
Butte Silver Bow County	Silver Bow Creek Greenway - General Maintenance	\$13,500.00
Elkhorn Working Group	McCarty Creek Trail Project 2024 (M)	\$39,820.00
Eureka Youth Sports League	Lincoln County North Eureka Trails	\$98,470.00
Five Valleys Land Trust	Confluence Universal Trail Network Project	\$100,000.00
Flathead Snowmobile Association	FSA TSP Contract Grooming & Brushing (M)	\$74,720.00
Fort Peck, Town of	Construction of 1.3 Mile Gravel Pedestrian Walking Path	\$100,000.00
Friends of Thompson Park	Thompson Park Trail Rehabilitation & Grooming Project	\$12,150.00
Gallatin Valley Land Trust	Main Street to the Mountains Stewardship Projects	\$46,730.00
Gateway to Glacier Trail	Cedar Ridge Trailhead and Pullout Construction	\$90,000.00
Helena, City of	Upper Davis Bike Skills Course Improvement Project	\$15,500.00
Kings Hill Grooming Association	KHGA Emergency Shelter and Vault Toilet Project (M)	\$44,408.75
Last Chance Nordic Ski Club	Cross Country Ski Trail Grooming at MacDonald Pass	\$32,956.00
Lincoln County	Kootenai Falls Trailhead Facilities	\$62,479.00
Little Belt Snowmobile Club	Little Belt Grooming and Trail Maintenance (M)	\$20,000.00
Missoula County Parks and Trails	Lolo Riverside Park and Trails Enhancement Project	\$78,300.88
Missoula Nordic Ski Club	Missoula Nordic Ski Club Winter Trail Grooming	\$88,752.05
Missoula Snowgoers Snowmobile Association	Lolo Pass Area Winter Recreation Trail Grooming and Maintenance (M)	\$18,939.00
Montana Snowmobile Association	Montana Snowmobile Association Statewide Grooming Program (M)	\$93,000.00

Organization	Project Title	Award Amount
Prairie County Economic Development Council	Terry Trailhead	\$24,580.00
Prickly Pear Land Trust	Helena Regional Trails	\$40,000.00
Ravalli County Off Road User Association	Ravalli County Off Road Project (M)	\$48,147.75
Scenic Montana Trails	Seeley Garnet Over Snow Grooming (M)	\$79,380.00
Seeley Lake Nordic Ski Club	Seeley Creek Trailhead Storage/Maintenance Building Construction	\$100,000.00
Silver Crest Trails Association	Silver Crest Ski Trails Grooming 2024	\$3,840.00
Swan Valley Connections	Mission Mountains Wilderness & Swan Front Trail Maintenance Project	\$49,755.00
The Trust for Public Land	Yellowstone Heritage Trail - Emigrant - New Trailhead/Trail Construction	\$100,000.00
Three Forks, City of	Trail Rehabilitation East of Madison River Bridge	\$87,000.00
USFS-Lolo National Forest-Superior Ranger District	Lower Heart Lake Trail Improvement Project	\$47,125.00
West Yellowstone Ski Education Foundation	Rendezvous Ski Trail Nordic Grooming	\$20,000.00
Whitefish Legacy Partners	The Whitefish Trail - Stewardship and Maintenance	\$60,000.00