

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)  
**Developing Recommendations for Managing Madison River Recreation**  
**Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee (MCAC) – Meeting #Five**

September 26, 27, 2012

**Session Summary**

**PROCESS OBJECTIVES**

**Within the Advisory Committee's Charter, develop consensus recommendations around the following 4 tasks:**

1. Review and assess river recreation information and existing conditions on the Madison River.
2. Identify and describe desirable or acceptable recreation conditions for the Madison River.
3. Identify and describe conditions that would warrant implementation of various management actions.
4. Develop a list of less to most restrictive management actions.

**SEPTEMBER 26, 27 SESSION OBJECTIVES**

1. Review new and existing Madison River recreation information/data.
2. Hear public comment related to unacceptable conditions and management options.
3. Within the guiding principles and interests, finalize collective descriptions of desirable and acceptable recreation conditions on the River.
4. Make significant progress on the collaborative process including:
  - Thresholds that would warrant potential management options;
  - A list of less to more restrictive management options.
5. Finalize the calendar.

**MCAC MEMBERS PRESENT**

- Robin Cunningham (PO Box 34, Gallatin Gateway, Montana 59730; 406-763-4761; [rcunningham@montana.net](mailto:rcunningham@montana.net))
- Joe Dilschneider (PO Box 1406, Ennis, Montana 59729; 406-581-5150; [joe@montanatrout.com](mailto:joe@montanatrout.com))
- Bob Gibson (311 Fieldstone Drive, Bozeman, Montana 59715; 406-587-4327; [bobgib3@bresnan.net](mailto:bobgib3@bresnan.net))
- John Juracek; (West Yellowstone, Montana; [jjuracek@gmail.com](mailto:jjuracek@gmail.com))
- Lee McKenna (PO Box 86, Helena, Montana 59624; 406-570-1589; [leemckenna2525@yahoo.com](mailto:leemckenna2525@yahoo.com))
- Philip Naro (21 Crescent Point, Bozeman, Montana 59715; 406-595-6663; [p.naro@wispwest.net](mailto:p.naro@wispwest.net))
- John Way (PO Box 625, Ennis, Montana 59729; 406-370-5206; [john@montanaway.com](mailto:john@montanaway.com))
- Virginia Tribe – Facilitator: [vtribe@bresnan.net](mailto:vtribe@bresnan.net)

**AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT**

Pat Flowers (FWP)

Chris McGrath (BLM)

## COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

### **“Trapline” Comments since the Committee’s Last Meeting**

- The survey information indicates that 80% of those responding are generally satisfied. Some wonder if that means that the other 20% get displaced?
- A person pointed out that surveys can be constructed to get the outcome one is looking for – so we need to be very careful in how surveys are designed and not give all the power to surveys.
- Some wonder why we aren’t looking at the fishing regulations that have been in place for a long time – commenting that original reason(s) for a particular regulation may no longer apply such as protect goose nesting – or below the dam, the possible need for regulation so spawners are not “beaten up “ by overfishing.
- A person noted that “commercial” takes place on the entire River and a “sacrifice” of some could have negative financial consequences for those affected.
- A reoccurring question is whether using floating as a means of access for fishing the upper River is being addressed.

### **Describing River “Zones” or Sections by Current Activities**

#### **MCAC members described and discussed current activities in the following sections of the Madison River:**

- The River above Hebgen Dam
- Hebgen Dam to Quake Lake - Wade fishing; “kick” boats used to cross Quake Lake; can fish from a boat but no official launch; Forest Service restrictions on commercial users; many unique values including wildlife viewing
- Raynolds Pass - Wade fishing; loading from a boat but no fishing from a boat; floating on tubes, rafts, etc.
- Lyons Bridge to Ennis - Wade fishing; fishing from a boat; relatively heavy commercial traffic
- Ennis to the Lake (dam) - Wade fishing; loading from a boat but no fishing from a boat
- Lake to Warm Springs – Popular kayak area; very limited commercial use permitted
- Warm Springs to Blacks Ford and below (to Grey Cliff) – Wade fishing; float fishing; heavy general recreation use especially in warmer months
- Grey Cliff to Cobblestone to Blackbird to Headwaters State Park (Three Forks) (Considered a more remote portion of the River) – All fishing; general recreation; canoeists; birders; wildlife viewing; hunters

### **Brainstorming “Least to Most Restrictive” Examples of Management Actions**

- Education/guidance
- Education and guidance with human contact
- Call for voluntary, adaptive actions by an “influential” entity
- Call for voluntary, adaptive actions by government
- “Redesign” sites
- River Endorsement Fund to pay for...
- “Redistributions”
  - Lifting some current restrictions
  - Formal redistribution
  - Seasonal closures
  - Zoning by use type
- Restrict use
  - Permitted
  - Seasonal
  - Place
  - Banning/closing

**Moving Forward with the Collaborative Process – Interests; Guiding Principles; Draft River Conditions, Thresholds, and ideas about Potential Management Actions should they be warranted**

#### **Interests**

It is in our interest to:

1. To maintain a healthy resource because no dollars or fun can be had on a degraded river.
2. To be good stewards of the Madison River (that is, protecting the resource) while still maintaining and accommodating a full spectrum of recreation activities.
3. To continue the mystique and lore of “the Madison” – even in these modern times - including a world class fishing experience – size of fish and quantity of fish; tranquility because of encountering fewer people; majestic scenery; and a clean, cold water river.
4. Have the Madison remain healthy and safe to fish and float for generations to come.
5. To preserve the beauty of the River and quality of the recreation experience.
6. To set measurable standards for recreational use impacts on water quality/fish populations because these resources are essential to com
7. To not have garbage present that spoils the experience and health of the River.
8. To have an educated public who values and demonstrates etiquette on the River.
9. To maximize the recreation experience by having congestion and pressure addressed through a variety of ways including having educated users who make helpful choices about locations – particularly during peak use times
10. To have quality fishing experiences for the float angler that may include quality and size of fish per trip; little congestion; boat ramp access where etiquette is demonstrated; and adequate parking.
11. To develop management actions that are technically and socially feasible; legal; affordable, measurable; and enforceable because they will be effectively implemented.
12. To develop management actions that fairly address all Madison River interests because that is the only way to produce an enduring and effective solution.

## **Guiding Principles**

### **We believe that:**

- As a headwaters, state, the quality of the river resource should be protected as the first and foremost priority and unlimited recreational or economic growth must not compromise long-term conservation.
- Anglers and other river users bring economic benefits to communities; there are also potential costs of river recreation to local governments.
- Commercial river-service providers should have opportunities to compete for the business of paying customers and viable and diverse types of commercial services should be encouraged through management processes.
- Commercial providers have a responsibility to pay for their use of public access but they should not bear the entire financial burden.
- Because Montana's rivers are a public responsibility, users should share the cost of access and statewide management.
- River management solutions must be technically and socially feasible, legal, affordable, measurable, enforceable, and reasonable to administer.
- Use levels should be the consideration that drives decisions, not types of use/user (who it is).

## **Draft Desired Conditions, Thresholds, and Management Actions should they be warranted**

### **The River above Hebgen Dam**

The Committee has not had discussion on this section of the River.

### **Hebgen Dam to Quake Lake**

The Committee has not had discussion on this section of the River.

### **Raynolds Pass**

#### **Desired Condition for this Segment of the River**

- Maintain a walk/wade section on the Madison River to maintain a quality experience.
- Leave the existing fishing regulations as they are (i.e., status quo).

#### **"Thresholds"/Triggers that would Warrant Increased Management Action**

- Commercial launches are used as the metric for overall boat launches.
- When the number of boats as measured by FWP Commercial Use statistics at Raynold's Pass exceeds 400 commercial launches per year for two consecutive years.

#### **"To do Now" Management Actions**

- Promote education on the walk/wade section (Signs at Raynold's Pass and three Dollar Bridge – no fishing from boats).
- Install "iron ranger" systems/devices to capture fisherman data related to the number of fisherman and use (install at Raynold's Pass, Three Dollar Bridge and Eagles' Nest).
- Promote river etiquette via signage or other means.
- Change FWP surveys to measure fisherman numbers on each section of the River as well as their satisfaction with river conditions.

**Raynolds Pass cont.**

**Any Suggestions about Fishing Regulations**

- If the number of commercial launches exceeds 400 per year for two successive years, then change the fishing regulations to eliminate the use of boats as a mode of fishing/transportation on this stretch of the River.

**Lyons Bridge to Ennis**

**Desired Condition for this Segment of the River**

- Maintain the Madison River as a world-class fishery (i.e., protect the River; diversing fishing; great experiences).
- Wait no longer than 15 minutes (on average) to put-in at all fishing access sites on this portion of the River from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in May to September 30 (put-in waiting times outside of these dates are expected to be shorter).
- Have no trash in/around the River.
- Implement a Madison River Fishing Stamp (\$1.00 per person per year) to improve river management; and to capture user data (via short survey and e-mail addresses).
  - Note: The cost of the Madison River Stamp could increase year to year to control use and numbers.

**“Thresholds”/Triggers that would Warrant Increased Management Action**

- When the criteria developed from the 2009 Onsite Visitor Survey and successive surveys indicates dissatisfaction rates >20% for two consecutive survey cycles (4 years).
- Or, when Total Angling Days on the River exceed 135,000 (?) per year over 2 consecutive survey cycles (4 years).
- Or, when Total Angler Days reach 135,000 per year, then the cost of the Madison River Stamp may increase year to year to control use/numbers.

**Least to Most Restrictive Management Actions**

- Educate the fishing community to readjust their expectations during peak fishing periods (June, July, August) and to suggest staggering their tie on the River at put-ins where it may be congested.
- Change existing access fishing regulations that are currently closed in the Spring (McAtee to Lyons)
- Restrict use/access.

**Any Suggestions about Fishing Regulations**

- Implement a Madison River Fishing Stamp (\$1.00 per person per year) to improve river management and programs; and to capture user data - via short survey and e-mail addresses.

**Ennis to the Lake (dam)**

The Committee has not had discussion on this section of the River.

### **Lake to Warm Springs**

The Committee has not had discussion on this section of the River.

### **Warm Springs to Blacks Ford**

#### Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- Manage for high volume, short duration, recreational floating use. (Encourage “splash and giggle” crowd to continue to use this section of the River.)
- Eliminate driving while intoxicated, excessive alcohol consumption on the River, garbage, and public safety issues associated with parking on the roadside.

#### “Thresholds”/Triggers that would Warrant Increased Management Action

- Thresholds currently exist related to garbage. Too much garbage is deposited in the River and at fishing access sites.
- Those thresholds exist now in the form of public safety issues such as driving while intoxicated, parking on the roadside instead of in the designated parking areas, and behaviors that displace other users, e.g., excessive alcohol consumption on the River, garbage and profanity.

#### Management Actions for Parking Issues

- Educate users about where to safely and legally park. Primary parking is Warm Springs. Overflow lot is California Corners.
- Create partnerships with the University and local schools, and other groups to increase education.
- Provide direction by on-site BLM personnel as to parking.
- Parking areas have already been re-designed.
- Increase law enforcement presence.
- Develop a formal partnership with Counties, Federal and State to increase law enforcement presence, especially on weekends from June 1 through September 30.
- Charge a fee for parking.
- As a last resort for management action, close the site due to overcrowding.

#### Management Actions for Garbage Issues

- Ban glass bottles on the Madison river.
- Educate people about packing out their garbage.
- Encourage the continued use of the free, mesh, reusable garbage bags at the sites.
- Add recycling bins at fishing access sites.
- Continue the joint clean-up efforts, by BLM, FWP, Trout Unlimited, the Madison River Foundation, REI and others.
- Change the dates of the clean-up to first week of August to increase awareness and participation.
- Continue Adopt-A-Fishing Access Site program.
- Increase law enforcement presence in order to reduce littering.
- Use a “punch card” system to ensure users leave with as much garbage as they put-in with.

**Grey Cliff to Cobblestone to Blackbird to Headwaters State Park/Three Forks** (Considered a more remote portion of the River)

Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- Preserve the status quo as this area is highly regarded for its opportunity for solitude and wildlife viewing.
- Do not increase access in this stretch.
- Allow a limited amount of float camping at undeveloped BLM land across from Greycliff fishing access site and consider allowing camping at large islands near Cobblestone fishing access site.

“Thresholds”/Triggers that would Warrant Increased Management Action

- If there is a proposal to pave the dirt road which provides access to this stretch of river.
- If there is a 100% increase over baseline in traffic count numbers for two consecutive years.
- If there are unacceptable levels of impacts on the resource, such as an increase in the number of fire rings and amount of human waste on site.

Least to Most Restrictive Management Actions

- Establish a baseline at sites for 2013 and 2014 by using reliable traffic counters at Grey Cliff and Cobblestone.
- When the 100% increase in use threshold is reached, design and implement a survey which assesses whether the increased use is negatively impacting experience. (Management action may be indicated by survey results - needs to be defined prior to moving forward.)
- Create a reservation system for float camping which requires the use of fire pans and human waste systems. Monitor impacts on the resource from float camping use. Consider limiting float camping use, if use levels cause degradation of the resource conditions.

**Fishing Access Sites**

MCAC members barely started and agreed to continue work on fishing access sites at the November 3 meeting in West Yellowstone. As a first step, they identified fishing access sites most needing attention as Lyons Bridge, Warm Springs and Blacks Ford. Reynolds Pass, McAtee and Varney Bridge were also mentioned as needing some discussion. Their initial discussion yielded the following:

Desired Condition at Fishing Access Sites

- No garbage
- Adequate parking
- Clean bathroom facilities
- Non-hazardous boat ramps
- “Useful” signage (i.e., one large sign; maps; a logo or standard for all signs; not too many; list of current activities)

### **Thoughts about General Recommendations**

MCAC members discussed the notion that some recommendations might be broad – applying to the entire River. Those might include things like:

- Education
- Partnering
- Need for data collection
- Funding mechanisms

### **Where do we go from here?**

#### **Homework**

- Run your trapline – in particular about “walk and wade”. Look at where “walk and wade” exists now. Some questions to consider are:
  - Are overall numbers equally important than how yo reached the area to fish?
  - Should there be exclusive walk and wade? Where and why?
  - What might happen if float fishing is allowed in currently walk and wade only areas?
  - How would you describe the desired condition for “walk and wade”?
- Suggest – from your perspective – where “walk and wade” would be the best use – and where you think it should be the only use.
- Look at the rest of the River – segments where we haven’t had discussion. Any additional ideas?
- Look at the fishing access sites we identified and think about “thresholds”, least to most” management actions should they be warranted, and any ideas about regulations.

#### **Finalizing the MCAC Meeting Calendar**

The MCAC will meet:

- November 3, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM in West Yellowstone at the Holiday Inn Express with a public open house the Thursday before.
- December 8, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM in Bozeman at FWP Headquarters.
- December 20 – FWP Commission presentation