

# **MADISON RIVER NON-COMMERCIAL RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

**DRAFT 5-26-2022**

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Preserve the quality or recreation on the Madison River.
2. Protect resources, both physical and biological, from the threats of unregulated growth of recreation on the river.
3. Collect recreational user count data in several reaches of the river.
4. Introduce tools that may aid in future recreation management.
5. Commit to developing a comprehensive Madison River Recreation Plan.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION:**

1. Increase passive data collection to build baseline data that incorporates counts of wade angling use and floating use in specific reaches of the river.
2. Require a Madison River Float Permit for floating recreation to gather use data and to serve as a possible tool for river recreation management in the future.
3. Develop a comprehensive Madison River Recreation Plan that addresses all forms of recreation.

# **1) INITIATE A PASSIVE MONITORING RIVER USE DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM**

## **SUMMARY:**

It is recommended that passive data collection methods be implemented for counting river users that can result in a daily average level of use at different times of the year. This benchmark data will aid in developing and implementing a comprehensive Madison River Recreation Plan. Benchmark river use data will also be needed in future adaptive management of a river recreation plan.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Initiate a passive data collection system that provides benchmark data on wade angling user counts in the reaches where float angling is restricted.
2. Initiate a passive data collection system that provides ongoing benchmark data on floating recreation user counts in multiple locations along the river.

## 2) REQUIRE A NON-COMMERCIAL MADISON RIVER FLOAT PERMIT

### SUMMARY:

The increased growth of recreation on the Madison River has raised concerns related to social crowding and the potential for degradation of the resource. A Madison River Float Permit shall be required daily for river users that plan to float the Madison River to aid in collecting data on river use and to provide a tool for future recreation management options.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. A Madison River Float Permit will be issued daily for all non-commercial groups that float the Madison River beginning in 2023.
2. A Madison River Float permit is required when floating between the Yellowstone Park boundary to Ennis Lake or from Warm Springs Day Use Area to the Jefferson River confluence.
3. Madison River Float Permits may be reserved digitally or in person at license providers.
4. The permit must designate the number of participants in the float party up to a maximum of 20 individuals per Permit.
5. The permit must designate the date of recreation. If a user plans to float on consecutive days, up to three daily Permits may be secured in one reservation session.
6. One person must be named as trip leader. The trip leader may designate one alternate trip leader. The trip leader or alternate leader as named on the Permit must be present for the entire duration of the float.
7. Any individual that utilizes the commercial services of a Madison River SRP holder is exempt from obtaining a non-commercial Madison River Float Permit since their use will be recorded and reported on their behalf by the commercial service provider.
8. A small reservation fee is recommended to offset costs of a reservation system and to ensure quality of data collected through the daily permit system.

### **3) DEVELOP A MADISON RIVER RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

#### **SUMMARY:**

The increased growth of recreation on the Madison River has raised concerns related to social crowding and the potential for degradation of the resource. A comprehensive river recreation management plan will be developed to address all recreational use on the river.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. After 2 years of implementation of the Madison River Float Permit system and expanded passive monitoring, a Madison River Recreation Management Plan will be developed which shall define acceptable levels of recreational use on the river and define a range of management options that protect the future quality of recreation on the river prescribed by ARM 12.11.405, ARM 12.11.415, ARM 12.11.420, ARM 12.11.425, ARM 12.11.430, ARM 12.11.435 and as described by the Montana River Recreation Management Planning Manual.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT: REQUESTED DETAILS TO BE COLLECTED FROM ENHANCED RIVER USE DATA COLLECTION**

## **SUMMARY:**

There is a need for a better understanding of all recreation use levels on the Madison River. This data will aid in establishing acceptable levels of use in a Madison River Recreation Plan and will aid in adaptive management in the future.

## **PASSIVE RIVER COUNT DATA COLLECTION RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. It is recommended that that the Department consider floats be scheduled through wade angling zones to actively count the number of wading anglers in the following reaches.
  - a. Between Hebgen Lake and Quake Lake
  - b. Between Reynolds Pass and Pine Butte
  - c. Between Ennis FAS and Valley Garden FAS
2. It is recommended that the Department consider establishing a floating recreation count system to actively count the number of rivercraft (and floaters) in the following reaches:
  - a. Between Reynolds Pass and Pine Butte
  - b. Between Lyons Bridge and Windy Point
  - c. Between McAtee Bridge and Story Ditch
  - d. Between Varney Bridge and 8 mile FAS
  - e. Between Ennis FAS and Valley Garden
  - f. Between California Corner and Cannaday
  - g. Between Blacks Ford and Greycliff FAS
  - h. Between Greycliff FAS and Cobblestone FAS
  - i. Between Blackbird FAS and the confluence of the Jefferson River

## **MADISON RIVER FLOAT PERMIT RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Additional survey questions should be requested on Madison River Float Permit reservations to gather data on float recreation:
  - a. For each day if the float party intends to float between Yellowstone Park and Ennis Lake or from Warm Springs Day Use Area to the Confluence of the Jefferson River
  - b. How many Rivercraft the party intends to use each day
  - c. How many of the float party intend to fish each day

## **ON RIVER DATA COLLECTION DURING USER CHECKS:**

1. Compliance rates for floating parties should be tracked during Madison River Float Permit compliance checks (what percentage of groups engaging in float recreation have secured the Madison River Float Permit).