

Missoula River Ambassador Pilot Program 2021 Impact Report

For the period June 21, 2021 through September 6, 2021



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INTRODUCTION

In the past decades, the ecological health of the Clark Fork, Blackfoot, and Bitterroot Rivers of the Missoula Valley has improved significantly. Accompanying these improvements is the ever-increasing use of these rivers by both local communities and visitors, a trend that has come to define recreation in the Urban Missoula Area.

With increased use, land and resource managers at the local and state levels are challenged to address the negative pressures of recreation; including habitat degradation, crowding at river access sites, and streambank erosion. Many of these impacts have been attributed to a lack of understanding and competency of responsible river etiquette. Addressing these gaps is the first step to creating a culture of sustainable and responsible use of our rivers.



2021 River Ambassadors, L-R: MJ DeRosier, Charlie Rieck, Tim Grisley, & Bela Garcia-Arce

Acknowledging this new set of land management challenges in Missoula, the Clark Fork Coalition, the City of Missoula, Missoula County, and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) collaboratively created a pilot River Ambassador program in the summer of 2021. The goals of this program are to:

- 1. Communicate practical information on responsible river recreation**
- 2. Educate river users on important conservation and stewardship ideas**

The River Ambassador program hired a team of River Ambassadors to tackle these goals through three methods: 1) friendly & educational in-the-field conversations; 2) digital communications via social media; and 3) tabling at formal outreach events. During the 2021 pilot season, River Ambassadors spoke with hundreds of river users, engaged thousands of social media accounts, and gave substantial reach to the “recreate responsibly” campaign.

FIELD COVERAGE: *Boots on the ground armed with Information and Kindness*

Like most “ambassador” efforts, a primary component of the River Ambassador strategy was maintaining a physical presence at high-use access sites. The physical presence of Ambassadors during field coverage became the tangible reminder of the responsible river recreation practices, promoting best practices directly to river users.

The schedule of field coverage was modeled after observed use patterns of recreational floaters. River Ambassadors worked Thursday through Sunday from 11 am to 7 pm and covered three primary coverage locations: Sha-Ron FAS to Milltown State Park, the Urban River Corridor, and a handful of “other” access sites located within 10-15 minutes from the

Clark Fork’s urban center. In the early afternoon, Ambassadors focused their presence on upstream sites – the ones most commonly used as put-ins. Later in their shifts, Ambassadors moved downstream, focusing their presence on take-out sites.

During field coverage, River Ambassadors acted as an educational resource. Their mission was specifically to communicate sustainable and responsible behaviors with river users in a **non-enforcement capacity**. Ambassadors used the “Identify, Educate, Discuss, Disengage (IEDD)” model to approach and initiate conversations with river users, and to ensure an educational tone, with a non-threatening demeanor.

During the 2021 field season, River Ambassadors provided **525 hours of field coverage**. River Ambassadors recorded the number of interactions they had with river users in each coverage area (**Table 1**). This number varied across locations and did not always correspond directly with hours of coverage. Nearly half of River Ambassador interactions occurred at Milltown State Park, with an average of 13.4 interactions per shift. Alternatively, and despite providing more coverage hours to this area, River Ambassadors reported interacting with ~5 users per shift while covering the South Bank of the river in the Urban Corridor (roughly between Jacob’s Island and Silver Park.)

Table 1. River Ambassador Coverage Days, Hours, and Interactions by Site				
Location	# of Coverage Days	# of Coverage Hours	Total Interactions	Average Interactions per Shift
Milltown State Park	28	129.5	524	13.4
Sha-Ron FAS	17	49.5	164	10.25
South Urban River Corridor	34	168	223	5.2
North Urban River Corridor	34	150.5	299	8.8
Other Sites	16	27.5		
Total	34	525	1,210	9.4

SITE REPORTS

Milltown State Park

River Ambassadors had two goals for Milltown State Park: 1) to increase public awareness of the site itself and drive hand-launch users (i.e. tubers, paddleboards, floating Flamingos) to this access; and, 2) to relieve pressure on Montana FVP staff by facilitating the flow of river users through the parking and launch area. On weekends River Ambassadors consistently provided coverage between 12:00 and 6:00 pm, and weekday coverage varied.

Peak use of Milltown was observed in July. During July it was common for the main parking lot and the Juniper Street overflow parking to fill up in the early afternoon (1-3 pm.) Floating from Milltown State Park to the downtown area is one of the longer day float options, stretching about 6.5 river miles. As water levels dropped and adverse weather (i.e. wildfire smoke, rainstorms) came later in the summer, River Ambassadors observed a decrease in use at Milltown State Park.



Overall, the River Ambassadors achieved their goals for Milltown State Park. Ambassadors documented many positive educational conversations with river users about the Milltown area. Often, Ambassadors were able to encourage awareness and use of the Milltown site to people who were unfamiliar with that site and noted the public was enthusiastic to visit when provided with information.

The nature of putting in at a hand-launch at Milltown provided Ambassadors with many opportunities to converse and connect with people. Ambassadors carried usable resources in the field such as a K-pump, duct tape, and mesh river-trash bags, which they shared with floaters. The response from people we shared these resources with was overwhelmingly positive; river users consistently thanked us for our presence. Throughout the season, Ambassadors became familiar with frequent and consistent users of the area. On the whole, they noted an improvement in the public's awareness and adherence to responsible recreation principles at this site. There were three common requests from river users for Milltown State Park: to install a water source on-site, provide river trash bags on-site, and keep the parking lot open later than 9 pm to accommodate the "after-work" floaters, especially as float duration from this site increases with late summer flows.

Sha-Ron Fishing Access Site Fishing Access Site (FAS)

The River Ambassadors' goals for Sha-Ron focused on mitigating crowding and conflicts by promoting responsible alternatives. Our strategies included communicating Milltown as a good river access option, promoting shuttle transportation to and from Sha-Ron FAS, and messaging that supported an ethic of respect and shared-use on the launch and parking areas.

Sha-Ron is one of the most popular river access sites near Missoula. Its proximity to town, small size, and limited infrastructure contribute to adverse impacts and a difficult reputation. The Sha-Ron access is older than the newly-constructed Milltown State Park and high use of the area is likely driven by familiarity, a trend noted by Ambassadors during their coverage. Users at Sha-Ron often communicated that the recreational experience here is degraded by infrastructure overload and crowding. Lack of infrastructure also contributes to public safety concerns. River Ambassadors observed an average of 30-50 cars parked on the shoulder of MT Highway 200 during peak times, and regularly observed 100+ overflow vehicles along Highway 200 and the surrounding neighborhood streets.

The River Ambassadors team did recognize some success meeting their goals at Sha-Ron. They especially found value in promoting Milltown and shuttle options to alleviate pressures at Sha-Ron. However, Ambassadors also found consistent and effective coverage at Sha-Ron difficult. Lack of available parking affected their ability to be present in the area for extended periods. Additionally, the most common issues at Sha-Ron were illegal parking and traffic conflicts in the "loop". These types of infrastructure issues (as opposed to lack-of-awareness issues) are hard to address with the tools of the River Ambassador.

To improve the effectiveness of field coverage at Sha-Ron in future years, Ambassadors recommend dedicating 1-2 team members to staffing the access each shift. This would allow Ambassadors to utilize shuttle services to access the site and the structure for more opportunities for education and conversation.

During the summer of 2021, three shuttle services transported floaters to Sha-Ron FAS from Missoula: the River Recreation Shuttle (offered for free by ASUM Transportation), the Clark Fork Yacht Club, and Loveboat Paddle Co. River Ambassadors communicated regularly with these shuttle services and worked with these team to incorporate recreate responsible messaging into their services. The Ambassadors noted that shuttle services were able to



deliver high volumes of floater to the Sha-Ron access without causing overcrowding of back-up on the launch ramp.

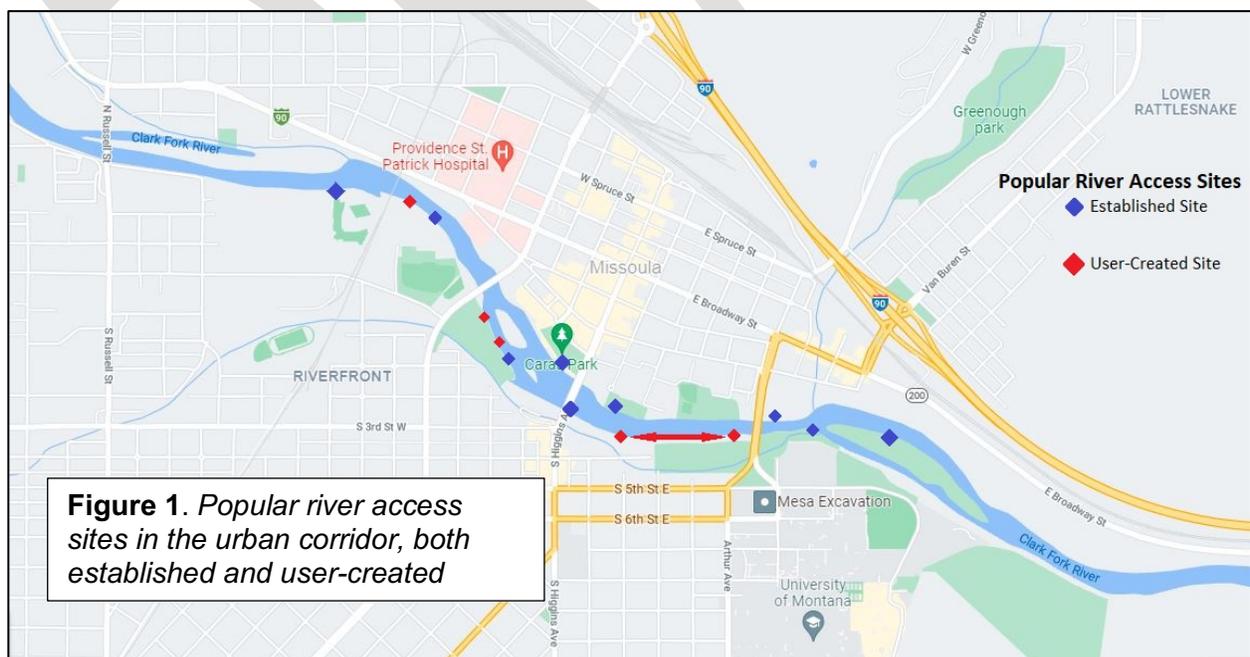
Deer Creek Beach

While the majority of users at the Deer Creek beach, directly across the river from Sha-Ron FAS, were beach users/sunbathers, Ambassadors noted that floaters also used this beach frequently as a pull-off for bridge jumping or meeting friends and as a put-in/take-out alternative to Sha-Ron FAS. This beach regularly had discarded trash left on the banks and a fair amount of micro trash. The River Ambassadors visited this location to do small cleanups regularly during the summer. Users commonly said they would often try to clean up the site. Sometimes, local users would leave trash bags by the fence to discourage littering. There was a recurring plea to install an official trash can at this site. Bridge jumping was a consistent issue we noticed. Ambassadors we encouraged not to engage with bridge jumpers by law enforcement during their training.

Urban River Corridor

The River Ambassador's goals specific to the Urban River Corridor were: to raise awareness of the City's [Clark Fork River Restoration and Access Project \(CFRRAP\)](#), and to observe recreational use patterns that could inform the Project.

The Urban River Corridor (URC) refers to the string of formal and informal parks and access sites flanking both banks of the Clark Fork from the University of Montana campus and Jacobs Island to the formal takeout at Silvers Park. This area receives the most pressure from the "tuber hatch" during the summer months. There are also significant amounts of other use, including beach use, swimming, fishing, etc (**Figure 1**).



The River Ambassadors found only a small portion of people they spoke with were aware of the CFRRAP, amounting to 9%. This lack of awareness provided many opportunities for Ambassadors to share information and resources about the project. The River Ambassadors also observed and documented substantial use at both established and user-created sites in this area.

The **Madison Street footbridge** area is a major river access point in the URC. The beach on the north bank, below the Doubletree Hotel, received heavy beach use. Ambassadors observed frequent floaters taking out at the beach here, presumably to access vehicles parked near Kiwanis Park. Bridge jumping was a consistent issue in this area and Ambassadors interacted often with groups of “repeat-offenders” on the issue. In early August 2021, we communicated to the City that we observed a couple of ropes tied from the footbridge to assist jumpers, and the ropes were quickly removed.

On the south bank of this area, the **Jacob’s Island dog park** and the area directly downstream received similar amounts of use. This was a popular take-out for floaters with vehicles parked in the University area, and the large gravel bar downstream from Jacobs Island had consistent numbers of beach users. The farthest upstream end of Jacobs Island is popular for canines and their friends and family, but also as a location for swimming and beach use. River Ambassadors had a high volume of contacts in this area.

Bess Reed Park and **Caras Park** are also popular floater take-outs on the north bank. Peak use hours for this area are afternoon-evening on days with favorable/warm weather. Usage increased significantly when events were taking place at Caras Park. These sites appeared to handle the amount of use they received well, although Ambassadors fielded a few reports of the garbage cans becoming full and several requests for recycling bins at these locations. The lack of designated, hardened, and clearly marked access points contributes to the creation of user-created pathways in this area.

The **Caras Park Observation Deck** above Brennan’s wave was a good place to interact with tourists visiting Missoula and gain an outside perspective on Missoula’s river culture and infrastructure. Many of the people the Ambassadors spoke with had floated on their visit and were very positive about the experience. **(Appendix A)**

Bear Tracks Bridge, on the south side of the river next to the Boone and Crockett Club, was possibly the most highly trafficked take-out location of the urban river corridor. This use was particularly influenced by the Clark Fork Yacht Club service located just up the street.

The **Clark Fork Natural Park Area** has a popular, established site for river access, particularly beach-goers and youth summer camp programs. This site consistently had recreators present over the field season.

From **McCormick Park** down to **Silvers Park**, Ambassadors observed less recreational river use with the exception of the well-known beach site adjacent to the Currents Aquatic Center. Occasionally, tubers would take out on the Search + Rescue Ramp at McCormick Park. There was a steady stream of trailer traffic at Silvers Park, but the area seemed to handle the pressure well. Users were efficient at the take-out and generally practiced good river etiquette.

West Broadway Island, on the north bank of the river, was closed for two for clean-up and infrastructure improvements. This park reopened on July 21st. River Ambassadors observed very little recreation on West Broadway Island after its reopening. Ambassadors did note that the new rules for West Broadway Island having an effect on the levels of transient use in the area. In future years, River Ambassador can help promote river recreation on West Broadway Island through conversations with river users and social media.

Additional Locations

River Ambassadors provide occasional coverage of several “other” access sites in the Missoula Valley. These sites received less pressure from the “tuber hatch”, but are well-known river access sites. River Ambassadors did find value in providing coverage at Maclay Flat & Kelly Island. These areas had high use and Ambassadors were able to have quality conversations with river users and consistently spread sustainable and responsible recreation messaging.



Ambassadors would recommend that the following sites be removed from River Ambassador coverage, and instead continue to be monitored by the School Resource Officers (SRO's):

- Harper's Bridge
- Kona Bridge
- North Ave (Maclay) Bridge
- Oral Zumwalt
- Buckhouse Bridge

These locations offer little opportunity for interaction and education, are not ideal for extended periods of coverage due to their distance and spread. Consistent and extended presence was a primary factor for effective interactions and education by the Ambassador team.

SOCIAL MEDIA

A key component of the Ambassador education strategy was leveraging social media to spread information and awareness. Social media is especially effective as a tool to communicate with 16 to 28-year-olds, a demographic that constitutes a large percentage of the casual river users in this project's focus area. Most individuals in this age range spend about 74% of their free time

on the internet, and 81% say their preferred social media platform is Instagram (Kim, 2021; Patel 2017).

During the pilot season, River Ambassadors established a strong presence on social media with active accounts on Instagram and Facebook. This success was greatly supported by the work of FWP's River Rec Intern, Hailey Erickson, who created valuable resources (posts, hashtags, etc.) for the team, and helped coordinate content sharing and engagement with the Ambassador accounts. The Ambassador team created content for these social media accounts that focused on three main themes:

- 1) Wildly sharing recreate responsibly principles
- 2) Providing real-time updates useful to river users
- 3) Connecting users to responsible recreation resources (shuttles, best-option access sites, etc.)

To track our social media successes, River Ambassadors used three measures of interaction with our accounts: follower growth, reach, and engagement.

Follower growth shows the ratios of followers gained and lost over a given period of time and is an indicator of "new- reach." From June 11 to September 9, the River



Ambassadors' Instagram account attracted 570 new followers. The majority of these follows occurred in the first two weeks of program kick-off (**Figure 2**).

Reach is the total number of distinct profiles that view your profile's content (Kindness, 2021). From June 11 to September 9, the River Ambassador content reached 3,182 different accounts (**Figure 3**).

Engagement measures action to a particular post. Engagement actions on Instagram include likes, comments, shares, and saves (Cucu, 2021). Engagement is particularly important to social media messaging as it is the primary

TUBE HATCH

noun

The emergence of people amongst river corridors in tubes, kayaks, SUPs, and any other flotation devices. The tube hatch happens when its 60° water temperature + 90° ambient temperature =

TUBE HATCH

Floating the Clark Fork River Checklist

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THE TUBE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DRY BAG |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SUN PROTECTION | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXTRA CLOTHES |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WATER BOTTLE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TOWEL |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WATER SHOES | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CARABINER |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PORTABLE AIR PUMP | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ROPE |

WHY HAVE FISHING RESTRICTIONS?



When water temperatures heat up there is less dissolved oxygen in the water which puts added stress on the fish.

- Cold water = happy trout

variable in promoting the visibility of content. Over the course of the 2021 field season, the River Ambassadors had 2,118 engagements with their content (**Figure 4**).

Figure 2: Instagram Follower Growth

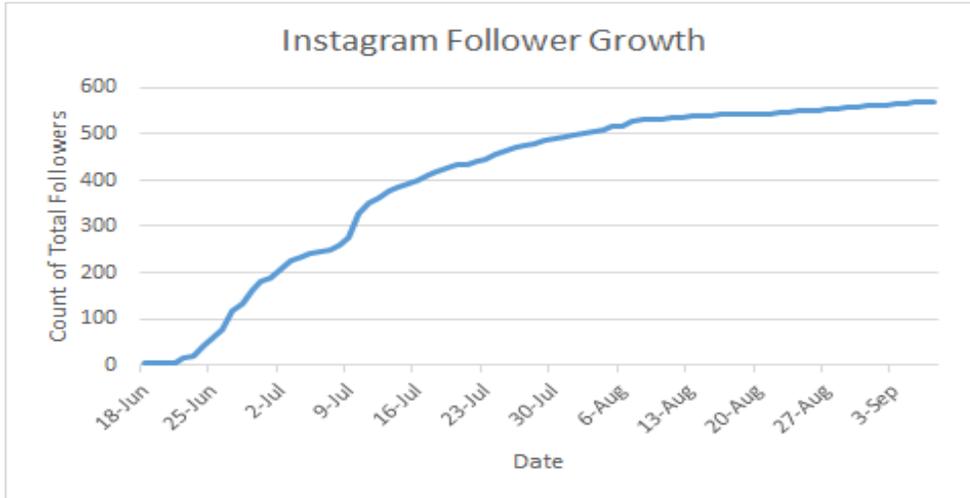


Figure 3: Number of Instagram Accounts Reached

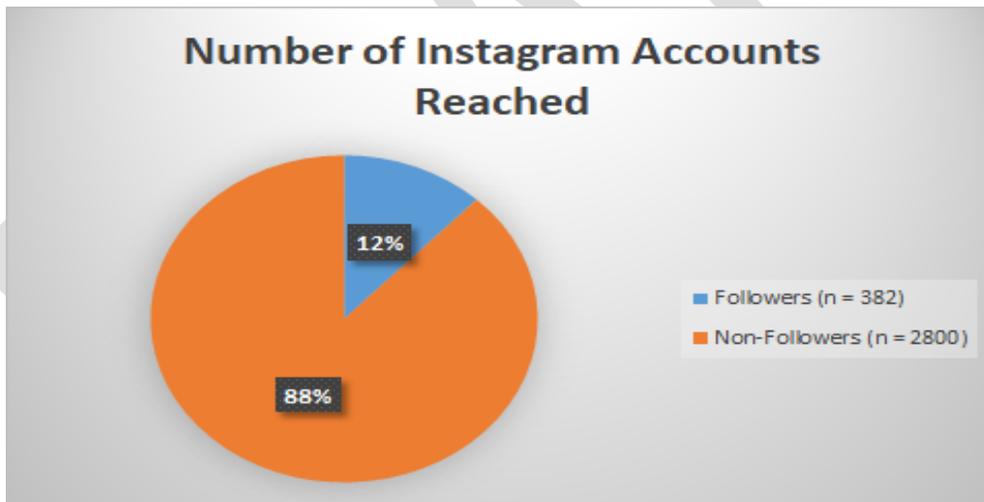
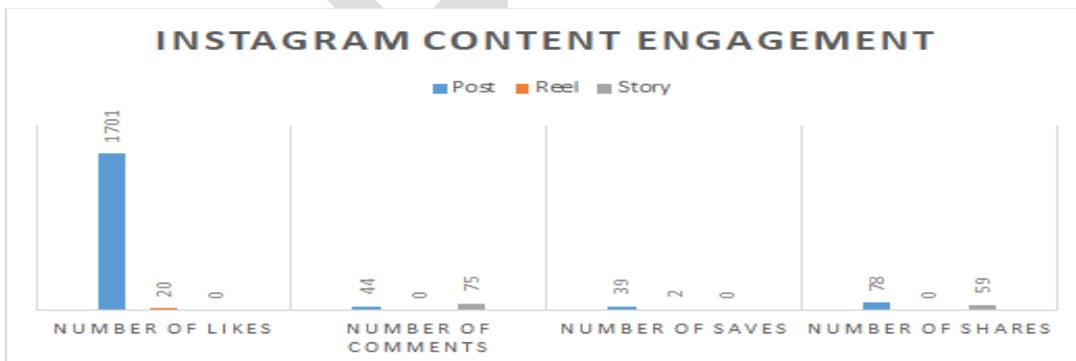


Figure 4: Instagram Content Engagement



OUTREACH EVENTS

As part of the Ambassadors' outreach and engagement with the community, they participated in several community events that presented the opportunity to share education and information with the public *before* they made it to the river. These included:

- Tabling at the popular Clark Fork Farmers Market every other week from July 10th to August 21st.
- Coordinating River clean-ups on July 25th, and August 22nd (in partnership with the Missoula Paddle Heads)
- Presentation to Missoula Parks and Rec. summer camps on August 20th
- University of Montana Freshman Float on August 29th

River Ambassadors recognized community events as valuable outreach opportunities for sharing information about the RA program, linking people into the Ambassadors' messaging and social media, and gathering river user surveys. The River Ambassador team recommends the program build a strategy for increased participation and visibility at popular community events.

Specifically, the 2021 River Ambassador team identified the following additional opportunities for RA outreach:

- Windermere SUP Cup
- The Big Paddle at Frenchtown Pond State Park
- Out to Lunch
- Dinner in the Park
- Summer camp programs
- The Western Montana Fair

DATA COLLECTION

The River Ambassador Program recognized the need to collect data early in the planning for this pilot program. Data collection efforts were designed to document the Program's efficacy and reach, capture trends of river use that might inform future River Ambassador efforts, and inform the diverse interests of the program partners.

At the beginning of the field season, the River Ambassador team met with our partner stakeholders about their specific interests. The interests of our partners were diverse but shared a focus on observational trends rather than quantitative measures. All partners recognized the value of the River Ambassador perspectives gained by extensive on-the-ground coverage of the recreation scene. The River Ambassador team took this feedback and developed several surveys to collect information: a River Ambassador Shift report, a River User Survey, and a Madison Street Footbridge User Count. They used ESRI's Survey123 software to collect the surveys, creating a digital database in the process.

River User Survey

The River Users Survey was developed to gather data on river use, gauge public perception of the CFRAP and River Ambassador programs, and gather feedback from the public on

infrastructure needs. River Ambassadors collected the River User Survey opportunistically during the field season during their conversations with the public. Questions on the River User Survey covered a range of topics from transportation to familiarity with responsible recreation principles (**Appendix B.**)

River Ambassadors collected 121 River User surveys during the field season. The average age of respondents was 34 years old, with an age range of 63 years (YOB 1950 - 2013) (**Figure 5**). Nearly one-third of all river users surveyed indicated they were visiting the area (**Figure 6**). The average recreation group size of survey respondents was 4.29 people.

Figure 5. River User Survey Participants Age

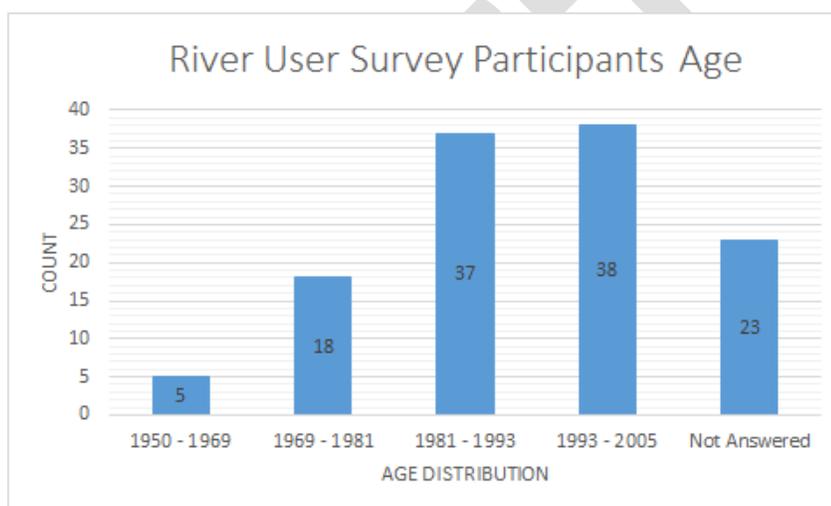
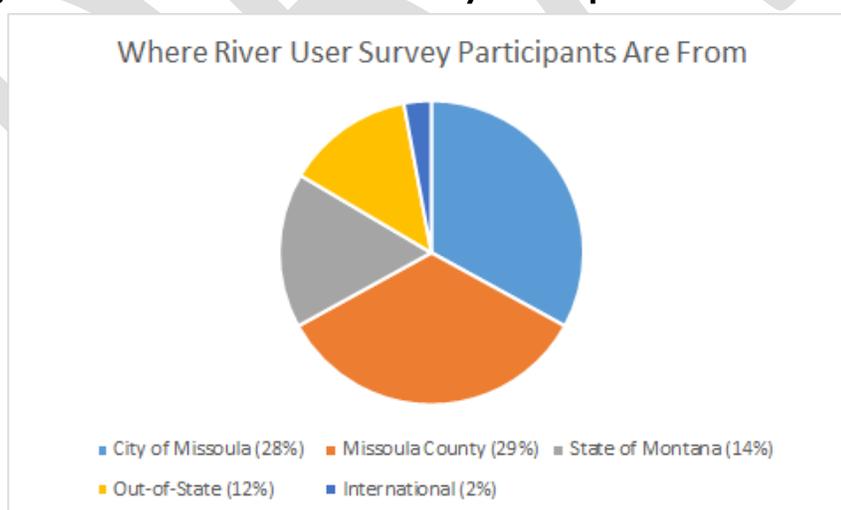


Figure 6: Where River User Survey Participants Are From.



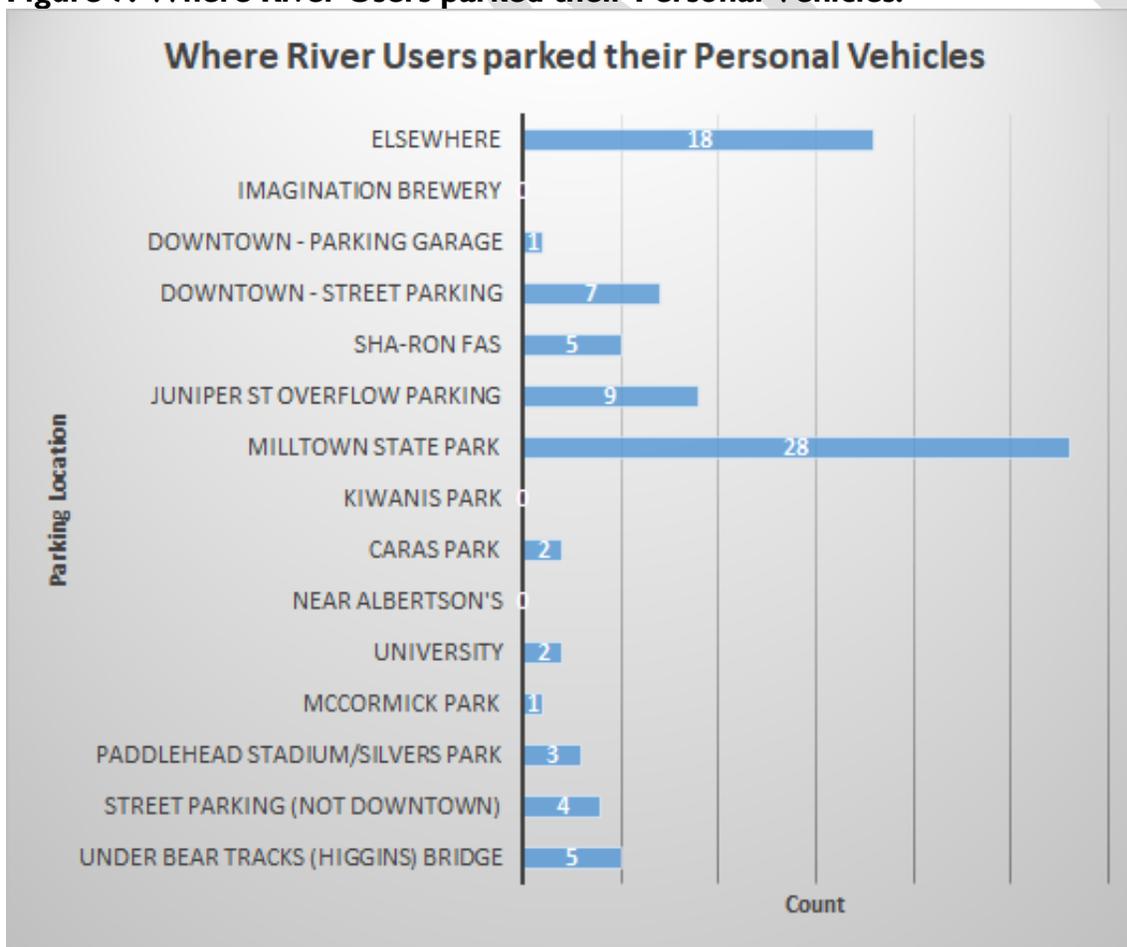
Survey participants were asked a series of questions about how they got to the river that day (**Table 2**). The majority of survey participants, 73%, reported driving their personal vehicle. Survey participants that drove personal vehicles reported parking at many different locations,

the majority of which were identified as “elsewhere” in our survey. The most common parking location reported correlated with the access site that provided the most user surveys to our data set, Milltown State Park (**Figure 7**).

Table 2. Mode of transportation used to get to the river.

How did the river user get to the river?	Count
Personal Vehicle	89
Public Transportation	0
On Foot	8
Bicycle	4
Skateboard	0
Other	0

Figure 7: Where River Users parked their Personal Vehicles.



Survey participants were also asked a series of questions on their river use patterns within about a thirty-minute drive from Missoula:

- Which activities will they participate in this summer?
- How often do they recreate on the river?
- What is your most frequent recreation activity?

The most common activity participated in was *river access (sunbathing, swimming, etc.)* (**Figure 8**). The proportion of our survey respondents who use the river with high frequency (5+ times per week) and low frequency (less than once a month) were about equal. The majority of our survey participants reported using the river somewhere between 1-2 times monthly (20 %) to 1-2 times per week (16%) (**Figure 9**). Floating (Single Person Craft: Tube, SUP, Kayak) and River Access (sunbathing, swimming, etc.) were the most common responses to “what is your most frequent recreation activity” (**Figure 10**).

Figure 8. River activities participation, within ~15 miles of Missoula.

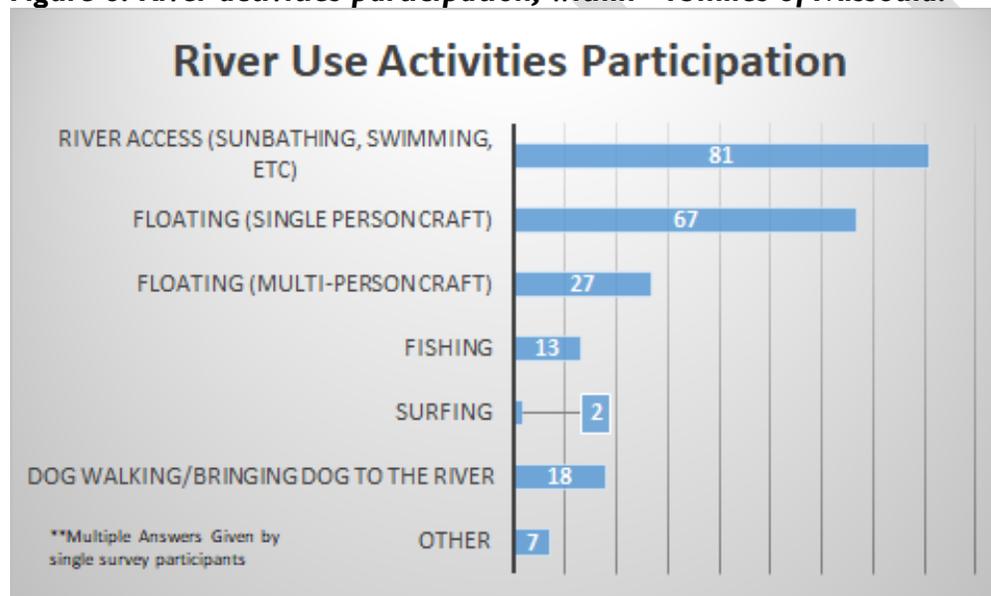


Figure 9. Frequency that river users access the river.

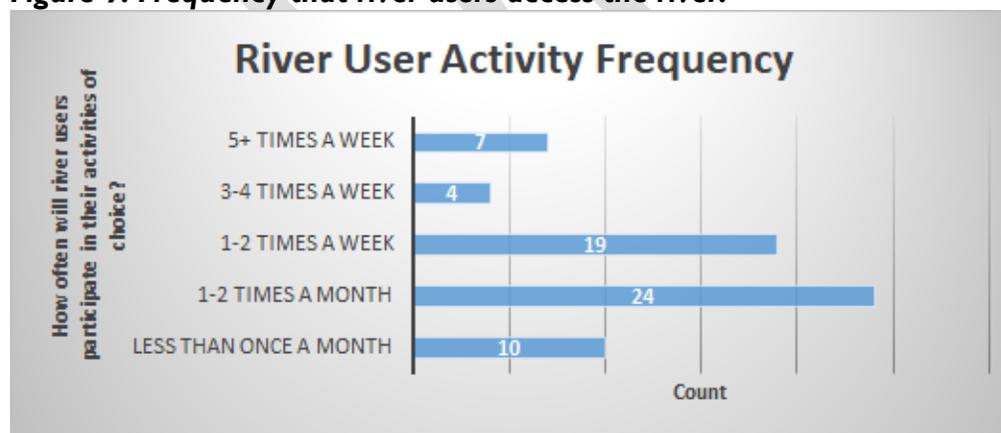
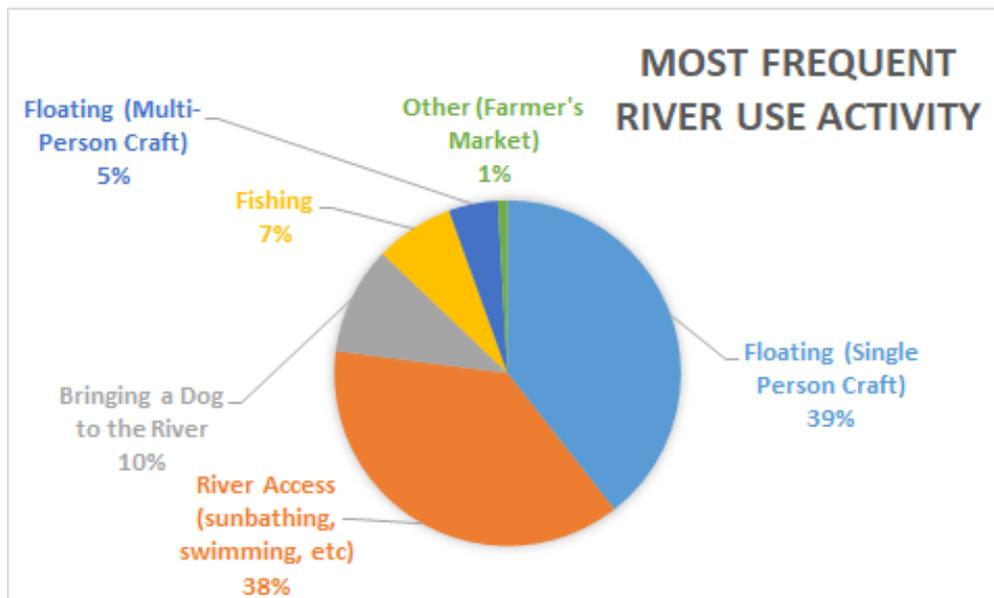
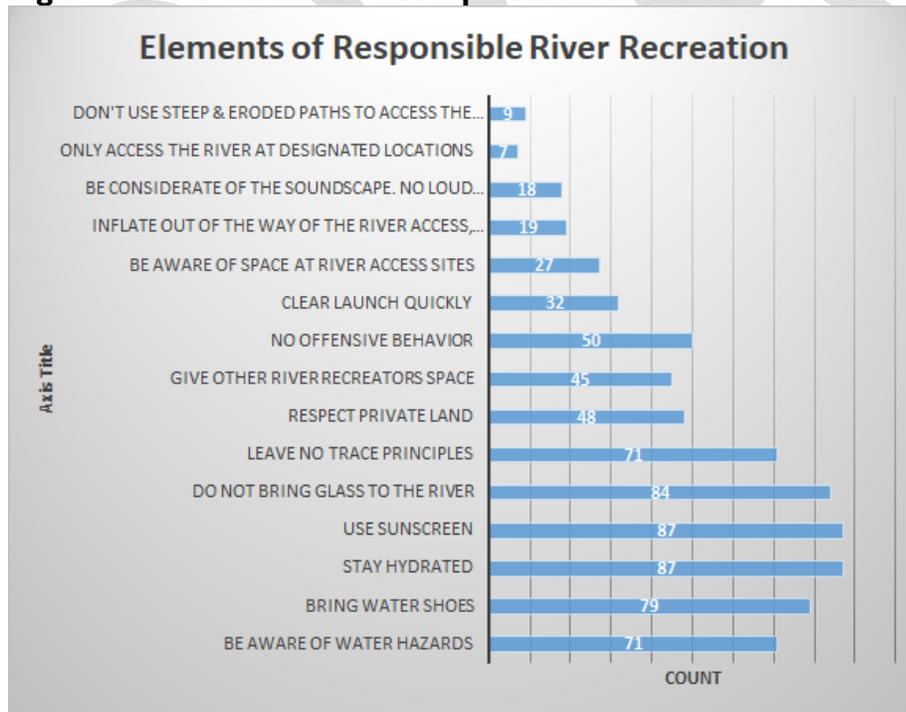


Figure 10. The most frequently participated activity by River Users.



To collect a baseline of river user knowledge the River User Survey also asked participants “What does “recreate responsibly” mean to you?” Responses indicate that *staying hydrated* and *using sunscreen* were the two most common responses. The next most common response was “do not bring glass to the river” (Figure 11).

Figure 11. The elements of responsible river recreation users indicated they know.



Madison Street Footbridge Count Survey

River Ambassadors explored collecting river user counts to replicate the citizen science project completed in 2015 and 2018. River Ambassadors counted the number of floaters that passed under the Madison Street Footbridge according to the protocols of past studies but did not produce a statistically comparable data set.

River Ambassadors counted the number of river users that floated under the Madison Street footbridge on four different dates over the field season: July 1, July 29, August 6, and August 14. Two of the survey dates were on a Thursday (July 1 and July 29), one of the survey dates was on a Friday (August 6), and one of the survey dates was on a Saturday (August 14). The data collection window was three hours on each of these dates (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Data collection schedule at the Madison St Footbridge Counting Survey.

Survey Date	Day of the Week	Survey Collection Time	Count of Floaters passing under Madison Street Footbridge
July 1, 2021	Thursday	2:15pm - 5:15pm	162
July 29, 2021	Thursday	2:30pm - 5:30pm	205
August 6, 2021	Friday	2:30pm - 5:30pm	158
August 14, 2021	Saturday	2pm - 5pm	283

River Ambassadors conducted this survey in teams of two to ensure counting accuracy.

Standing on the Madison Street footbridge, Ambassadors recorded the following data:

1. The number of people that float under the Madison Street Footbridge, by watercraft type (continuous tally)
2. The number of people who “put-in” or “took-out” by Zone, and type of watercraft (continuous tally)
3. The number of river users on the south and north riverbanks, by Zone (tally every half hour)

Aggregated survey results from the four Madison Street footbridge surveys show:

- 808 Total Floaters, all watercraft types
 - Average 16 Tubers/hour
 - Average 19 Floaters/Hour (All watercraft types)
- 60% of floating use in single-person Tubes

- 72% of floaters put in upstream and floated by to take-out somewhere downstream
- Consistently high beach use on the North Shore, nearest the DoubleTree Hotel.
 - Average 10 users

River Ambassador saw value in pursuing this data collection effort in future years. The benefits of continuing to conduct this survey would be twofold. First, the survey places River Ambassadors in a position to make many contacts with the general public; their continuous presence with clipboards & paper surveys engaged curious passersby to learn more about the River Ambassador program and created valuable opportunities to share responsible river recreation messages with a diverse swath of the public. Second, collecting replicable data contributes to long-term tracking of recreation pressure on the river, this contribution is meaningful and fulfilling to River Ambassadors. Additionally, the resulting statistics (average # of floaters per hour) are ones that people understand easily and find highly engaging.

ONGOING CONSIDERATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The success of the River Ambassadors pilot was noted by partners, the public, and the Ambassadors themselves. Ambassador presence established a norm of stewardship and responsible recreation. The program relieved pressure on our partners and brought multiple jurisdictions together in collaboration to improve the recreation experience and protect river resources. Looking to future years of the River Ambassador Program, there are four types of recommendations for the pilot season. The types of recommendations are as follows:

- Coverage
- Communications
- Staffing
- Training
- Data Collection
- Outreach Strategies

Coverage was an evolving model over the 2021 field season. We would like to make the following recommendations regarding River Ambassador Coverage:

- Sha-Ron FAS
 - We would recommend having Ambassadors tabling at Sha-Ron in the future. This would give Ambassadors more confidence in their role at the site while providing coverage.
- Urban River Corridor
 - We would recommend less rotation between sites on the urban river corridor, with a greater emphasis on in-place coverage at hot spots along this stretch (i.e. collecting data @ Madison Street Bridge)

Communication was largely controlled bottom-up in this pilot season. River Ambassadors self-direct their weekly work plans and communications, supported by the Lead River Ambassador. Ambassadors made the following recommendations regarding their communications:

- River Ambassadors occasionally felt removed from the host organization, Clark Fork Coalition.
- The most valuable communications with partners occurred at the beginning of the season when Ambassadors became familiar with the goals and expectations of the partners. Communication with partners should be extended to opportunities to gauge progress, present findings, and get feedback from partners during mid-season and end-of-season meeting.
- Originally, we anticipated the need for consistent communication with law enforcement. Around mid-season Ambassadors shared they didn't feel the need to coordinate their coverage and observations with law enforcement.



Staffing the River Ambassador program was extremely successful. The program recruited high-quality team members in a short timeframe. These team members all rated their interactions together, and their effectiveness as a team, highly. Recommendations to staffing include:

- Small adjustments to the job description to accurately reflect the geography and social media duties.
- Partnering with the University of Montana in an internship program
- Adjusting the number of River Ambassadors on the team

Training for the Ambassadors was coordinated with the City of Missoula, Missoula County, Missoula Downtown Association, and Region 2 FWP staff. FWP game wardens left an excellent impression and gave valuable advice for interacting with the public. Ambassadors also found it valuable to interact with the various river-centric businesses in the community during training. Those became regular points of contact in the field and businesses regularly supported our social media communication.

“I was surprised that so many important people in the community took the time to meet with us.” River Ambassador feedback.

Our recommendations regarding training are as follows:

- Training from an Indigenous perspective on how they view water, animals, habitat, etc., and why they are sacred. River Ambassadors would like to receive training to better communicate this understanding of place and stewardship.

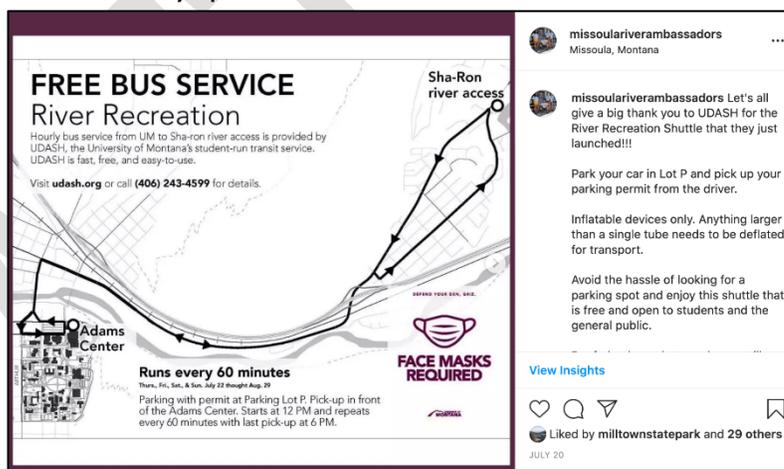
- Increased time spent developing social media content and practicing data collection.

Data collection using ESRI's survey123 was valuable to the pilot season. Our recommendations regarding data collection are as follows:

- Replicating the 2015 and 2018 river recreation counts in the URC
- A new survey to capture user-created river access trails employed opportunistically by River Ambassadors
- A new survey to capture overflow parking information that precisely informs stakeholders where river infrastructure is overloaded.
- Shorten and refine River User Survey questions

Outreach strategies during the pilot season included in-the-field coverage, social media presence, and outreach events. We believe there is potential to further strengthen and build relationships with our community and recommend pursuing the following opportunities:

- Pursue a deeper relationship with the Parks and Recreation Summer Camps, particularly camps focused on river recreation. We believe it would be impactful to our program's message of river stewardship and responsible river recreation.
- Focused outreach and education with local hotels that connects messaging to river users from outside the area.
- Organizing clean-ups and other stewardship events that create opportunities for outreach and contacts.
- Focused outreach and contacts with local equipment retailers & river service providers
- Continued development of a social media presence, focusing on these elements:
 - Creating content that capitalized on social media trends and algorithms for viewership. (i.e., creating 'reel' content. The single reel published this season got a lot of reach and engagement, compared to a single post or story.)
 - Growing engagement with River Ambassador content by coordinating with peer media accounts to share, like, and tag Ambassador content
 - Sharing content that is immediately relevant and useful to the public (i.e. our "River Rec Report", which showed expected temperatures and flows each day, was our most popular content amongst our followers)
 - Identifying ways to increase social media content visibility, non-resident, or tourist demographics.



- Using trends noted during pilot season's data collection to focus responsible river recreation messaging

CONCLUSION

We would like to thank our partners for all their contributions this season. We greatly appreciated the support shown from Missoula County, MT FWP, the City of Missoula, and the Clark Fork Coalition. The resources and training you provided were essential in our success. Thank you for all your support.



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Appendices

A: River User Survey – Highlighted Responses

Date	Where is the River User from?	How does the River User feel about the River Restoration and Access Project?	Would the River User like to see any additional services provided on the River Corridor? (eg: restrooms, drinking fountains, informational signage, car parking, bike parking etc.)	Please share any additional comments, concerns, or suggestions:
6/26/21				Would be great if there was a teach can at Deer Creek beach
6/26/21				Good privacy which some river access spots provide. Concerned about river access sites being removed.
6/28/21				Dissatisfied with the amount of trash observed on south riverbank in urban corridor. Would like to see more beach access sites on south river
6/28/21				Seen lots of lost yacht club frisbee/paddles. More river bags around!

6/29/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Very Satisfied		Group of 2 in IK. Excited about the ambassador program. Concerned about losing favorite access sites due to hardening river infrastructure.
7/3/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Neutral	Please make sure there are enough access sites for peak use in the summer	
7/3/21	OutOfState (Minnesota)	Neutral	Recycling bins	
7/3/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Satisfied	More education on where/how to float (they just moved here).	
7/4/21	Local_InState	Neutral		Lives down in Livingston. Up for the Holiday and a friend's birthday. Very in favor of ambassadorship
7/4/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Satisfied	Unaware but intrigued. Think controlling streambank erosion is important.	Older couple that uses SUPs. Excited about the RA program. Sha-Ron is too busy for them.
7/4/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Very Satisfied	Feels the city is very considerate of community needs. Thinks more vehicle parking would be nice but likely the crux of logistics	SUP. Walks dogs and beach access use at Jacobs Island. Usually only SUPs 3-5x a summer but anticipates doing more in 2021 due to the heat.
7/4/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Neutral	College group that didn't have much of a reaction.	College group that floats often and takes out at Jacobs Island. They never bring glass and always stay hydrated (by bringing Gatorade).

7/4/21	OutOfState (California & Indiana)	Neutral	Not a resident.	Digital nomads passing through town and floating on rented SUPs 1x before moving on to Kalispell/Glacier country.
7/4/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Dissatisfied	Would prefer to see a more 'natural' management approach to how/where the river flows thru town. Very anti-channelizing the river.	Commented that the parking lot to the west of the Orange St bridge (north-side) is under-utilized.
7/4/21	Local_InState	Neutral		Younger couple from Helena visiting family in town. Brought son to River to cool off.
7/4/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Neutral		Transient gentleman. Very kind. Interested in responsible river rec. Talked about not fishing in the heat. ~25 beach users at site.
7/5/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Very Satisfied	It is important to these users that the restoration and access project considers ecological concerns, not just recreation. Very interested on seeing the MAX wave completed.	Nice couple with adult son. Strong interest in the MAX wave completion. Would like to see more parking available near Silvers Park - so they don't feel the need to use the S+R ramp..
7/9/21	OutOfState (Colorado)	Satisfied	Better parking	
7/9/21	Local_InState	Neutral		River user floated to downtown and loved it!

7/9/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Neutral	More trash cans & clearer signage for river access points.	
7/10/21	Local_InState	Satisfied		
7/10/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Neutral		They really appreciated the duct tape.
7/10/21	Local_InState		Na	
7/11/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Satisfied	Like the idea of managing the river thru town. Would like to maintain a natural river look	Father with 3 children. Floats MSP to JI with them often. Only does weekends when university parking is free. Likes shuttle idea - wonders if will be family friendly.
7/11/21	Local_MissoulaCounty			Trash cans needed. Lots of private parties want it
7/12/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Neutral		Group of 13 college aged floaters. Happy to recreate responsibly though did not seem to take the proper preparedness steps.
7/12/21	International (Germany)	Neutral		Very nice German couple. Spoke to them initially about streambank erosion, since they were at a user created site. Quickly pivoted to their journeys and offering ideas for visiting and

				sharing how to river recreate in Missoula/Clark Fork.
7/15/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Satisfied	Anti MAX wave - concerned about fish habitat disruption	Couple with 1 child. Uses the area just downstream of S+R consistently. Has a raft and stay away from taking their raft to the urban stretch, prefers the Blackfoot and Bitterroot.
7/15/21	Local_CityofMissoula,Local_MissoulaCounty	Neutral		Group of 3 families with their 7 combined kids. 1 family lives on Easy St so they come to Ben Hughes very often in the summer. Had wine bottles, spoke to them about glass - seemed receptive. Interviewed one of the Mother's for survey.
7/16/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Neutral	Apathetic response	Group of 4 men. Floated Sha-Ron to Bess Reed. Parked 1 vehicle at Sha-Ron on 200 (spoke about risks and plugged MSP). One parked at Caras park lot.
7/16/21	OutOfState (Arizona)			They were out of staters who were a little intoxicated, but nice
7/17/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Satisfied	More river access points friendly to various groups.	
7/17/21	Local_CityofMissoula,Local_InState	Satisfied	Perhaps another dog park further downstream.	Couple brought their dogs down to the river to cool off/swim. Their parents are visiting from

				Augusta. Usually take their dogs to the beach at the Clark Fork Natural area.
7/22/21	OutOfState (California)		Bathrooms	They were from out of state, and were in a bit of a hurry
7/22/21	OutOfState (Utah)		Garbage cans	They love the fact that there's so much public lands
7/22/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Satisfied		Satisfied river access
7/23/21	OutOfState (Vermont)			"We love the bike path all along the river"
7/23/21	OutOfState (California)	Neutral		Old couple visiting from California. Thought "our program sounded very important."
7/23/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Satisfied		Group of 3 Missoula kids back from school for the summer. "It's cool that Missoula has a Rover Ambassador program. I think you guys will help new college students be safer on the river." - Tom J
7/23/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Neutral		Little girl and her family at Maclay Flats. She wanted to tell me about all the river responsible things her family does and how they never leave trash. She said it would be nice if there were more recycling bins out in public.

7/24/21		Neutral		Aquatic ecologist and her daughter. Coming to do some rock collection at MSP. They liked the idea of this program and imagine it helps streamline the put-in process.
7/24/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Neutral		2 couples and a young child. They like to float MSP to Boone and Crockett. They usually drive. Told them about the river rec shuttle since floats are getting longer. They're in favor of the program - no quotes:(
7/24/21	Local_InState	Neutral		Big friend gathering with folks from many cities in MT. 3 in Missoula. They love the river ambassador idea. "That's what makes Missoula such a fun city. They promote fun!" - Trevor J. Floating MSP to Silvers.
7/29/21	Local_CityofMissoula			More signage at McClay flats to avoid walk in boat loading overcrowding
7/30/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Neutral	More recycling bins	More recycling bins
7/30/21	OutOfState (California)	Neutral		"I'm definitely gonna follow you guys on Instagram"-Sean from Lake Tahoe
7/30/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Satisfied	A trash can under the Madison.	

7/30/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Neutral	Na	“The more services there are, the more people are going to come and use them. I’d rather go out of my way to an early used place”
7/31/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Satisfied	Waa not aware of the project but expressed appreciation when learning about the project. Likes the direction, general idea.	Couple with young child floating in tandem duckie - Maclay to Kelly Island. Likes the idea of the RA program, wants RAs to focus on river trash.
7/31/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Very Satisfied	Would like to see trash cans	2 moms with 5 kids. They think Maclay is very family friendly. not interested in leashing dog when mentioned. "Thanks for keeping the river clean!" - Beth J.. they expressed appreciation for parks and rec summer programs.
7/31/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Neutral	A drinking fountain between country club and river access sites	
7/31/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Neutral	Trash cans @ deer creek	
8/1/21	Local_InState		No	“In Hawaii, they’re not allowed to use most sunscreens. The river here is just as important”
8/1/21	Local_CityofMissoula	Very Satisfied		They love the River Ambassador program
8/7/21	Local_CityofMissoula			More trash infrastructure. No dogs are on leash in leashes required areas. Recommends

				informational kiosk to touch on rules/regs/etiquette.
8/7/21	Local_CityofMissoula			More parking is needed
8/7/21	Local_CityofMissoula,OutOfState	Satisfied	"It important for our city to keep up with the increased river use. I'm glad they are trying to keep up with the increased use. This river ambassador program seems to be a good way to educate people on how to use our rivers.	"We're looking forward to a great float. Thanks for the info about the first ripple under the train bridge." -Jeanne S -- group of 4 couples. floating MSP to ShaRon. One couple is visiting from Colorado.
8/12/21	Local_InState		Kids splash pad	They were curious about our job, so I gave them our social media
8/14/21	OutOfState (Utah)	Neutral		Visitor passing through, hoping to get into Canada for school but was turned back due to COVID. Thinks the River Ambassador program is a very cool program, imagines there is a good need for them. Liked learned about Missoula's water treatment system
8/14/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Neutral	Trash cans at every main river access point	
8/14/21	Local_CityofMissoula			Drinking fountain needed at Milltown SP

8/20/21	Local_InState	Very Dissatisfied	More seating, sculptures at Caras	"I heard they're removing the hill at Caras Park. I hope they don't, there's so much nostalgia there for me. I also don't like how they cut down al" the trees along the river front"
8/21/21	Local_MissoulaCounty	Very Satisfied	"No, this is how I like it".	"I love public lands, and it's great that they built this place (Milltown State Park) with our tax dollars. It benefits everyone, and the animals too"

B. River User Survey Questions

Section	Question	Hint	Type of Question	Possible Answers	Related Questions
Transportation	How many river users are in the group?		Number		
Transportation	How many floatation devices is this group using?		Number		
Transportation	How did the River Users get to the river today?		Multiple Choice, Select One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Vehicle • Public Transportation • Bicycle • On Foot • Skateboard • Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the River User drove a personal vehicle, they were asked to specify where they parked. • If they indicated 'other', they were asked to specify their type of transport.
River Use Activities	Which activities will the River User participate in this summer?	Please include activities only on the Missoula river corridor, ~30 minutes from downtown.	Multiple Choice, Select Multiple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Access • Floating (Single) • Floating (Multi) • Fishing • Surfing • Dog walking • Other 	
River Use Activities	How often will the River User participate in these activities this summer?	Please include activities only on the Missoula river	Multiple Choice, Select One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Access • Floating (Single) • Floating (Multi) 	

		corridor, ~30 minutes from downtown.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing • Surfing • Dog walking • Other 	
River Use Activities	Which river activity does the River User participate in most often?	Please include activities only on the Missoula river corridor, ~30 minutes from downtown.	Multiple Choice, Select One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Access • Floating (Single) • Floating (Multi) • Fishing • Surfing • Dog walking • Other 	
Missoula's City Restoration and Access Project	Are you aware of Missoula's River Restoration & Access Project?	This project seeks to improve river access, minimize erosion, and stabilize banks by hardening surfaces and enhancing river infrastructure.	Multiple Choice, Select One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No 	
Missoula's City Restoration and Access Project	Did you participate in, or provide input on, the planning of the River Restoration and Access Project?		Multiple Choice, Select One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No 	
Missoula's City Restoration and Access Project	How does the River User feel about the River Restoration and Access Project?	Ask the user how they feel about the Restoration & Access Project. Are they happy about these management activities or would they prefer a more hands-off approach to the Downtown River Stretch	Multiple Choice, Select One, Lickert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very Dissatisfied • Dissatisfied • Neutral • Satisfied • Very Satisfied 	
Missoula's City Restoration and Access Project	Would the River User like to see any additional services provided on the River	Ask the user if they have any additional river-related services they	Text		

	Corridor? (e.g.: restrooms, drinking fountains, informational signage, car parking, bike parking etc.)	would like to see provided or incorporated into the Restoration & Access Project. Try to use Keywords. This question is Urban River Corridor Centric.			
Responsible River Recreation	What does being a Responsible River Recreationalist mean to you?	Ask the river User if they 'know what it means to recreate responsibly on the river', let them riff, and record any answers given. Try to minimize hints or guiding the respondent.	Multiple Choice, Select Multiple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Aware of Water Hazards • Bring Water Shoes • Stay Hydrated • Use Sunscreen • Do Not Bring Glass to the River • Leave No Trace Principles • Respect Private Land • Give other River Recreators Space • No Offensive Behavior • Clear Launch Quickly • Be Aware of Space at River Access Sites • Inflation out of the Way of the River Access, Vehicles, and Other Users • Be considerate of the Soundscape • Only Access the River at Designated Sites • Do not use Steep or Eroded Paths to Access the River 	
River Users' Access Sites	Please mark the river access site that the River User Accessed today:	Ask the River User to share the river access sites that they used today/have used in the past. Use the	Geopoint		

		plus (+) button below to add an additional river access sites - the more the better!			
River Users' Access Sites	How often do you access this site?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 Times • Less than Once a Month • 1-2 Times a Month • 1-2 Times a Week • 3-4 Times a Week • 5+ Times a Week 	
Comments	Record any additional comments, concerns, or suggestions received:	Let them know that comments will help better plan river policies & infrastructure.	Text		
Demographic	If the River User is willing, what is their birth year?	What year was the River User born?	Number		
Demographic	Where is the River User from?	Please select multiple locations where the users are from, if the group is diverse.	Multiple Choice, Select Multiple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local – City of Missoula • Local – Missoula County • Local – In-State • Out of State • International 	