



**FISCAL YEAR 2024 RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM AWARDS  
RECORD OF DECISION  
May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024**

### **Recreational Trails Program Authority and Scope**

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides funds for development, renovation, maintenance, and acquisition of land for recreational trails and for trail-related safety, education, and information. Section 206 of Title 23, United States Code, establishes the RTP as a federal-aid program. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) administers this program at the federal level [23 U.S.C. 206 (b)] while Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is charged with program administration at the state level [23 U.S.C 206 (c)] and as designated by the Governor. After allowing for federal rescissions, overhead, and indirect costs, approximately \$1.5 million was available for grants from Montana's FY 2024 RTP apportionment.

### **RTP Grant Application Process and Awards**

Montana received a federal RTP allocation totaling approximately \$1.5 million for Fiscal Year 2024 RTP projects. Table 1 (attached) reflects the approximate funding amount to be awarded to each subrecipient in FY 2024.

This year, FWP received 47 RTP grant applications with requests totaling approximately \$2.4 million. Of the original applications received, 37 applications are recommended for either full or partial funding based on their application scores and how well the projects adhere to State Trails Advisory Committee and FWP priorities.

The recommended FY 2024 RTP projects were deemed successful based on technical eligibility, application scoring, and funding availability. FWP posted a list of the 37 recommended projects on its website, sent out press releases, and announced a period for public comment. The public comment period ran from March 26<sup>th</sup> through April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Since the closing of public comment, 1 project sponsor has opted to pull their RTP application. 36 of the 37 recommended projects are approved for funding and listed within this decision notice.

### **Environmental Review of RTP Applications**

Each of the recommended projects must satisfy environmental reviews for both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). Seven (7) of the projects were exempt from completion of an environmental review because they included only education/awareness or the purchase of equipment.

The 30 projects that were not exempt from environmental review included environmental review documents with their applications. Most projects provided adequate documentation, including a MEPA/NEPA Environmental

Analysis Checklist or a Categorical Exclusion Checklist. Those projects that provided insufficient environmental review documentation have submitted the required documentation to the RTP Manager.

The RTP Manager completed an environmental review of each project before the RTP Agreement is issued. All recommended FY 2024 RTP projects qualified for a FHWA Categorical Exclusion under NEPA (23 CFR 771.117(c)(23)) and MEPA (ARM 18.2.261(2)(w)). The major categories for which impacts are being reviewed include the following:

- **Soils:** Maintenance and renovations of existing trails will have immediate short-term negative impacts during the time of on-ground maintenance but will result in long-term positive impacts. Soil erosion will be reduced, and water runoff will be diverted gradually 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 serious effects were noted.
- **Water Quality, Hydrology, Fisheries:** Maintenance and renovation of existing trails will have immediate short-term negative 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 should have positive impacts.
- **Wildlife:** Almost any type of unusual or intermittent disturbance, including trails and trail use, can have a negative effect on wildlife species and perhaps wildlife habitat. Environmental reviews completed for grant projects analyzed these potential impacts and the effects were determined to be minimal.
- **Land Use:** Grant projects will not change the existing types of use on those trails affected as noted in applications by the land managers.
- **Economic Impacts:** Numerous studies conclude that public trails benefit local economies. A strong trail system both helps preserve natural amenities and provides greater opportunities for enjoying them. Trails are significant economic generators that attract businesses, draw tourism, create jobs, and increase property values. Trails can also result in negative economic impacts, including the potential spread of noxious weeds. Projects included in this year’s program are anticipated to have generally positive economic impacts.
- **Outdoor Recreation Impacts:** Grant projects will have positive impacts on outdoor recreation. Maintenance and renovation of trail systems will enhance the user’s experience while protecting resources. The opportunity for public comment through the grant application process is intended to reduce the possibility of funding projects of questionable merit or with potential to increase conflict.
- **Cultural Resources:** No negative impacts on cultural resources were identified in the individual project environmental review process or through public scoping.
- **Cumulative and Irreversible Impacts:** No significant cumulative or irreversible impacts are anticipated from FY 2024 RTP grant projects.

## Public Comment Summary

During the public comment period, FWP received nine (9) comments.

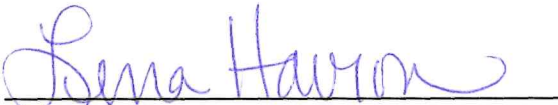
4 Comments expressed general support for various proposed projects.

4 comments expressed concern for the proposed project sponsored by the Prickly Pear Land Trust for trail maintenance, re-tread, and minor re-routes on 12miles of trail within the South-Hills trail system within the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest.

1 comment expressed desire for snowmobile-focused grants to provide benefit to nonmotorized trail users (e.g., a non-motorized lane for Fat Tire bikes). RTP is required to commit 30% of it's funding to motorized-focused trail projects. Concern of tree topping by snowmobiles was also expressed.

## Decision

The decision of Operations and Fiscal Services, a division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, is to approve the FY 2024 Recreational Trails Program grant awards for the projects listed in Table 1 (attached), as recommended by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks staff and the State Trails Advisory Committee.



Lena Havron  
Chief Financial Officer

**Table 1 2024 Recreational Trails Program Awards**

<b>Organization Name</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Funding Amount</b>
<b>Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness Foundation</b>	2024 Volunteer Trail Stewardship in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness	\$30,000.00
<b>Beartooth Recreational Trails Association</b>	Winter Trail Maintenance of the West Fork Road and red Lodge Nordic Center	\$7,560.00
<b>Billings TrailNet</b>	Extending the Big Ditch Trail; Connecting Families to Parks and Schools.	\$84,181.98
<b>Billings, City of</b>	Rose Park Trail: Enhancing Recreation and Connectivity, Phase 2	\$50,000.00
<b>Bitterroot Ridge Runners Snowmobile Club</b>	Bitterroot Ridge Runners Snowmobile Trail Grooming	\$40,000.00
<b>Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation</b>	Volunteer Stewardship Projects in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex	\$35,000.00
<b>Bridger Ski Foundation</b>	Bridger Ski Foundation Community Nordic Trails Grooming and Operations	\$32,000.00
<b>Flathead Snowmobile Association</b>	Flathead Snowmobile Association Grooming of Snowmobile Trails in Canyon Creek and Olney & Upper Whitefish Area.	\$92,000.00
<b>Foy's To Blacktail Trails</b>	Emmons Ridge Trail Drainage and Naturalization	\$20,000.00
<b>Gallatin Valley Land Trust</b>	Painted Hills Trail Enhancements	\$34,360.00
<b>Glacier Nordic Club</b>	Big Mountain Nordic Trail Grooming	\$32,000.00
<b>Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Association</b>	Helena Lewis & Clark National Forest trail safety & maintenance for motorized trail recreation.	\$67,500.00
<b>Kings Hill Grooming Association</b>	Kings Hill Grooming Association Snowmobile Trail Grooming and Trail Maintenance	\$69,200.00
<b>Kootenai Cross-Country Ski Club, Inc</b>	Purchase updated grooming equipment for Nordic ski trails.	\$21,000.00
<b>Last Chance Nordic Ski Club</b>	Grooming equipment acquisition for MacDonald Pass ski trails	\$21,605.00
<b>Mile High Nordic Ski Education Foundation</b>	Equipment purchases for two Cross-Country Ski areas, Southwest Montana	\$27,449.00
<b>Missoula Nordic Ski Club</b>	Equipment, trail work & signage to support grooming of cross-country ski trails in Missoula County	\$28,756.00
<b>Missoula Snowgoers Snowmobile Association</b>	Lolo Pass Ski and Snowmobile Trail Grooming	\$30,000.00
<b>Missoula, City of Parks and Recreation Department</b>	Rattlesnake Greenway Recreational Plan Implementation- Duncan Trail & Trailhead	\$100,000.00

<b>MTB Missoula *</b>	Marshall Mountain Early Phase Adaptive Trail Construction	\$100,000.00
<b>Ruby Habitat Foundation</b>	Nature Trail Signage Upgrades for the Woodson Ranch Nature Trail	\$720.00
<b>Seeley Lake Nordic Ski Club</b>	Seeley Lake Nordic Ski Trail Grooming	\$23,000.00
<b>Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation</b>	Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Volunteer Trail Clearing and Maintenance, 2025	\$25,000.00
<b>Shelby, City of</b>	Roadrunner Recreation Trail Crack Seal and Coat	\$65,400.00
<b>Silver Crest Trails Association</b>	Silver Crest Trails Nordic Grooming	\$9,370.00
<b>The Trust for Public Land</b>	Yellowstone Heritage Trail, Emigrant Segment - New Pedestrian Bridge Construction	\$100,000.00
<b>USFS-Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest Service-Dillon Ranger District</b>	Beacon Training Park	\$4,400.00
<b>USFS-Custer Gallatin National Forest-Bozeman Ranger District</b>	2024 Bozeman RD Year-Round Trail Maintenance and Volunteer Leadership Project	\$35,000.00
<b>USFS-Custer Gallatin National Forest-Hebgen Lake Ranger District</b>	Hebgen Lake RD Trail Crew Summer/Winter Trail Maintenance	\$20,000.00
<b>USFS-Flathead Avalanche Center</b>	Avalanche Forecasting and Education	\$22,608.00
<b>USFS-Gallatin National Forest-Avalanche Center</b>	Saving Lives through Avalanche Forecasting in SW Montana	\$22,608.00
<b>USFS-Lolo National Forest-Ninemile Ranger District</b>	Petty/Albert Heavy Trail Maintenance	\$15,942.00
<b>USFS-Lolo National Forest-Superior Ranger District</b>	Trail Lake Reestablishment Project	\$38,000.00
<b>West Central Montana Avalanche Foundation</b>	Avalanche Information and Education	\$30,000.00
<b>West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce</b>	Snowmobile trail grooming from West Yellowstone, Montana	\$90,000.00
<b>Whitefish Legacy Partners*</b>	The Whitefish Trail - Smith Lake-Swift Creek Recreation Expansion	\$50,000.00

\* Project funding is contingent upon completion of Environmental Review Requirements to be approved by FWP & FHWA.