



# *A NEW DAY FOR MONTANA STATE PARKS*

Parks in Focus Commission Final Recommendations

*DECEMBER 2018*



PICTOGRAPH CAVE STATE PARK



MADISON BUFFALO JUMP STATE PARK



WILD HORSE ISLAND STATE PARK



TRAVELERS' REST STATE PARK

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*We thank Montana State Parks and Montana State Parks Foundation for the photos in this report.  
The cover photo shows Makoshika State Park.*



SMITH RIVER STATE PARK

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montana state parks are the most affordable and accessible destinations in the state to camp, hike, fish, swim, boat, and discover our world-renowned natural and cultural treasures. However, our parks are under serious stress, and these problems are not new. The Parks in Focus Commission was established under executive order by Governor Steve Bullock to strengthen the state parks system and to ensure that the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks has the resources, capacity, and expertise to implement the three recommendations from the 2015-2020 Montana State Parks and Recreation strategic plan: developing diversified revenue streams, growing strategic partnerships, and building an engaged constituency for state parks.

Over the course of 2018, the 12-member Commission conducted extensive research and surveys, held public meetings and site visits around the state, consulted experts in the field, and solicited staff and public comments to arrive at the recommendations in this final report. The Commission's final recommendations aim to break the cycle that has hindered state parks for decades, build the foundation for success, and start today for the future state parks system Montanans deserve.

It is no secret that Montana State Parks has a funding problem. There simply are not enough resources to sustain 55 state parks. Our philosophy as a Commission has been that we must look at Parks holistically, addressing the whole patient and not just symptoms. It is not sufficient to identify funding shortfalls or simply to ask for more money. To secure more funding, the Commission believes Parks must address internal issues and capitalize on external opportunities. Parks must lay the foundation for success by building credibility through a commitment to leadership and adhering to a disciplined approach. Parks must create excitement through a compelling vision and set of public experiences to attract partners and build constituents. Only with these conditions in place will additional funding ensure that state parks remain an essential part of Montana's culture, economy, and outdoor way of life.

Our recommendations follow this logic of building internal competence and external relationships. We also recognize that Parks must combine short-term pragmatism with a sustained commitment to excellence. We lay out a strategic roadmap to achieve four main goals:

1. The Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks is a unified agency, with aligned vision, mission and programming, and a bench of strong leaders.
2. The Parks Division has clear strategic priorities, efficient management systems, sufficient staffing, and strong internal capability.
3. The Parks Division has a strong partnership culture, with partners significantly leveraging division capacity to improve the state park experience, and a broad set of advocates promoting and championing the benefits of parks and recreation.
4. The Parks Division utilizes short, medium, and long-term funding strategies to stabilize and then build for the future state parks system Montanans deserve.

The Commission has outlined a detailed set of actions for each of these goals. These efforts collectively will lead to new and reliable funding for Montana's parks system only with a sustained commitment to implementation. We believe that with the new leadership in place at the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, a compelling vision and disciplined approach at Parks, and an engaged, vocal set of constituents, we can break the vicious cycle and marshal the vision, courage and creativity needed to build and support the parks system Montanans deserve.

# VISION FOR PARKS

Montana Parks In Focus envisions a responsive and relevant system of state parks that begins with a strong, aligned, re-energized Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks; a compelling vision and investment strategy and enhanced competency at the Parks Division; broad engagement of people, partners, businesses, and communities; and a defined path toward short, medium, and long-term sustainable funding. We recognize that the outside connects us all, whether we are exploring a ghost town or an underground cavern, running a river or running a trail, attending a pow wow or setting up camp. With a focus on the outdoor experience, Montana's state parks have the necessary capacity and public support to ensure that state parks remain an essential part of Montana's culture, economy, and outdoor way of life.



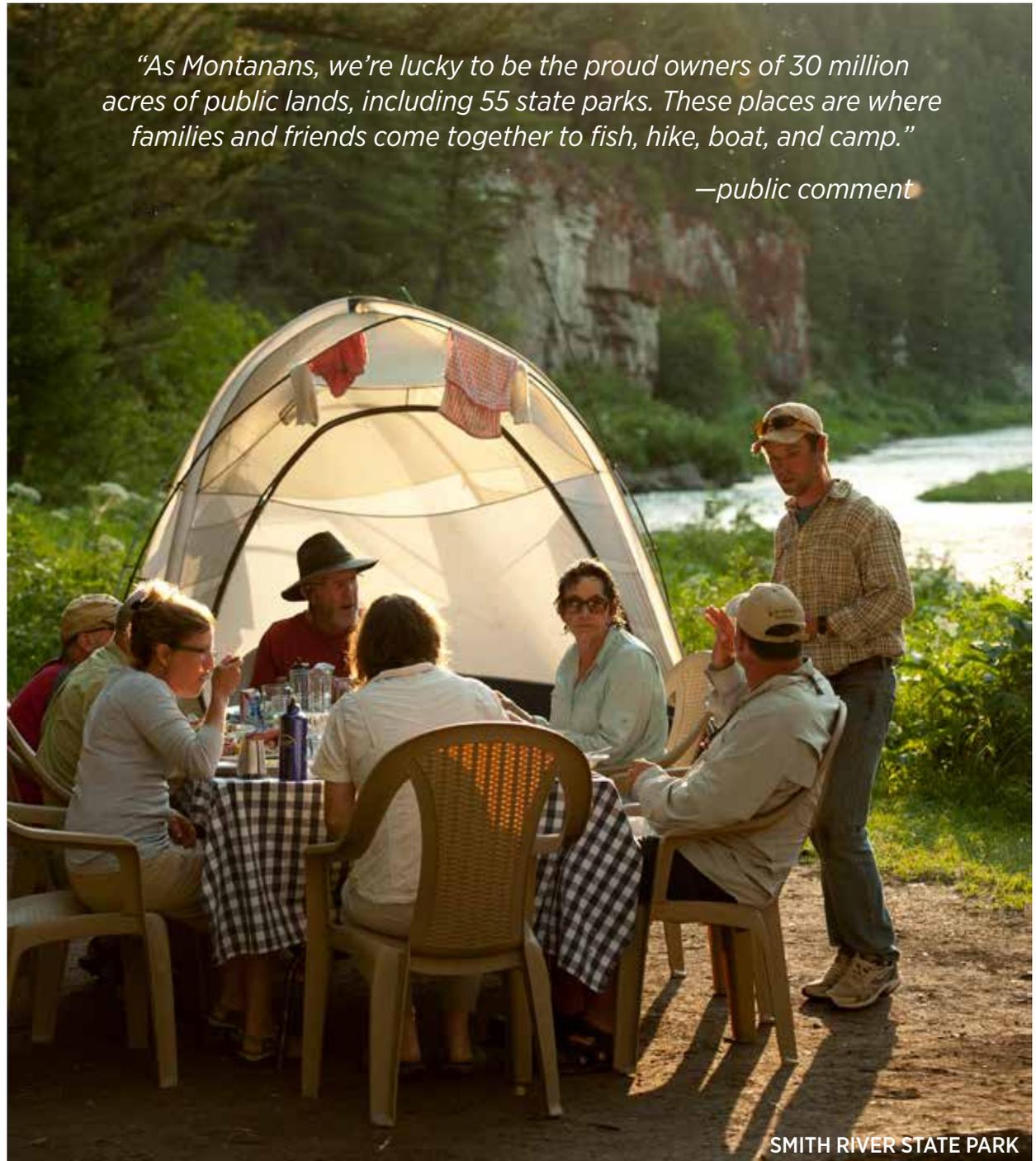
MISSOURI HEADWATERS STATE PARK

Our recommendations lay out a strategic roadmap to achieve four goals that we believe can make this vision a reality:

- *The Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks is a unified agency, with aligned vision, mission and programming, and a bench of strong leaders.*
- *The Parks Division has clear strategic priorities, efficient management systems, sufficient staffing, and strong internal capability.*
- *The Parks Division has a strong partnership culture, with partners significantly leveraging division capacity to improve the state park experience, and a broad set of advocates promoting and championing the benefits of parks and recreation.*
- *The Parks Division utilizes short, medium, and long-term funding strategies to stabilize, lay the foundation, and build for the future state parks system Montanans deserve.*

*“As Montanans, we’re lucky to be the proud owners of 30 million acres of public lands, including 55 state parks. These places are where families and friends come together to fish, hike, boat, and camp.”*

*—public comment*





*“We can’t take our state parks for granted.  
Without sustainable funding, our parks won’t be able  
to support the increased use that they are seeing.”*

*—public comment*

**BANNACK STATE PARK**

# INTRODUCTION

Montanans love and value our rich mosaic of public lands, including state parks. Montana state parks are the most affordable and accessible destinations in the state to camp, hike, fish, swim, boat, and discover our world-renowned natural and cultural treasures. Perhaps that is why nine out of 10 Montana residents have visited a state park.<sup>1</sup> Communities across Montana recognize that our 55 state parks support health, attract employers and families, and are a vital part of our high quality of life.

Despite our love for state parks, however, we are not adequately funding or investing in them. While state park visitation skyrocketed 40 percent over the last 10 years, funding and staffing levels stagnated.<sup>2</sup> Thirty years worth of studies have all noted the chronic underfunding of parks, which now includes a \$22 million backlog of major maintenance and infrastructure projects. Dedicated and resourceful state park employees struggle to meet the needs and expectations of visitors, much less steward our world-class natural, heritage, and recreational assets.

Recognizing these deep challenges, the Parks Division (Parks) and Montana State Parks and Recreation Board (Board) in 2014 undertook an extensive strategic planning exercise that outlined three major goals: develop diversified revenues, grow strategic public-private partnerships, and build an engaged constituency. The 2015-2020 strategic plan, called “Charting A New Tomorrow,” was finalized in December 2014. Despite this solid plan, upheaval ensued at Parks, with a legislative bill to separate Parks from the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (ultimately vetoed by the Governor), an \$11.2 million unspent and unaccounted for funding balance, the abrupt departure of the Parks Administrator, turnover of the State Parks and Recreation Board, and a financial and performance audit ordered by the state legislature.

*1 Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, 2018*

*2 Montana State Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, 2015-2020*

Responding to the Parks crisis, on January 12, 2018 Governor Steve Bullock issued an executive order establishing the Montana Parks in Focus Commission as a public-private collaboration to strengthen the state parks system and to ensure that the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks has the resources, capacity, and expertise to implement the Montana State Parks and Recreation 2015-2020 strategic plan. The purpose of the Montana Parks in Focus Commission is to provide expert, independent recommendations that focus on implementation of the three goals outlined in the plan: developing diversified revenue streams, growing strategic partnerships, and building an engaged constituency for state parks.

During 2018, the Commission reviewed previous Parks assessments and reports; hosted four well-attended public Commission meetings in Three Forks, Kalispell, Glendive, and Great Falls to deliberate and gather public input; held site visits at six state parks across the state; conducted extensive internal and external surveys to learn more about how state parks function and public desires for state parks; and examined top performing state parks systems in the region (see Appendix D for details).

In addition, the Commission worked closely with the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), Parks Division, and Montana State Parks and Recreation Board to understand challenges and identify solutions. We were pleased to discover that it is a new day for state parks, with new, inspired leadership at the agency, division, and board levels all working collaboratively and constructively to ensure Parks' success.

At FWP's request, Parks in Focus facilitated two leadership retreats with the FWP senior management team; spearheaded a critical parks classification effort with Parks staff and leadership; implemented a summer-long Montana State Parks Adventure Challenge to increase Parks' constituency; facilitated the Montana State Parks Foundation board retreat; and solicited and synthesized more than 150 public comments and 14 pages of unique comments from FWP and Parks staff on draft recommendations.

The following analysis and recommendations emerge from this robust process and input, and aim to break the cycle that has plagued state parks, build the foundation for success, and start today for the future state parks system Montanans deserve.



# QUICK FACTS

**55** State Parks covering 46,538 acres

**7** National Historic Landmarks

**4** Outdoor Recreation Grant Programs

Over **2.5** million visits annually

Sustains **1,600** tourism and outdoor recreation jobs in local communities

Generates over **\$289m** annually to local economies

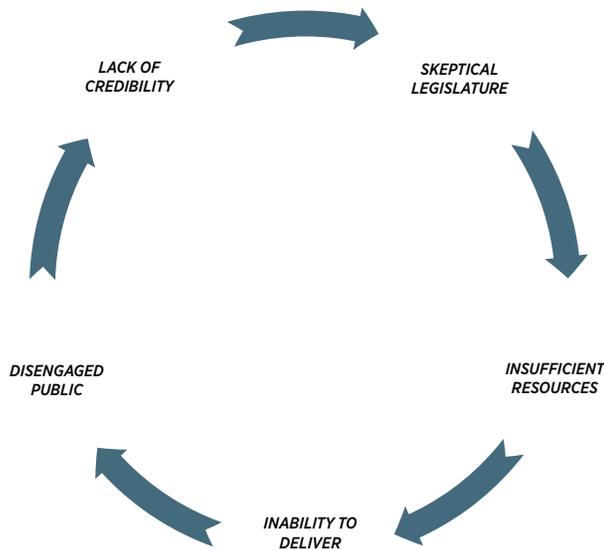
WAYFARERS / FLATHEAD LAKE STATE PARK

## Break the Cycle

It is no secret that Montana State Parks has a funding problem. There simply are not enough resources to sustain 55 state parks. To put this into context, Montana has by far the largest number of state parks and roughly  $\frac{2}{3}$  the staffing and  $\frac{2}{3}$  the parks budget compared to our neighboring states.<sup>3</sup>

In a state like Montana that arguably values its public lands, heritage, and outdoor recreation opportunities more than any other state, why do we consistently underfund our parks? After analyzing over thirty years of previous studies and strategic plans, it appears that our state parks system is stuck in a vicious cycle that is very difficult to break.

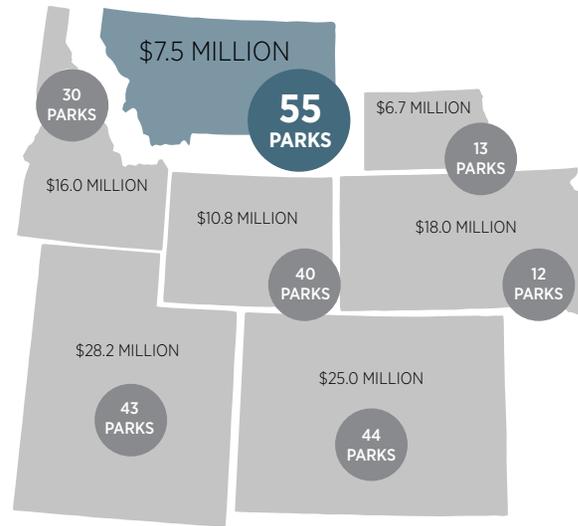
Figure 1. Vicious cycle



<sup>3</sup> Environmental Quality Council, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, 2018

Figure 2. Number of state parks and operating budget, 2012



Our citizens acknowledge the importance of parks, visit them regularly and in increasing numbers, and express a desire for greater investment in amenities like trails that would enhance their experiences.<sup>4</sup> Yet state funding is limited, and very real fiscal constraints as well as concerns over Parks' ability to manage these funds in an effective manner leads to insufficient Parks budgets. This, in turn, leaves Parks without the resources to be good stewards and to deliver on its mission, further eroding trust and confidence with both the public and the state legislature, which sets the cycle up to repeat itself.

The following Parks in Focus recommendations are designed to break this vicious cycle, addressing both the internal issues and external forces shaping Parks' performance and future.

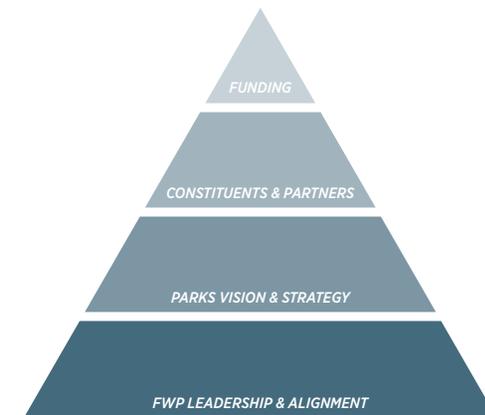
## Build the Foundation

Our philosophy as a Commission has been that we must look at Parks holistically, addressing the whole patient and not just symptoms. It is not sufficient to identify funding shortfalls or simply to ask for more money.

Parks must lay the foundation for success by building credibility through a commitment to leadership and adhering to a disciplined approach, and create excitement through crafting a compelling vision and set of public experiences to attract partners and build constituents. Only with these building blocks will Parks get the increased funding it needs and deserves.

As shown in Figure 3, our recommendations are laid out as building blocks, each one necessary for the next, starting internally and then building externally, ultimately leading to new and more diversified funding streams for Parks.

Figure 3. Building blocks for funding



Leadership + Vision + Constituents = **Funding**

## Start Today for Tomorrow

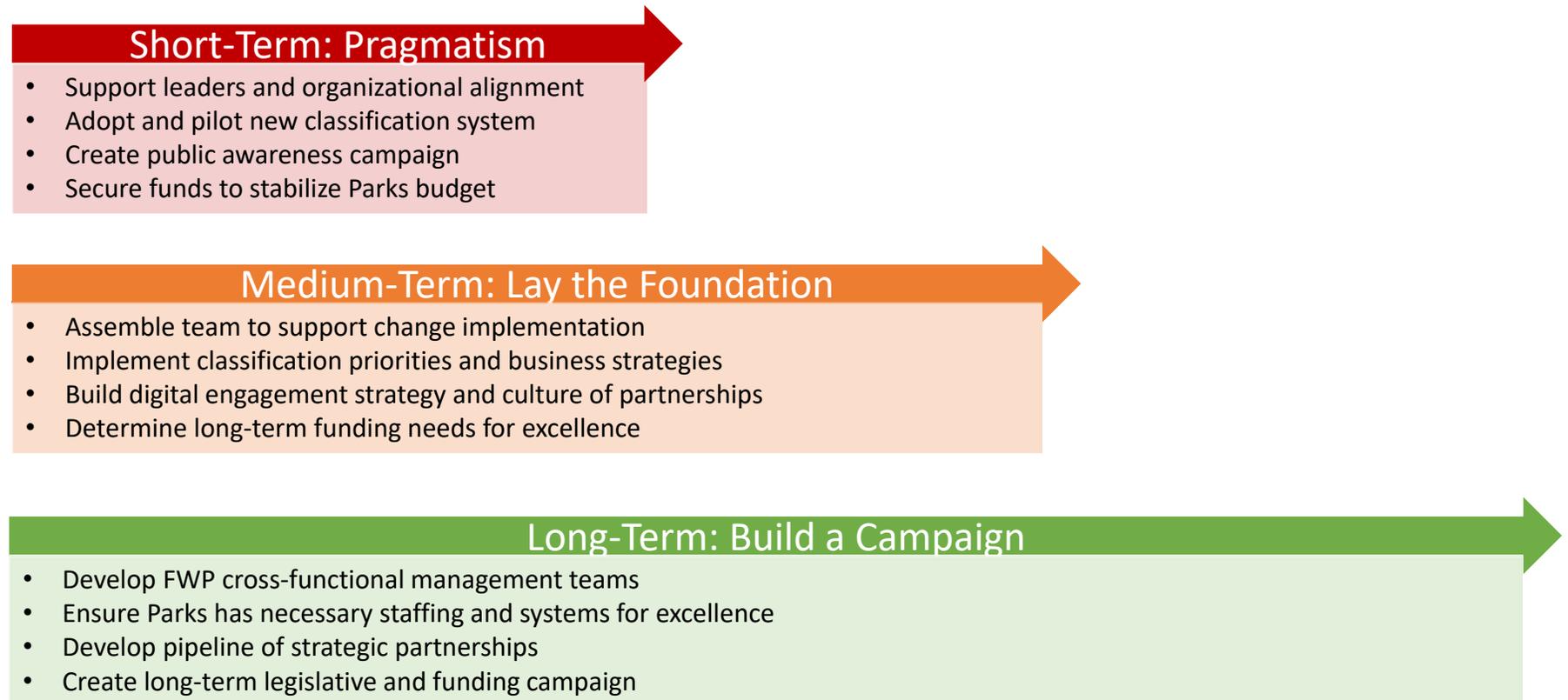
The Commission recognizes that there is no silver bullet, and that it will take short-term realism and long-term dedication from both leaders within the system and engaged park champions to fix what is broken in our system. We are encouraged by the incredible changes already underway, and have confidence in Parks' long-term success. We recognize the key to that success lies not in these recommendations, but in their implementation.

Appendix C details each recommendation, as well as who is taking responsibility and the timeline for completion.

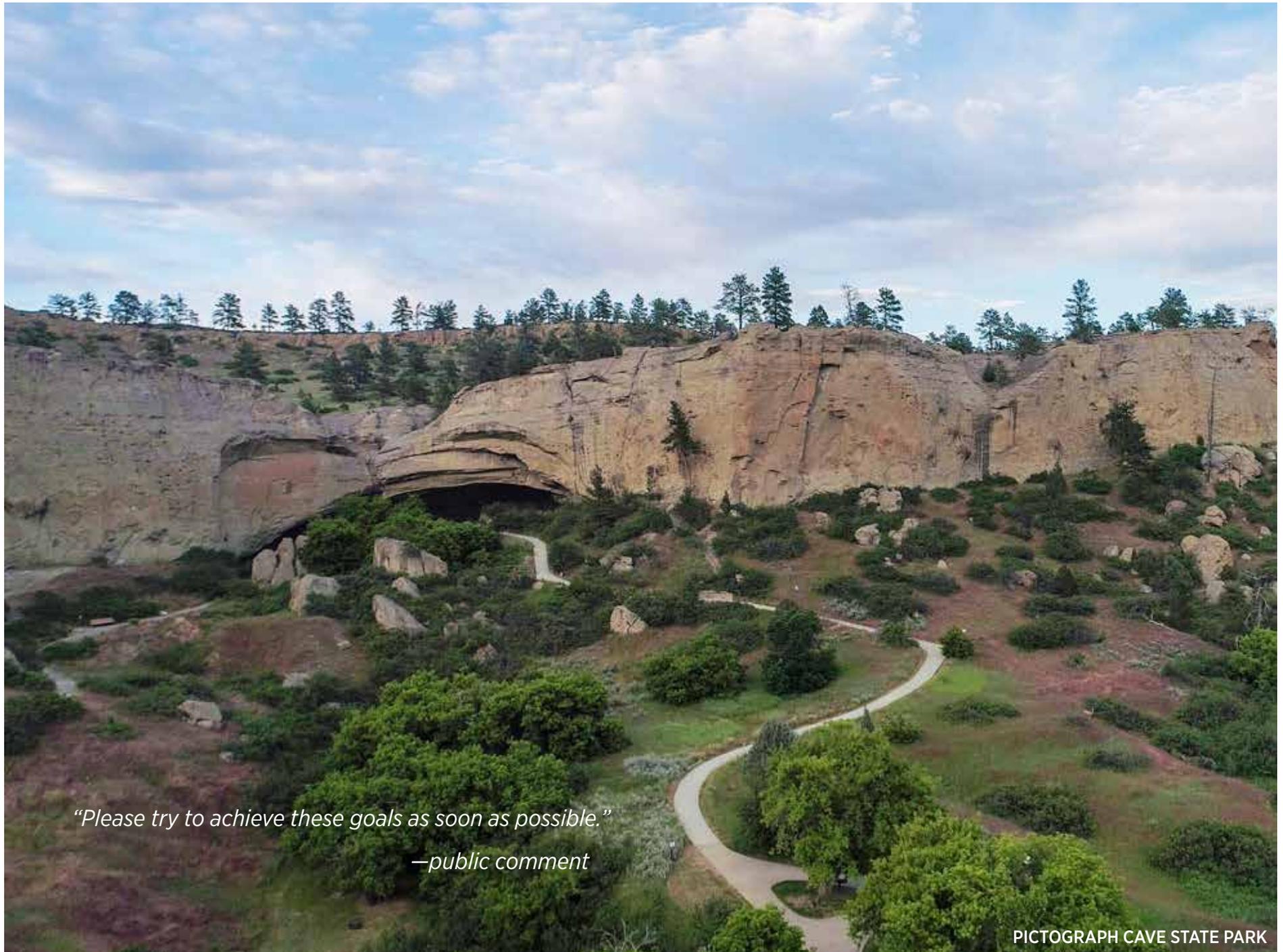
The Commission recognizes that the scope of the recommendations in this report and the effort it will take to succeed may be daunting. As a result, we outline three horizons for success, starting with stabilization of the Parks Division, then laying the foundation for rebuilding Parks, and ultimately building a campaign and movement for the long-term.

We cannot put off to tomorrow the work that Parks and parks supporters must begin today. The usual approach, focused only on urgent demands and short-term needs, is a necessary but insufficient strategy to building a great state parks system. We must also start today on midrange and long-term foundations of success. If we do, we can break the vicious cycle we're caught in and create a parks system that is a crown jewel in our public lands portfolio, a model for other states, and a resource that truly allows the outside to connect us all.

Figure 4. Implementation starts today for tomorrow







*“Please try to achieve these goals as soon as possible.”*  
—public comment

PICTOGRAPH CAVE STATE PARK

# RECOMMENDATION #1

## Accelerate Fish, Wildlife & Parks Transformation

Goal: The Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks is a unified agency, with aligned vision, mission and programming, and a bench of strong leaders.

*Montana State Parks cannot thrive until the Parks Division is fully aligned with the larger Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). The FWP Director is working to unify the agency, better integrate all divisions, invest in training of senior leaders, and develop trust to transform what has been a fragmented department with distinct internal cultures.*



## 1. BUILD “ONE AGENCY, ONE VISION” APPROACH

**FWP has committed to building a unified agency aligned under a common focus and mission. The agency underwent an exhaustive planning process to craft a Vision and Guide to set its future direction, protecting “the integrity of what defines Montana, the Montana experience and our people.” FWP recently unveiled a new brand, The Outside Is In Us All, that conveys this vision. Together, the vision and brand express the Agency’s commitment to resource protection and unparalleled outdoor recreation experiences. Reconciling these two complementary but often competing demands is critical to the success of both FWP and Parks.**

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- Create an internal FWP implementation team and scope of work focused on aligning programs and vision across divisions (including employees of all ranks, divisions, and locations) and build support for change
  - Establish clear roles and responsibilities and a timeline for the implementation team
- Realign FWP and Parks administrative regional boundaries to minimize unnecessary duplication and create efficiencies
  - Engage and seek guidance from the Fish & Wildlife Commission, Parks and Recreation Board, staff, and major stakeholders
- Refresh the FWP website and other communications collateral and related outreach to express a unified vision and brand for all divisions



## 2. PURSUE ALTERNATIVE STAFFING AND MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

**Parks cannot succeed without the alignment of programs, staffing, and services within FWP. Currently, FWP and Parks regions do not align geographically or functionally. Some FWP divisions are more centralized than others, affiliated roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined, and services are either duplicative or lacking altogether. Creating functional, cross-agency work teams would foster a unified culture and team efficiencies at FWP, while still supporting the autonomy that Parks and other divisions need to manage their specific obligations.**

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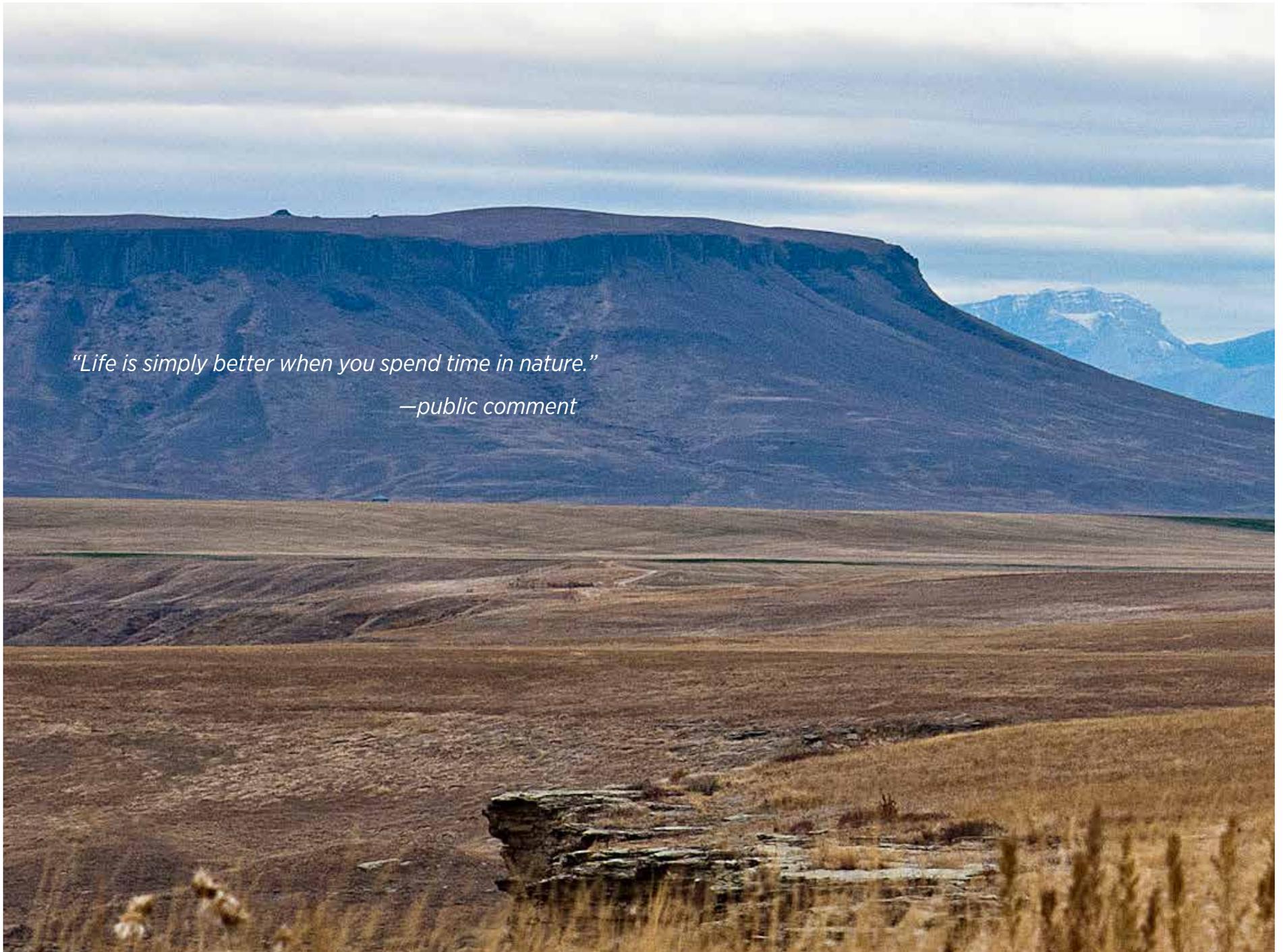
- Develop cross-functional management approaches and on-the-ground teams that allow for centralization of services.
- Align FWP and Parks communications teams to ensure consistency while recognizing the critical importance of communications to Parks' services and offerings.
- Integrate oversight and execution of law enforcement and maintenance responsibilities.



### 3. BUILD LEADERSHIP BENCH AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

The Parks Division and FWP require leaders who can solve complex problems in a creative, multi-disciplinary fashion. To build toward the future, Parks needs to retain top performers and attract new talent. Systemic, sustained organizational change requires structural support and change agents at all levels.

- Secure training for leadership, including members of the implementation team and the FWP senior management team.
- Pilot a staff rotation (work detail) regimen to foster a common mission and culture, and provide professional growth opportunities.
- Design and implement a staff survey to solicit feedback on departmental changes.



*"Life is simply better when you spend time in nature."  
—public comment*



FIRST PEOPLES BUFFALO JUMP STATE PARK

# RECOMMENDATION #2

## Strengthen the Internal Capability of Parks

Goal: The Parks Division has clear strategic priorities, efficient management systems, sufficient staffing, and strong internal capability.

*Parks staff, despite dedication and a “can do” attitude, are severely constrained by a lack of resources and outdated systems. Parks is working to build the elements needed for change: vision, strategic investment framework, supporting systems, and expanded capacity.*



## 1. ESTABLISH PARKS' VISION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Perhaps the single most important thing Parks can and must do is to articulate a compelling vision for the system as a whole and then build a program of action that achieves that vision of success. This can be done through a revision of Parks' classification framework that refocuses on experiences and services, and how to provide these in a manner that recognizes the significance of park assets, ensures system diversity, and meets public demand.

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- Revise and adopt a new classification policy.
  - Establish clear experience and service class guidelines.
  - Assign all parks within the classification framework.
  - Develop budget priority criteria to guide future investment.
  - Secure State Parks and Recreation Board adoption of revised policy.
- Implement the classification framework.
  - Seek clarification on any needed legislative changes or approvals (e.g., Primitive Parks Act).
  - Create more detailed guidance on specific park service class and experience standards.
  - Develop three pilot park management plans and business strategies to engage the public and partners, and create a management and investment plan.
- Design and implement a park user survey to assess visitor satisfaction and align park offerings with visitor desires and expectations.



## 2. BUILD INTERNAL SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

**In order to secure the confidence of the public and the legislature, Parks needs to cultivate business focus—that is, make the case for new investments, build partnerships, and balance revenues with expenses. To create this discipline and practice, Parks must standardize the way it tracks maintenance costs and infrastructure investments and improve fee collection.**

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- Deploy asset management software across the parks system, including prioritization and tracking of routine maintenance and capital expenditure needs.
- Improve fee collection at parks, such as better signage, fee stations, and mobile apps.
- Determine information technology needs at parks to allow for more efficient management, communications, bookings, and revenue capture.

### 3. EXPAND STAFF CAPACITY

Staffing levels at the Parks Division are roughly two-thirds of those in other states in our region. Parks must build its staff both in numbers and capacity (particularly in the field) to handle basic services, innovate, and cultivate the next generation of leaders.

- Determine necessary staffing levels based on classification exercise and peer analysis of other state parks systems.
- Request more full-time positions and spending authority from the Legislature to expand capacity based on staffing assessment.
- Request legislative authority to allow for greater flexibility in the use of part-time and seasonal staff to accommodate peak season demands.
- Seek legislative staffing authority and funding to expand FWP intern and existing volunteer programs.

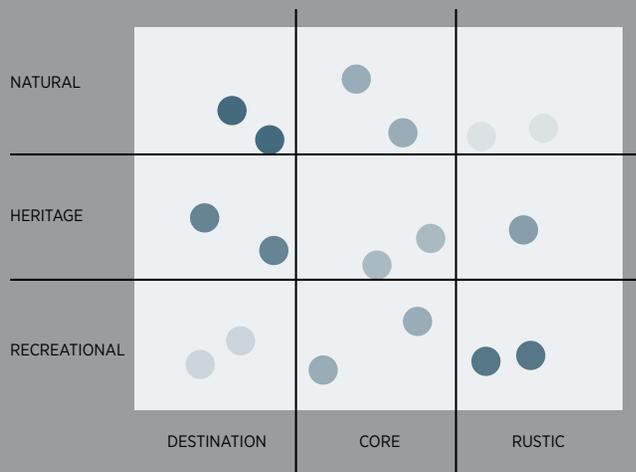


CHIEF PLENTY COUPS STATE PARK

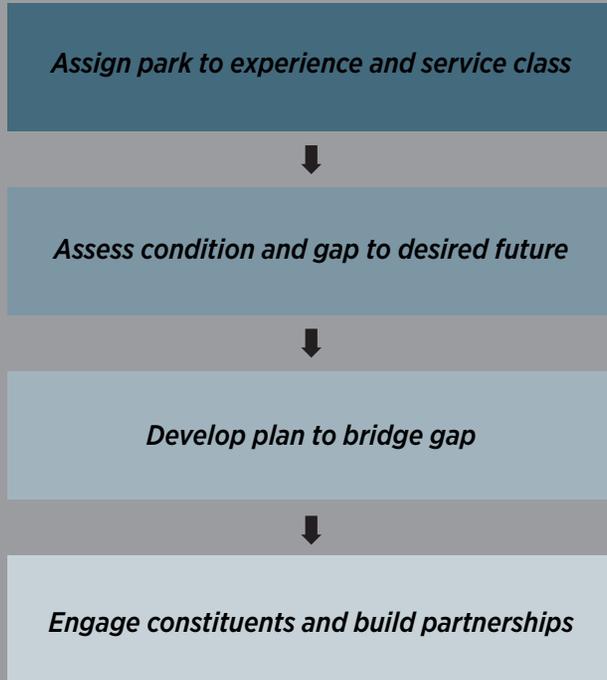
# PARK CLASSIFICATION

*Parks in Focus recommends that the Montana State Parks and Recreation Board and Parks Division revise the current Classification and Prioritization of Park Resources policy. Parks in Focus staff have been working with the Parks and Recreation Board and Parks Division to pivot from a scarcity-driven, resource allocation exercise to a forward-looking vision and investment strategy for building a diverse, robust, and thriving parks system. This approach provides a framework for attracting new partners and investment, driving us toward a sustainable parks system for the future.*

*In the revised framework under discussion, all parks in the system would be allocated to a primary park experience (natural, heritage, recreational) and a service class (destination, core, rustic) outlining the level of amenities and services the park offers to visitors. This approach brings a management focus to the user experience and spells out an appropriate level of development.*



*Creating clear standards at the system level and assigning parks to experience and service class categories would allow staff to develop more detailed plans and engage the public in envisioning and creating a park's desired future condition. The process could look like this:*



*The plan to bridge the gap—a business strategy—would merge conventional management goals, such as resource and visitor management, with investment priorities (where we choose to invest first) and a timeline for implementation. Staff would develop the plan with partners and constituents to build engagement and new revenue sources.*



*“I made a choice to move to Montana for the quality of life; the state park system plays an important role in the public lands tapestry that makes Montana a desirable place for people who have a choice of where to live.”*

*—public comment*





GIANT SPRINGS STATE PARK

# RECOMMENDATION #3

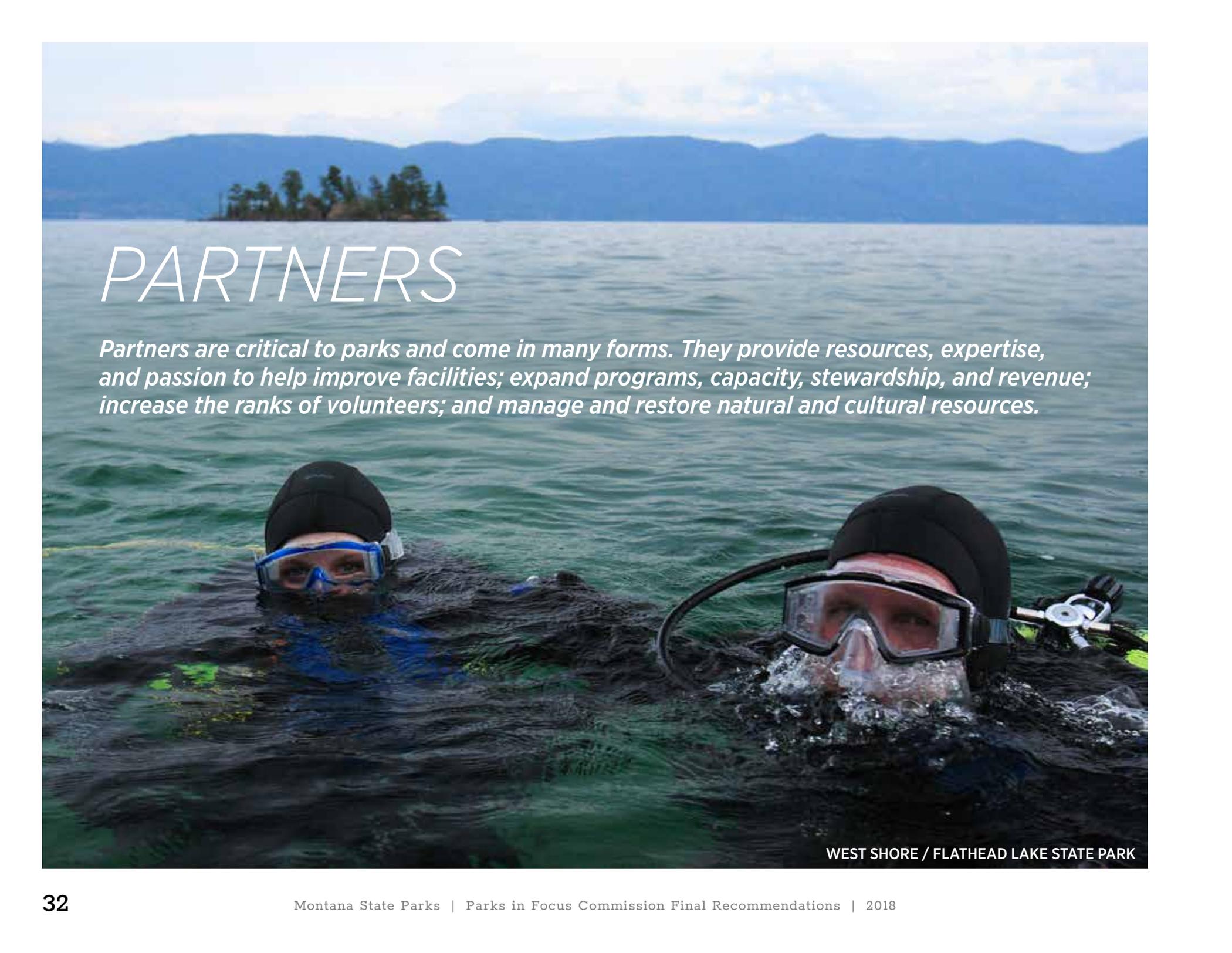
## Develop Strong Partnerships and Constituency

Goal: The Parks Division has a strong partnership culture, with partners significantly leveraging division capacity to improve the state park experience, and a broad set of advocates promoting and championing the benefits of parks and recreation.

*Even with strategic focus and efficient systems, Parks cannot succeed in isolation. A new framework for success requires partners and constituents to activate the vision and help secure critical financial support. While the Commission is in no way advocating for privatization—state parks are and will remain public assets that are publicly managed—Parks needs private funding to supplement its public revenue in order to manage its significant portfolio. Public-private partnerships, corporate sponsorships, and philanthropic funding should contribute to and improve state parks without detracting from what is fundamentally a public mission and experience.*



LEWIS & CLARK CAVERNS STATE PARK

A photograph of two divers in a lake. The divers are in the foreground, wearing black wetsuits and masks. The water is a deep blue-green. In the background, there are mountains and a small island with trees. The sky is overcast.

# PARTNERS

*Partners are critical to parks and come in many forms. They provide resources, expertise, and passion to help improve facilities; expand programs, capacity, stewardship, and revenue; increase the ranks of volunteers; and manage and restore natural and cultural resources.*

WEST SHORE / FLATHEAD LAKE STATE PARK

## ***PARTNERS WORKING TO ENHANCE THE PARK EXPERIENCE INCLUDE:***

### **Montana State Parks Foundation**

The Montana State Parks Foundation is the official nonprofit fundraising partner of Montana State Parks and is dedicated to helping Montana's state parks system become one of the best in the nation through private fundraising and capacity building in areas where government funding is simply not enough. The Foundation raises private support to enhance the visitor experience and rallies advocates for Montana's state parks and recreation heritage. In 2018, the Foundation worked on five different park projects. At Milltown State Park, the Foundation worked with supporters such as OnX Maps and River Design Group to fund landscaping and visitor use improvements and ensure a spectacular opening for Montana's newest state park.

### **Travelers' Rest Preservation & Heritage Association**

Travelers' Rest Preservation and Heritage Association (TRPHA) supports Travelers' Rest State Park through outreach, advocacy, and educational experiences that link the past to the future. The unique partnership between Montana State Parks and TRPHA ensures that Travelers' Rest State Park provides the highest level of visitor services and unique educational opportunities. From tours to storytelling, from field trips to community events, TRPHA supports a wide variety of programs for children and adults. These programs are delivered by professional Parks staff, AmeriCorps members, and dedicated volunteers.

### **NorthWestern Energy**

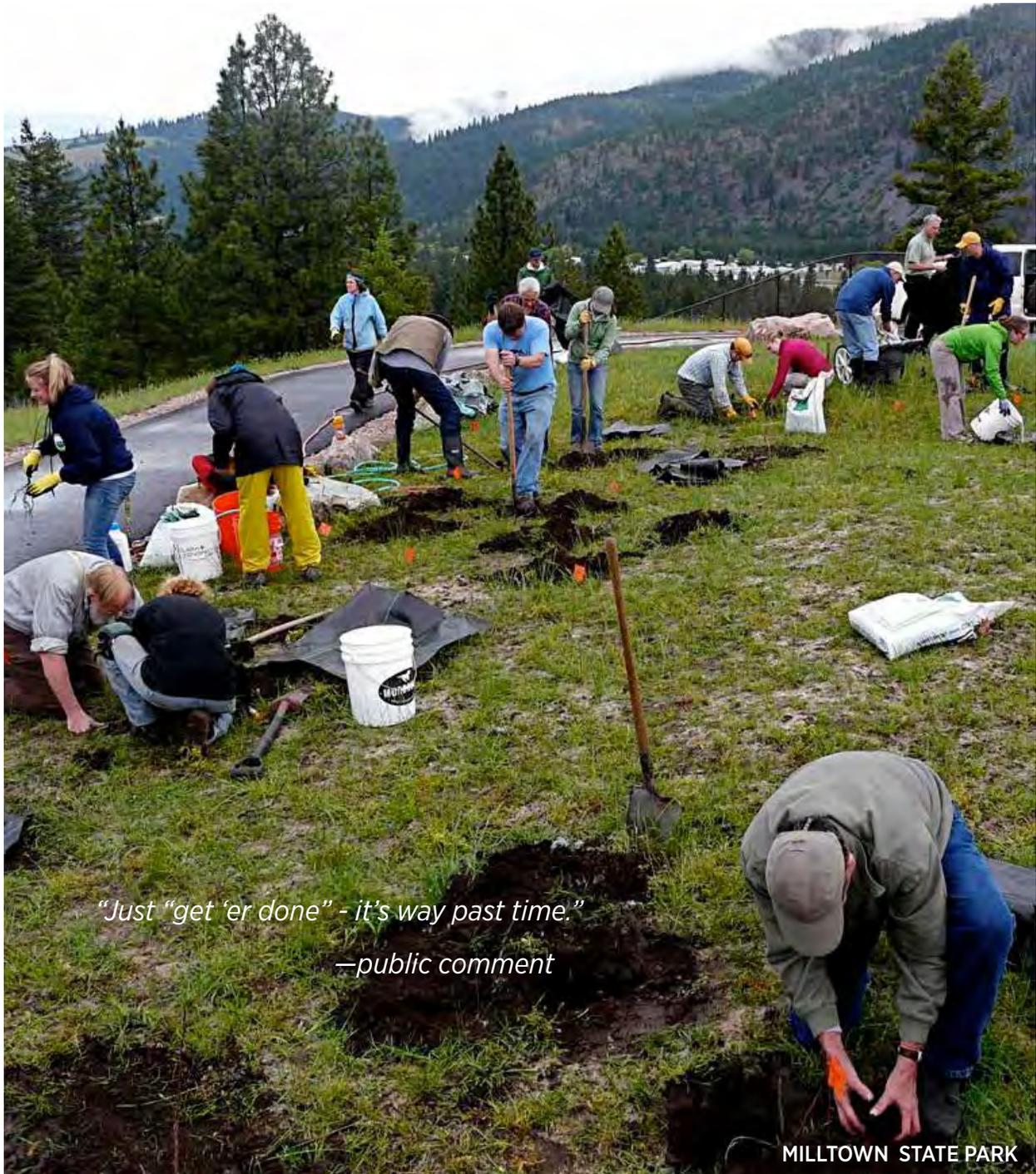
Under a Cooperative Management Agreement, state parks receives annual funding from NorthWestern Energy to manage and maintain access to public recreation opportunities and open land within Giant Springs State Park, the most visited state park in Montana. The Agreement works in conjunction with the Missouri/Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan to ensure public recreation needs are met at Giant Springs. In addition, the Missouri/Madison River Fund, established in 1999, awards annual grant funding to FWP and other land management agencies to improve, develop, and maintain recreational sites and opportunities in the river corridor. This public-private partnership remains essential to funding operations at Giant Springs and Black Sandy state parks and generates significant benefits for visitors and the community.

### **Montana Conservation Corps**

Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) and Montana State Parks have worked closely together, beginning with a project in the early 1990s to knock out and haul away an old asphalt trail that was leaching oil into the caves at Lewis and Clark Caverns and replace it with a limestone-based concrete walkway. MCC has left its mark on the trails at Lone Pine, frisbee golf course at Makoshika, cabins at Lewis and Clark Caverns, improved campground facilities at Cooney, and post-fire invasive species mitigation at Rosebud Battlefield. MCC is a Montana nonprofit with a mission to empower young leaders, stewards, and engaged citizens. Beyond the benefits to state lands from this partnership, MCC helps Parks to connect a new generation of Montanans to our great cultural, historic and natural treasures.

### **AmeriCorps**

Montana State Parks AmeriCorps promotes healthy, active, and environmentally aware communities by enhancing land, enriching educational opportunities, increasing volunteerism, and improving community outreach in state parks. Each year, national service members from across Montana and the nation contribute more than 28,000 hours directly to 18 state parks, and support 10 or more parks through program planning, system-wide initiatives, and other support functions. Since 2012, AmeriCorps members have improved more than 2,800 acres of state park land; conducted 3,500 education and interpretation programs which have been attended by nearly 84,000 individuals; engaged more than 3,000 volunteers; and conducted over 2,200 community outreach activities, such as tabling at the Montana Folk Festival and local farmers' markets. The AmeriCorps program at Montana State Parks is made possible through a federal cost sharing grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service.



1. CREATE A PARTNERSHIP CULTURE AT PARKS

Partnerships need an enabling environment that values and invites collaboration. While local partnerships (i.e., friends groups, volunteers, local businesses) are strong, Parks needs to improve and expand strategic statewide partnerships (i.e., Parks Foundation, Montana Conservation Corps, Montana businesses, healthcare associations), especially those that can leverage limited staffing resources and generate new revenue.

- Institutionalize the use of partnerships.
  - Develop partnership guidelines that outline rules, roles and responsibilities, and benefits to both Parks and partners. Universities and national congressionally-chartered foundations, such as National Parks Foundation and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, offer models for managing governance issues.
  - Centralize oversight of partnership negotiations and agreement terms and streamline partnership agreements, MOUs, and contracts.
  - Explore greater flexibility to award sole-source contracts that recognize partnership values that extend beyond low-cost considerations.
  - Create a communications framework to promote partnership collaboration and mutual recognition.

## 2. SECURE PARTNERS TO GENERATE REVENUE AND ENRICH THE PARK EXPERIENCE

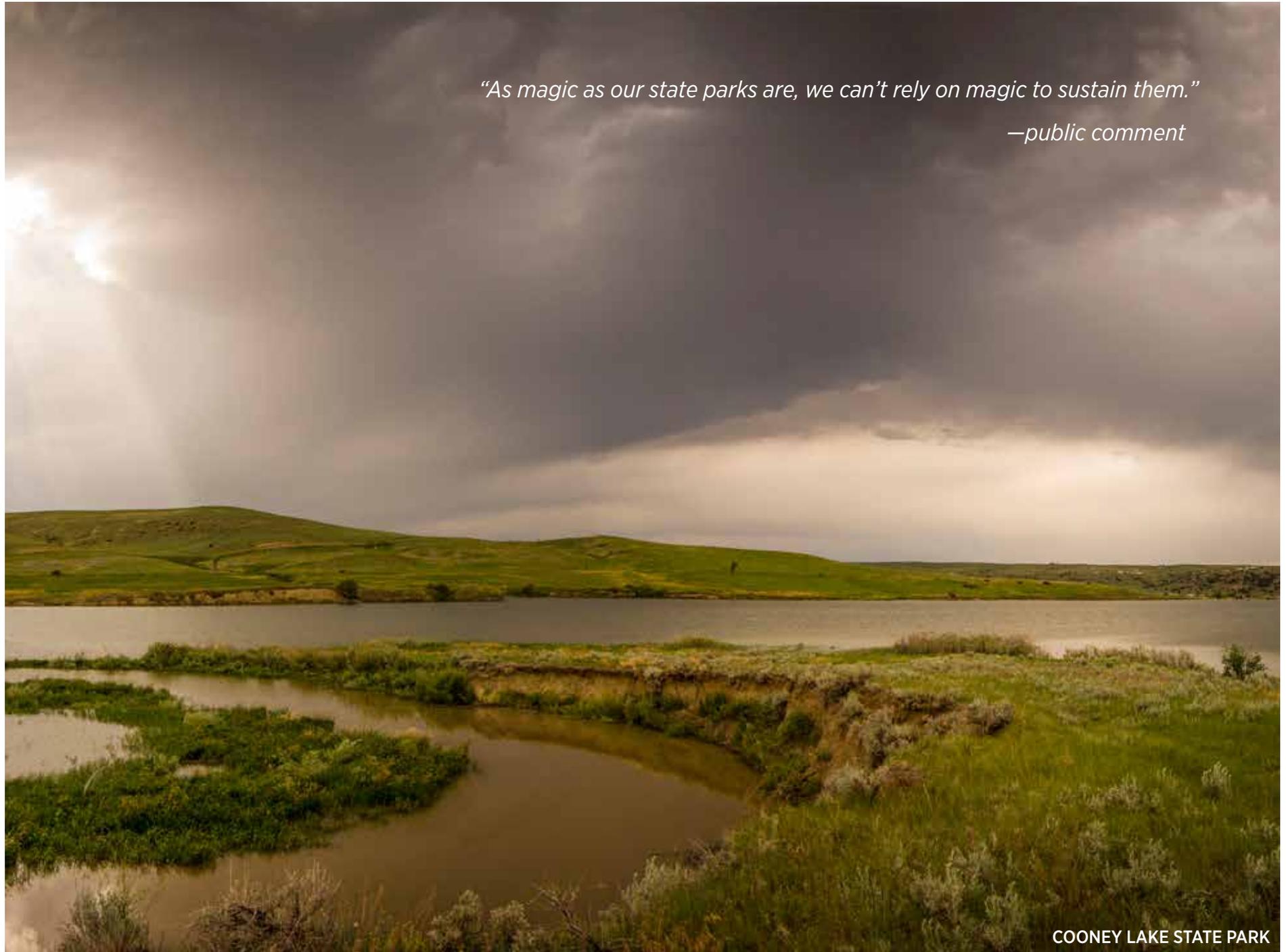
**Parks must carefully identify and select partners who can address its highest-priority needs, financial or otherwise. Partners should expand, not usurp, already severely constrained capacity at Parks.**

- Determine highest-priority partnerships and invest in these relationships.
  - Deepen existing strategic relationships with Montana State Parks Foundation, AmeriCorps, and Montana Conservation Corps to expand capacity and revenue, and increase the engagement and participation of younger generations as park volunteers and professionals.
  - Conduct a cost-benefit analysis for all potential new partnerships and prioritize budget allocations to stimulate partnerships that increase capacity and resources.
  - Focus on developing significant new statewide partnerships to implement existing park priorities.
  - Explore park co-management options with local communities and other partners that keep parks public, yet fill critical management and maintenance needs.





*“As magic as our state parks are, we can’t rely on magic to sustain them.”*  
*—public comment*



COONEY LAKE STATE PARK



LEWIS & CLARK CAVERNS STATE PARK



TRAVELERS' REST STATE PARK

### 3. EXPAND THE CONSTITUENCY FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

**By focusing on raising awareness and outreach and expanding park access and relevance to all Montanans, Parks has the potential to engage a broader set of advocates, including those who are underserved or disenfranchised.**

- Working with the Montana State Parks Foundation, Parks should:
  - Create a public awareness campaign to elevate the value of parks and recreation to Montanans.
  - Develop an engagement strategy (digital, media, and outreach) to cultivate park champions who will advocate for parks and recreation.
  - Develop three tangible pilot projects to expand state park access and relevance, such as more diverse overnight accommodations (e.g., bike campsites and yurts), public transportation options, new trail systems (including motorized and non-motorized), and health connections to hospitals and healthcare providers (i.e., Parks Rx programs that prescribe parks and trails activities).



FIRST PEOPLES BUFFALO JUMP STATE PARK

# *RECOMMENDATION #4*

## **Increase Funding for the Future**



Goal: The Parks Division utilizes short, medium, and long-term funding strategies to stabilize, lay the foundation, and build for the future state parks system Montanans deserve.

*All preceding recommendations build on one another, leading to the ultimate goal of increased and more secure funding for state parks. While Parks has an enviable diversity of funding sources, no single funding source is or will be adequate to solve Parks' funding challenges. No silver bullet exists.*

*Parks has not had adequate funding for decades. To break the destructive cycle outlined in the introduction of this report, Parks needs to be efficient and credible. It must cultivate strong leadership and put forth a vision that attracts new partners and funders. It must build a movement of park supporters who are passionate about the state park experience and willing to advocate for increased resources. As a result, our recommendations call for complementary short, medium, and long-term funding strategies that build on incremental improvements toward a higher standard of success.*

*The Commission recognizes that public funding will remain the largest source of support for state parks. Earned, private, and philanthropic sources will be important, and more so over time, but they never will replace public funding for a public experience. Any increase in public funding should not disproportionately burden non-park users and should reflect the real costs of providing the park experience the public seeks. See Appendix B for potential funding options.*



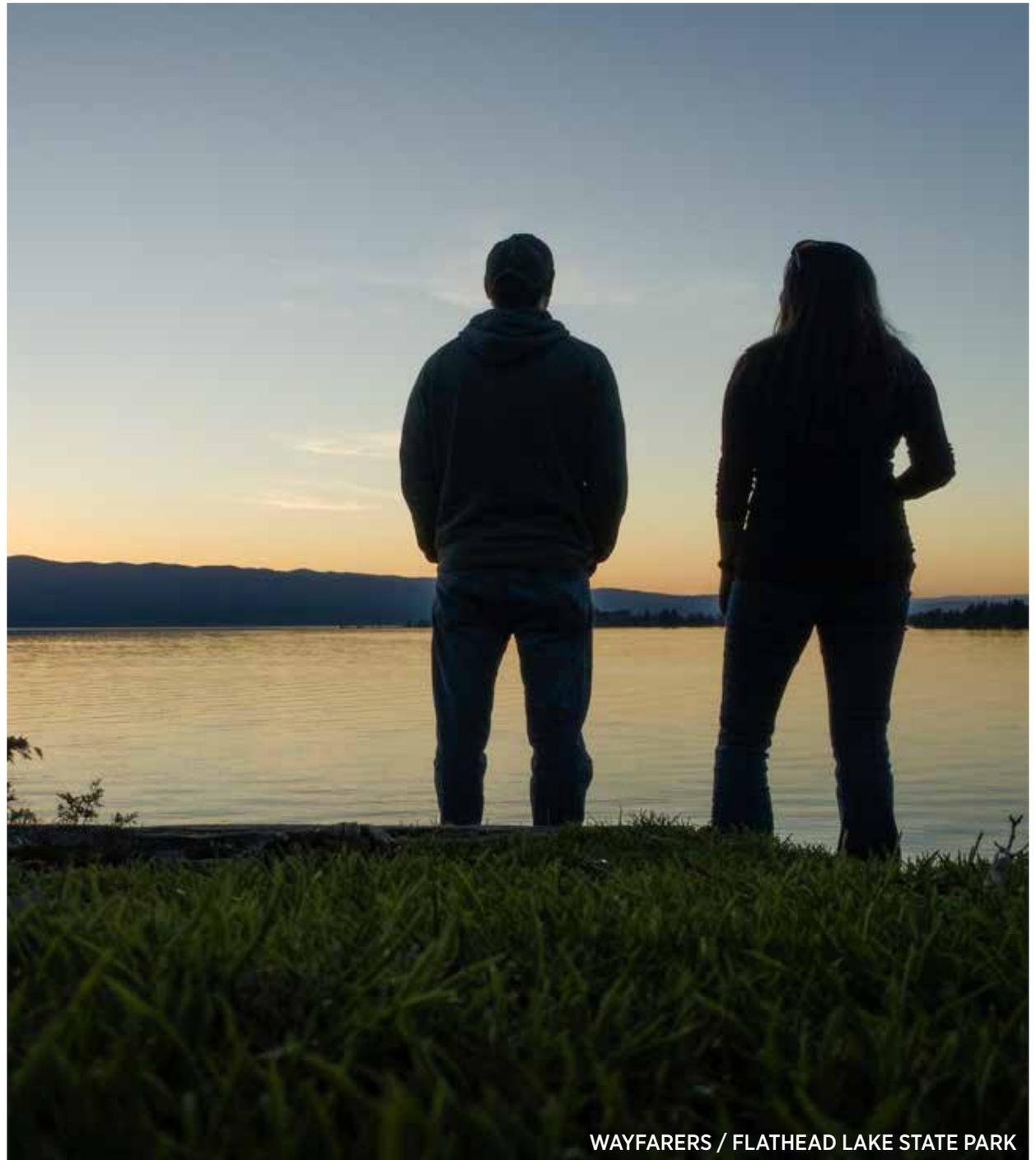
*“There are few places that can compete with Montana and our state parks....  
They are such an important heritage for the people of Montana and I look  
forward to handing them over to my children and grandchildren.”*

*—public comment*

**CHIEF PLENTY COUPS STATE PARK**

## 1. MAKE THE CASE FOR FUNDING AND DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENT TIME HORIZONS

- Develop a parks investment pro forma and establish clear funding needs.
  - Create a state-of-the-state report that articulates the value of parks for Montanans.
  - Keep an up-to-date catalogue of improvements at Parks and known issues that have been addressed successfully.
  - Conduct a parks and trails economic impact analysis to measure and demonstrate the economic role and significance of parks and recreation.
  - Determine priority funding needs for short, medium, and long-term horizons, using staffing and facilities condition data, park visitor survey findings, and established classification framework priorities and standards.
- Create progressive funding strategies that build from today's needs to long-term success.
  - Stabilize the Situation: for the next year, seek \$3 million in new revenue to address the highest priority staffing, operations, maintenance, and capital project needs.
  - Lay the Foundation: for the next five years, seek \$20 million in new revenue to expand staffing levels to meet growing demands, address the long-term maintenance and capital backlog, and begin to implement classification standards.
  - Build the Campaign: for the next 20 years, seek the funds necessary (the exact amount is unknown today) to steward the parks system in light of changing demographics, relevance, and access.





LAKE ELMO STATE PARK

- ## 2. IMPLEMENT TAILORED STRATEGIES FOR THREE MAIN SOURCES OF FUNDING
- Government
    - Craft a specific legislative strategy and activate state park champions at the Legislature.
    - Educate lawmakers and influencers.
    - Pursue revenue sharing where a rational nexus exists between current state funding streams and unfunded Parks management responsibilities.
    - Seek dedicated state funding that is commensurate with growing visitor demands.
    - Work with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development, and Governor's Office of Outdoor Recreation to identify planning, promotion, and funding resources that would benefit state parks, land stewardship, and Montana's recreation economy.
  - Philanthropic
    - Work closely with Montana State Parks Foundation to increase philanthropic funding, with a focus on creating a pyramid of engagement for donors and developing sponsorships of statewide significance.
    - Explore opportunities through ties to park offerings, such as in the areas of health care, community development, and outdoor recreation and tourism.
  - Earned
    - Develop business partnerships to improve park amenities, visitor services, and generate new revenue.
    - Improve fee collection at state parks and expand opportunities for the public to pay for park access and services.
    - Study the current user fee structure and rates, including premium or oversubscribed park services, and explore potential rate increases and variable pricing options.



*"My family loves state parks! Please keep them funded."*

*—public comment*

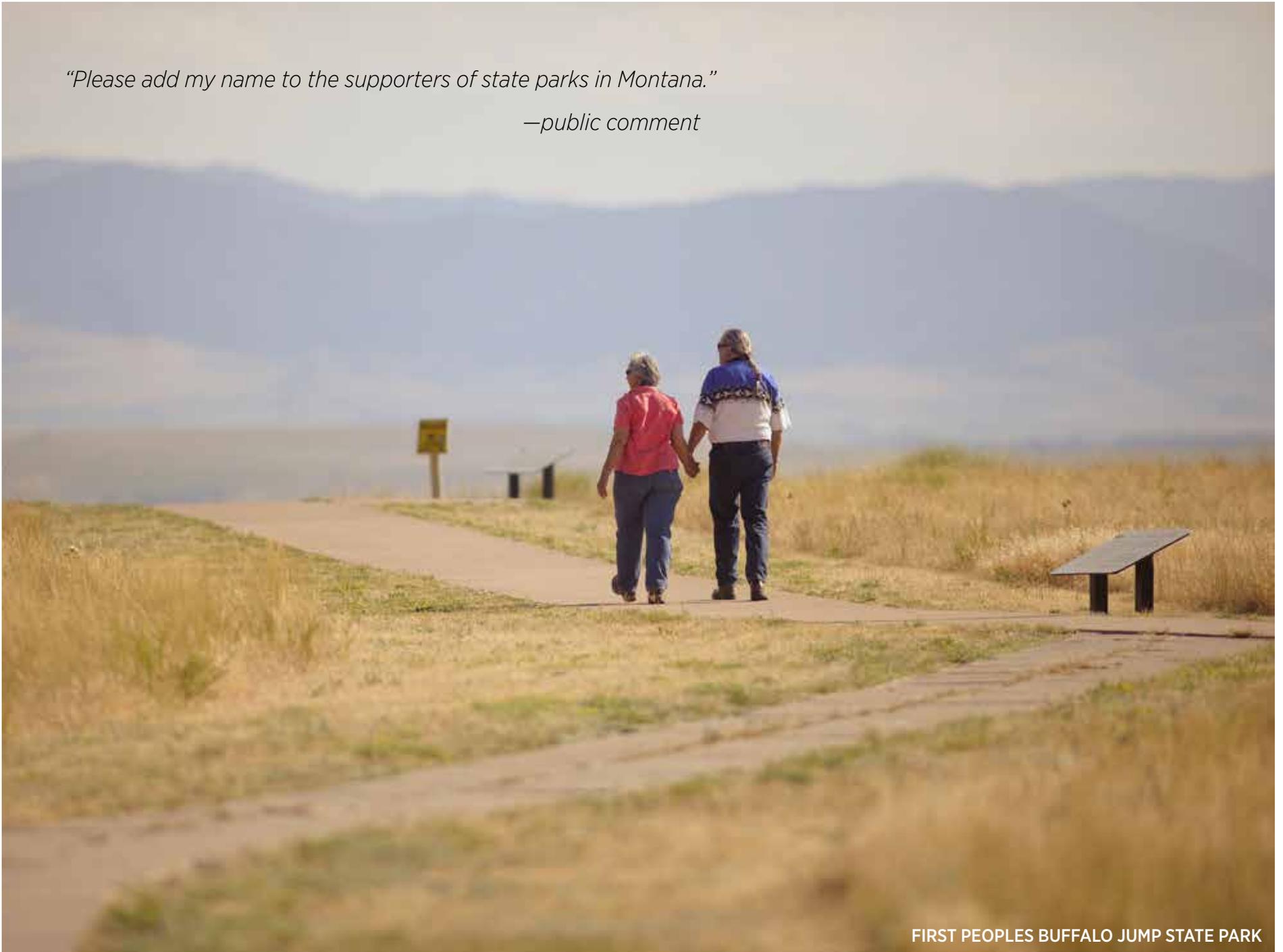




BANNACK STATE PARK

*“Please add my name to the supporters of state parks in Montana.”*

*—public comment*



FIRST PEOPLES BUFFALO JUMP STATE PARK

# CONCLUSION

It is a new day at the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and the Parks in Focus Commission believes that the time has finally arrived to break a destructive cycle of insufficient funding and erosion of services that has long stymied the Parks Division. With new leadership in place, our recommendations focus on building credibility, through leadership development, alignment, and discipline; and creating excitement with a compelling vision that attracts a broad engagement of people, partners, businesses, and communities. With these building blocks in place, we map a path toward short, medium, and long-term sustainable funding.

Our recommendations recognize that successful implementation demands commitment from state government. To break the cycle, we need a deliberate and extensive effort by the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks to support a unified “One Agency, One Vision” approach to parks and recreation. To break the cycle, the Parks Division must inspire with a compelling vision and a detailed strategy for achieving that vision. And lastly, to break the cycle, the public at large, partners, supporters, and park users, must vociferously demand the resources necessary to steward Montana’s parks for the next generation.

After a year of research, public input, and deliberation, the Parks in Focus Commission came away with a profound respect for the challenges Montana state parks face, the incredible opportunity at hand, and a shared recognition that our state parks system is truly the gem of the Treasure State and deserving of sustained support. The changes already underway encourage us. We believe wholeheartedly that the Parks Division is capable of carrying out our recommendations, breaking the vicious cycle of underfunding, and building the future parks system Montanans want and deserve.

## Appendix A:

### Parks in Focus Commission

#### STACE LINDSAY (CHAIR)

Stace Lindsay is President of Fusion Venture Partners, a strategic consulting and investment firm, and a senior Moderator for Aspen Global Leadership Network. A Montana native, Stace has also been an entrepreneur, investor, and a strategic advisor to senior business, government and nonprofit leaders around the world.

#### MARK AAGENES

Mark Aagenes is Director of External Affairs for The Nature Conservancy Montana. He manages the chapter's public policy work at the state and federal levels. Mark previously spent a decade as the Conservation Director for Montana Trout Unlimited.

#### LISE AANGEENBRUG

Lise Aangeenbrug is the new Executive Director for The Outdoor Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Outdoor Industry Association. She previously served as Executive Vice President for the National Park Foundation and was Executive Director of the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund, the State of Colorado's constitutionally created fund for protecting and enhancing parks, rivers, trails, open space and wildlife.

#### SHANE DOYLE

Dr. Shane Doyle is an educator and cultural consultant who hails from Crow Agency, Montana. A member of the Crow tribe, Dr. Doyle is currently engaged in curriculum design throughout the state to implement Montana's Indian Education for All curriculum, and recently completed a postdoctoral appointment in genetic research at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

#### DAVE GALT

Dave Galt is a fourth generation Montanan working in government affairs with the law firm Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry & Hoven. He served as Executive Director of the Montana Petroleum Association for ten years after retiring from the Montana Department of Transportation.

#### ANGIE GROVE

Angie Grove spent 28 years with the Montana Legislative Audit Division, working specifically with the State Parks Division. In addition to being the owner (with her husband) of Great Divide Cyclery, Angie served for seven years on the board of the Prickly Pear Land Trust.

#### NORMA NICKERSON

Norma Nickerson has served since 1995 as the Director of the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana's W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation. She is the 2011 recipient of the Greater Western Chapter Travel and Tourism Research Association Lifetime Achievement Award. Norma serves on the board of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Helena branch, and sat on the Missoula Parks and Recreation board for five years.

#### MICHAEL PUNKE

Michael Punke is an American writer, professor, policy analyst, attorney, and former Deputy US Trade Representative and US Ambassador to the World Trade Organization. Punke is the author of *The Revenant*; *Fire and Brimstone: The North Butte Mining Disaster of 1917*; and *Last Stand: George Bird Grinnell, the Battle to Save the Buffalo, and the Birth of the New West*. He is currently the Vice President of Global Public Policy for Amazon Web Services.

#### LANCE TREBESCH

Lance Trebesch is CEO/Co-Owner of TicketPrinting.com and Ticket River, custom ecommerce event products and online event management ticketing operating in the US, Canada, UK, and Australia. TicketPrinting.com's base is in Harlowton, where it is one of the largest employers in Wheatland County. Lance is a founding member of Business for Montana's Outdoors, which educates and advocates for the importance of open public lands as key growth drivers in the entrepreneurial economies of the West.



MEDICINE ROCKS STATE PARK

#### CHAS VINCENT

Chas Vincent is a State Senator in the Montana Legislature from District 1 representing Libby, Montana, and serves as Chair of the Environmental Quality Council. Chas is a fourth-generation logger and currently works for Environomics, a Libby-based consulting firm.

#### JEFF WELCH

Jeff Welch is the founder of three companies specializing in tourism and outdoor recreation, including the advertising firm MERCURYcsc, and a passionate spokesman for Business for Montana's Outdoors. Jeff serves on the Montana State Parks and Recreation Board and the Montana State Parks Foundation board.

#### AARON WERNHAM

Dr. Aaron Wernham is a family physician and CEO of the Montana Healthcare Foundation. He founded and directed the Health Impact Project, a national initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts, and has served as a public health and policy advisor for Alaska Native tribes while working with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.

## Appendix B: Funding Options

The following table outlines current and potential funding sources for Parks, including Government, Philanthropic, Earned Revenue, and Creative Financing options. Recognizing there is no “one-size-fits-all” model for state parks systems, Montana has a range of options to consider based on approaches employed throughout the country.

EARNED						
Source	Purpose	Currently Used	Advantages	Disadvantages	Potential Impact	Potential for Increase
User Fees	State park user fees include park entrance fees and annual park passes, camping and lodging fees, and fees for activities. User Fees generate 21% of state parks overall budget	Yes	Major source of current funding. Captures out-of-state users.	Need better understanding of demand curves at individual parks; increasing prices without improving park offerings could be problematic	Medium	Administrative increase in user fees, variable pricing models, peak season pricing, use-specific fee structure, and out of state revenue increase options
Concessionaires	Private sector contracts provide quality services, programs, and facilities that enhance the convenience, enjoyment, education, and recreational experiences of state park visitors	Yes	Public-Private Partnership. Cost savings from contracting park operations, park programs, stewardship, and management of special facilities.	Need additional staffing for permitting and oversight; competition at banner parks; short season; lack of infrastructure to host concessionaires.	Small	Concessionaire possibilities limited. Minimal return on investment.
Vanity License Plate	Portion of vanity plate sales go to MT State Parks Foundation.	Yes	Visible, inexpensive, minimal oversight, unrestricted funding source for project work	Inconsistent funding; participation varies; requires marketing to maintain participation	Small	Increase public awareness and communicate benefits to increase participation
Privatization	Contractual arrangements with private firms to operate parks	No	Private contracts could be incentivised to improve park performance through programs, events, facilities maintenance, community engagement and attract additional private funding	Huge public opposition to privatization. Needs assessment to carefully weigh the full costs of efficient contracting with the costs of operating parks themselves.	Small	Create pilot to test.
GOVERNMENT						
Source	Purpose	Currently Used	Advantages	Disadvantages	Potential Impact	Potential for Increase
Light Vehicle Registration Fee	“Voluntary \$6 vehicle registration fee with option to “opt out” during registration. Funds make up 38% of state parks overall budget and are used for maintenance and operational costs.”	Yes	Simple, one-time fee lowers barrier to entry. Allows state residents to visit parks for free. Participation rate is very good (~75%).	Participation varies by county and is not mandatory. Any change or increase would need legislative approval.	Medium	Increase current participation rate through public awareness campaign; amend registration to be mandatory; statutory increase in fee; expand vehicle classes to include trailers, RV's, farm vehicles; outreach to county clerk offices to increase participation; expand offerings to rental vehicle and fleet vehicles.
Lodging Facility Tax	Two taxes are collected on users of overnight lodging facilities in Montana: (1) 4% lodging facility use tax; and (2) 3% lodging facility sales tax. 6.5% of the combined bed tax goes to FWP for maintenance of facilities in state parks. Funds make up 15% of state parks overall budget.	Yes	Tourism in Montana is increasing. Use of state parks is increasing. Practical connection between tourism, state parks, accommodations. Distributes both in-state and out-of-state contributions.	High competition; competing interests seeking a % share. Possible decrease in bookings due to increase in room rates.	Medium	Redirect small % to “destination parks”; % increase across all recipients
Motorboat Sticker / Launch Fee	Sailboats, motorboats and personal watercraft must be registered in Montana. Registration tax and fuel tax make up 11% of state parks overall budget.	Yes	Strong connection to what tax is going to pay for. Water-based parks generate revenues for terrestrial parks.	Singles out motorboat users. Non-motorized sailboats less than 12 feet long and manually propelled boats, regardless of length, are exempt from registration and taxation.	Small	Legislative fee increase

Coal Tax Trust Fund	Royalties paid into a trust from coal generated in Montana; interest earnings on those funds are used to help pay for state parks. Long-term financing for infrastructure projects. State parks receives 1.27%, which makes up 9% of state parks overall budget.	Yes	State ensures that the revenues earned from nonrenewable resource extraction provide benefits in perpetuity. Long-term financing for infrastructure projects.	Projected decline in coal production will slow funds added to the Trust. Not constitutionally protected.	Large	Increase % given to parks for maintenance backlog projects
Federal Funds	Federal grant programs contribute funding for capital improvements and maintenance projects. Federal funds make up 2% of state parks overall budget.	Yes	Easy to find matching funds. Annual availability. Multiple sectors with compatible grants available.	Unstable due to inconsistent congressional appropriations. Competitive. Single-use generally, not for operations.	Small	Funding cycles determine grant applications
Montana Department of Transportation	Funds for maintenance of MDT roads that are within park units	No	Historically, MDT funds went toward critical road and infrastructure projects.	Discretionary. No formal agreement in place.	Medium	Lapsed funding could be reinstated
Revenue Sharing	Revenue generated from one division could be used to support another. For example, fishing access sites on state park lands	No	Increased efficiencies, interagency collaboration and cooperation, cost-savings	Interagency accounting, lack of use data and revenue allocation model	Small	Portion of FWP fishing license sales to maintain fishing and recreation sites in parks
Ballot Initiative	Legislative referendum or citizen initiative to create new funding to develop or rehabilitate parks.	No	Durable long-term funding; low volatility	Potential legislative opposition; signature gathering expensive for citizen initiative	Large	New funding source
Out Of State RV Registration Tax	Out-of-state RV tax. Currently, there is a small registration fee on out-of-state RVs, but unlike other states, RVs are not taxed as property or subject to any additional taxes, like sales tax.	No	Prevents subsidized out-of-state RV's. Does not affect MT residents.	Potential political opposition to any new tax.	Medium	Reintroduce HB621 with renewed interest
Source	Purpose	Currently Used	Advantages	Disadvantages	Potential Impact	Potential for Increase
Trailer Registration Tax	Tax on trailers based on length or weight during one-time registration process	No	One-time tax for one-time registration.	Not a direct tie to trailer use of parks; new tax	Small	Reintroduce HB621 with renewed interest and stronger business case narrative
Big Sky Trust Fund	Economic development fund that sunsets in 2019. Potential to create a new State Parks Trust Fund and seed it with the expiring funds from BSTF	No	Creates a new constitutionally protected funding source that will accrue over time.	Competition with economic development entities. Pensions are paid out of Coal Tax Trust	Large	Create a new State Parks Trust Fund and seed it with the expiring funds from BSTF
Gas Tax Reallocation	Reallocation of gas tax dollars based off the 2013 Bureau of Business and Economic Research study	No	No new tax, reallocation of current tax. Funds could be used for infrastructure at state parks.	Funds heavily restricted and limited. Potential political opposition.	Small	Modest increase in percentage given to state parks; broaden language on spending authority
Self-Imposed Excise Tax for Non-Consumptive Uses	Known as "pay to play"—recreational license or "trails pass"; self-imposed excise tax on recreation equipment	No	Engages willing groups of constituents who may feel increased ownership and responsibility	Regressive tax, narrow tax base and possibly not a significant source of funding. Voluntary participation. Targets goods with relatively inelastic demands.	Small	Excise tax on outdoor recreational equipment purchased in the state focused at the distribution level, not retail level for ease of administration
State-wide Mill Levy	Legislative referendum to create a one-mill levy dedicated to Parks and Recreation	No	Dedicated source with a broad base, recommended in 2002 by the State Parks Futures Committee	Potential political opposition; would need broad public support before approaching legislature	Large	One-mill levy would generate approximately \$3m/year
Levy Tax on Land Conversion	Real estate transfer tax on transfer of title of property	No	Broad tax base, incentivizes keeping open land undeveloped	Could be perceived as overreach of local government. Potential political opposition.	Medium	New funding source

Levy Tax on Rental Vehicles	Montana charges a 4% sales and use tax on base rental charges for rental vehicles. Percentage could be redirected to state parks	No	Popular in other states, proven source of income for parks, could include fleet vehicles	No clear relationship to state parks; difficult to link benefits of tax to rental cars, can be perceived as singling out industry.	Small	Percentage of rental vehicle tax could be redirected to state parks
Retail Sales Tax	Montana is one of only four states that does not currently have a sales tax. Percentage of sales tax could be directed to state parks	No	Invests all citizens in their state parks. Significant source of funding over time. Sales tax could help balance rise in property tax	Politically unpopular to create sales tax	Large	Appropriate small % to fund state parks. Broad base sales taxes; substantial amount of revenue can be generated with a relatively low tax rate
Special Park Districts	Independent, special purpose governmental units that have administrative and fiscal independence from local governments and have taxing authority and can issue bonds	No	Administrative flexibility and fiscal independence. Bonds can be issued for capital projects, with property tax revenues backing the bonds.	Often multi-jurisdictional, including several counties or municipalities, difficult to organize	Medium	Could be funded through Business Improvement Districts - commercial areas of a city that collect "self taxes" from property owners in the area to provide services and programs
General Fund Monies Redirected to Parks	Redirect portion of general funds to state parks to create new enterprise financing framework based off of cyclical fee restructuring	No	Creative financing framework, shows state investment in parks	Subject to political cycles and administrations. Current lack of business plans and investment strategies to show return on investment.	Large	Potential for significant capital investments in parks
Oil and Natural Gas Production Tax	Increase in severance tax on natural gas production with % dedicated to state parks.	No	Revenues earned from nonrenewable resource extraction provide benefit in perpetuity.	Increased taxes, could generate political and industry opposition	Large	Create Trust similar to the Coal Tax for coal bed methane, natural gas, and oil production to be used for park operational costs

### PHILANTHROPIC

Source	Purpose	Currently Used	Advantages	Disadvantages	Potential Impact	Potential for Increase
Montana State Parks Foundation	"Nonprofit partner to state parks raises private support to enhance the visitor experience and build advocates for Montana's state parks and recreation heritage."	Yes	Primary partner to parks with ability to build and maintain durable constituent base and leverage funds, build political power for positive impact.	Limited capacity. Importance not understood by staff or legislature. Need to build trust and capacity.	Medium	Foundation can attract statewide corporate supporters to support park investments and programming; create parks endowment
Corporate Sponsorships	Engage the business community on capital improvement projects.	Yes	Help cover costs of major facilities improvements while promoting business involvement. Sponsorship with Montana company has beneficial branding, could raise visibility and recognition.	Lack of staff capacity has created reluctance to engage business partners. Lack of centralized oversight of partnerships. Needs investment strategy to drive business plans and return for investors.	Large	MSPF builds network of Montana businesses to sponsor park improvements, visitor center remodels, creation of new education resources, trails, docks, etc.
Friends Groups	Friends groups fundraise for individual parks and specific projects within those parks; capitol improvements, general facilities and maintenance	Yes	Local involvement, citizen investment, local partnerships with businesses, dedicated constituent group, creative programming, effective for small-medium projects	Small project funds that often don't cover operational costs.	Small	Incubate friends group for each state park, provide project support and tool kit to get them started on project-based fundraising
Healthcare Grants	Engage the healthcare community to help with community access, trail development, and programming	No	Direct connection to health and wellness initiatives, engages underserved populations, new funding source for multiple uses	Lack of clarity on return on investment with tangible results. Needs program oversight, marketing and communications	Small	Healthcare is the largest and fastest growing industry in the US. Currently untapped for health-recreation nexus.
Voluntary Individual Donations	Donation boxes, kiosks, donor benches, in-kind capital project donations, etc	Yes	Strong success at park level engaging local businesses on projects and park improvements. Shared responsibility in success. Good for small projects, highly marketable. Potential to create life-long donors.	Limited number of willing donors/participants. Needs supporting organization like Parks Foundation.	Small	Ensure donation boxes at all park and applicable FWP units

Community Development Grants	Engage business development community on projects that enhance connectivity, community health and marketing for new park audiences	No	New funding for parks that qualify and have programs and projects with direct community benefits	Narrow grants, competitive, park needs to be within proximity of community, limited funds	Small	Work with Foundation on individual projects and apply when in cycle
Tourism Grant Program	The Tourism Grant program awards funds to projects that strengthen Montana's economy through the development and enhancement of the state's tourism.	No	Raise awareness of state park assets and experiences, educate new audiences	Small grants, competitive	Small	Marketing and communications grants to promote parks
Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) Grant	TSEP is a state-funded program established to help solve serious health and safety problems and assist communities with the financing of public facilities projects. The program helps local governments with infrastructure planning as well as constructing or upgrading drinking water systems, wastewater treatment facilities, sanitary or storm sewer systems, solid waste disposal and separation systems, and bridges.	No	Existing funding source. Direct tie between parks and healthy living and community vitality.	Project based, potentially challenging to find compatible projects	Small	Funding for infrastructure improvements, trail projects, accessibility
Montana History Foundation Grants	The Montana History Foundation offers grants of \$500 to \$5,000 to preserve and protect the historic legacy of communities across the state.	No	Dedicated funding for historic and cultural facilities.	Small grants. Competitive, limited to parks with heritage component.	Small	Work with Foundation to explore grant opportunities for specific projects
High Obesity Program (DPHHS)	Center for Disease Control and DPHHS have grant program to mitigate obesity, promote healthy living and improved wellness	No	Grant source for capital improvements like trails, pathways, ADA infrastructure. Good crossover with rural underserved populations.	Need to demonstrate nexus between trails, parks and decreased obesity.	Small	Funding for maintenance or construction of walking trails, marketing to encourage use, monitoring
CREATIVE FINANCING						
Source	Purpose	Currently Used	Advantages	Disadvantages	Potential Impact	Potential for Increase
Lottery Revenues	The Montana Lottery was created by referendum in 1986. Since then, it has paid out at least \$310 million to players in prizes. Dedicate a share of lottery revenues to state parks.	No	As a voluntary mechanism, lotteries are more efficient than other voluntary donation schemes because of the scope and number of participants.	Lotteries often place a disproportionate burden on lower income households who tend to purchase comparatively more lottery tickets. Only a subgroup of citizens are paying for the parks—those who buy lottery tickets—and they may not be the same people who benefit from using the parks.	Large	Small % directed to state parks
Pay For Success Financing	An approach to contracting that ties payment for service delivery to the achievement of measurable outcomes	No	Investment up-front with back-end payer repaying principal and returns	Need to set predetermined outcomes based off of state park vision and goals. Requires significant investment in independent evaluators and intermediaries.	Medium	Could provide private investment financing
Local Governments	Adjacent local governments create local options tax incentives, such as business improvement districts, PILT, development impact fees, zoning districts, etc	No	Local engagement and investment, creative partnerships	Limited applicability to state parks; vulnerable to political cycles	Medium	Potential funding for parks adjacent to communities
Special Park Districts	Special purpose governmental units with administrative and fiscal independence from local governments, created and managed based on geography and proximity to parks	No	Have taxing authority and can issue bonds. Successful models for providing park services	More successful in larger population areas with close proximity to popular parks	Medium	Potential for small percentage directed to parks in close proximity to communities
Single-Use Plastic Bag Fee	Fees primarily provide a financial incentive to reduce the use of plastic bags, which are a source of litter, particularly in streams and rivers	No	Reduce plastic bag use while generating new income for state parks. National trend to move away from single-use plastic items.	Politically unpopular in MT. Unreliable source for park operations.	Medium	Pilot with Montana-based grocery chain for parks close to retail stores and communities

## Appendix C: Implementation

The following table lays the groundwork for implementation of the Parks in Focus Commission's recommendations. The Commission recognizes the need to develop a more detailed work plan - with clear roles, priorities, deadlines, and outcomes - in conjunction with FWP and Parks, and offers this framework as an initial step toward that work plan.

RECOMMENDATION #1	IMPLEMENTING PARTY	OTHER PARTIES
<b>ACCELERATE FISH, WILDLIFE &amp; PARKS TRANSFORMATION</b>		
<b><i>Build "One Agency, One Vision" approach</i></b>		
Create an internal FWP implementation team and scope of work focused on aligning programs and vision across divisions (including employees of all ranks, divisions, and locations) and build support for change.	FWP	PIF, Consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish clear roles and responsibilities and a timeline for the implementation team.</li> </ul>	FWP	PIF
Realign FWP and Parks administrative regional boundaries to minimize unnecessary duplication and create efficiencies.	FWP	Parks, F&W Commission, Parks Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage and seek guidance from the Fish &amp; Wildlife Commission, Parks and Recreation Board, staff, and major stakeholders.</li> </ul>	FWP	Parks, F&W Commission, Parks Board
Refresh the FWP website and other communications collateral and related outreach to express a unified vision and brand for all divisions.	FWP	Parks, Consultant
<b><i>Pursue alternative staffing and management approaches</i></b>		
Develop cross-functional management approaches and on-the-ground teams that allow for centralization of services.	FWP	PIF, All FWP Divisions
Align FWP and Parks communications teams to ensure consistency while recognizing the critical importance of communications to Parks' services and offerings.	FWP	Parks
Integrate oversight and execution of law enforcement and maintenance responsibilities.	FWP	All FWP Divisions
<b><i>Build leadership bench and provide support for implementing change</i></b>		
Secure training for leadership, including members of the implementation team and the FWP senior management team.	FWP	PIF, Consultant
Pilot a staff rotation (work detail) regimen to foster a common mission and culture, and provide professional growth opportunities.	FWP	Parks
Design and implement a staff survey to solicit feedback on departmental changes.	FWP	Parks, Consultant

RECOMMENDATION #2	IMPLEMENTING PARTY	OTHER PARTIES
STRENGTHEN THE INTERNAL CAPABILITY OF PARKS		
<b><i>Establish Parks' vision and investment strategy</i></b>		
Revise and adopt a new classification policy.	Parks Board	Parks, PIF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish clear experience and service class guidelines.</li> </ul>	Parks	Parks Board, PIF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assign all parks within the classification framework.</li> </ul>	Parks	Parks Board, PIF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop budget priority criteria to guide future investment.</li> </ul>	Parks	FWP, Parks Board, PIF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure State Parks and Recreation Board adoption of revised policy.</li> </ul>	Parks	FWP, PIF
Implement the classification framework.	Parks	Parks Board, PIF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek clarification on any needed legislative changes or approvals (e.g., Primitive Parks Act).</li> </ul>	Parks Board	FWP, Parks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create more detailed guidance on specific park service class and experience standards.</li> </ul>	Parks	PIF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop three pilot park management plans and business strategies to engage the public and partners, and create a management and investment plan.</li> </ul>	Parks	PIF, Consultant
Design and implement a park user survey to assess visitor satisfaction and align park offerings with visitor desires and expectations.	Parks	FWP, ITRR
<b><i>Build internal systems and processes</i></b>		
Deploy asset management software across the parks system, including prioritization and tracking of routine maintenance and capital expenditure needs.	Parks	FWP
Improve fee collection at parks, such as better signage, fee stations, and mobile apps.	Parks	Consultant
Determine information technology needs at parks to allow for more efficient management, communications, bookings, and revenue capture.	Parks	Consultant
<b><i>Expand staff capacity</i></b>		
Determine necessary staffing levels based on classification exercise and peer analysis of other state parks systems.	Parks	FWP
Request more full-time positions and spending authority from the Legislature to expand capacity based on staffing assessment.	Parks	FWP, Parks Board, Park Champions
Request legislative authority to allow for greater flexibility in the use of part-time and seasonal staff to accommodate peak season demands.	Parks	FWP, Parks Board
Seek legislative staffing authority and funding to expand FWP intern and existing volunteer programs.	FWP	Parks, Parks Board

RECOMMENDATION #3	IMPLEMENTING PARTY	OTHER PARTIES
DEVELOP STRONG PARTNERSHIPS AND CONSTITUENCY		
<b>Create a partnership culture at Parks</b>		
Institutionalize the use of partnerships.	Parks	FWP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop partnership guidelines that outline rules, roles and responsibilities, and benefits to both Parks and partners.</li> </ul>	FWP	Parks, Foundation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centralize oversight of partnership negotiations and agreement terms and streamline partnership agreements, MOUs, and contracts.</li> </ul>	Parks	FWP, Parks Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore greater flexibility to award sole-source contracts that recognize partnership values that extend beyond low-cost considerations.</li> </ul>	FWP	Parks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a communications framework to promote partnership collaboration and mutual recognition.</li> </ul>	FWP	Parks, Foundation
<b>Secure partners to generate revenue and enrich the park experience</b>		
Determine highest-priority partnerships and invest in these relationships.	Parks	Foundation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deepen existing strategic relationships with Montana State Parks Foundation, AmeriCorps, and Montana Conservation Corps to expand capacity and revenue, and increase the engagement and participation of younger generations as park volunteers and professionals.</li> </ul>	Parks	Range of Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a cost-benefit analysis for all potential new partnerships and prioritize budget allocations to stimulate partnerships that increase capacity and resources.</li> </ul>	Parks	PIF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on developing significant new statewide partnerships to implement existing park priorities.</li> </ul>	Parks	Range of Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore park co-management options with local communities and other partners that keep parks public, yet fill critical management and maintenance needs.</li> </ul>	Parks	Range of Partners
<b>Expand the constituency for parks and recreation</b>		
Working with the Montana State Parks Foundation, Parks should:	Parks	Foundation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a public awareness campaign to elevate the value of parks and recreation to Montanans.</li> </ul>	Parks	PIF, Foundation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an engagement strategy (digital, media, and outreach) to cultivate park champions who will advocate for parks and recreation.</li> </ul>	Parks	PIF, Foundation, Consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop three tangible pilot projects to expand state park access and relevance, such as more diverse overnight accommodations (e.g., bike campsites and yurts), public transportation options, new trail systems (including motorized and non-motorized), and health connections to hospitals and healthcare providers (i.e., Parks Rx programs that prescribe parks and trails activities).</li> </ul>	Parks	Foundation

RECOMMENDATION #4	IMPLEMENTING PARTY	OTHER PARTIES
<b>INCREASE FUNDING FOR THE FUTURE</b>		
<b><i>Make the case for funding and develop strategies for different time horizons</i></b>		
Develop a parks investment pro forma and establish clear funding needs.	Parks	PIF, Consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Create a state-of-the-state report that articulates the value of parks for Montanans.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	FWP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Keep an up-to-date catalogue of improvements at Parks and known issues that have been addressed successfully.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	FWP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Conduct a parks and trails economic impact analysis to measure and demonstrate the economic role and significance of parks and recreation.</i></li> </ul>	FWP	PIF, ITRR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Determine priority funding needs for short, medium, and long-term horizons, using staffing and facilities condition data, park visitor survey findings, and established classification framework priorities and standards.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	FWP
Create progressive funding strategies that build from today's needs to long-term success.	Parks	FWP, PIF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Stabilize the Situation: for the next year, seek \$3 million in new revenue to address the highest priority staffing, operations, maintenance, and capital project needs.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	FWP, Parks Board, Range of Partners, Park Champions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lay the Foundation: for the next five years, seek \$20 million in new revenue to expand staffing levels to meet growing demands, address the long-term maintenance and capital backlog, and begin to implement classification standards.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	FWP, Parks Board, Range of Partners, Park Champions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Build the Campaign: for the next 20 years, seek the funds necessary (the exact amount is unknown today) to steward the parks system in light of changing demographics, relevance, and access.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	FWP, Parks Board, Range of Partners, Park Champions
<b><i>Implement tailored strategies for three main sources of funding</i></b>		
<b>Government</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Craft a specific legislative strategy and activate state park champions at the Legislature.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	FWP, Park Champions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Educate lawmakers and influencers.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	FWP, Park Champions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Pursue revenue sharing where a rational nexus exists between current state funding streams and unfunded Parks management responsibilities.</i></li> </ul>	FWP	Parks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Seek dedicated state funding that is commensurate with growing visitor demands.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	FWP, Parks Board, Range of Partners, Park Champions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Work with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development, and Governor's Office of Outdoor Recreation to identify planning, promotion, and funding resources that would benefit state parks, land stewardship, and Montana's recreation economy.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	FWP, DNRC, Tourism, OOR
<b>Philanthropic</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Work closely with Montana State Parks Foundation to increase philanthropic funding, with a focus on creating a pyramid of engagement for donors and developing sponsorships of statewide significance.</i></li> </ul>	Foundation	Parks, Friends Groups, Businesses, Individuals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explore opportunities through ties to park offerings, such as in the areas of health care, community development, and outdoor recreation and tourism.</i></li> </ul>	Foundation	Parks, MT Healthcare Foundation, Hospitals, Department of Commerce, Chambers of Commerce, OOR
<b>Earned</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Develop business partnerships to improve park amenities, visitor services, and generate new revenue.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	Businesses, Concessionaires, Commercial Use Permittees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improve fee collection at state parks and expand opportunities for the public to pay for park access and services.</i></li> </ul>	Parks	Foundation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Study the current user fee structure and rates, including premium or oversubscribed park services, and explore potential rate increases and variable pricing options.</i></li> </ul>	Parks Board	Parks, PIF, Consultant

## Appendix D:

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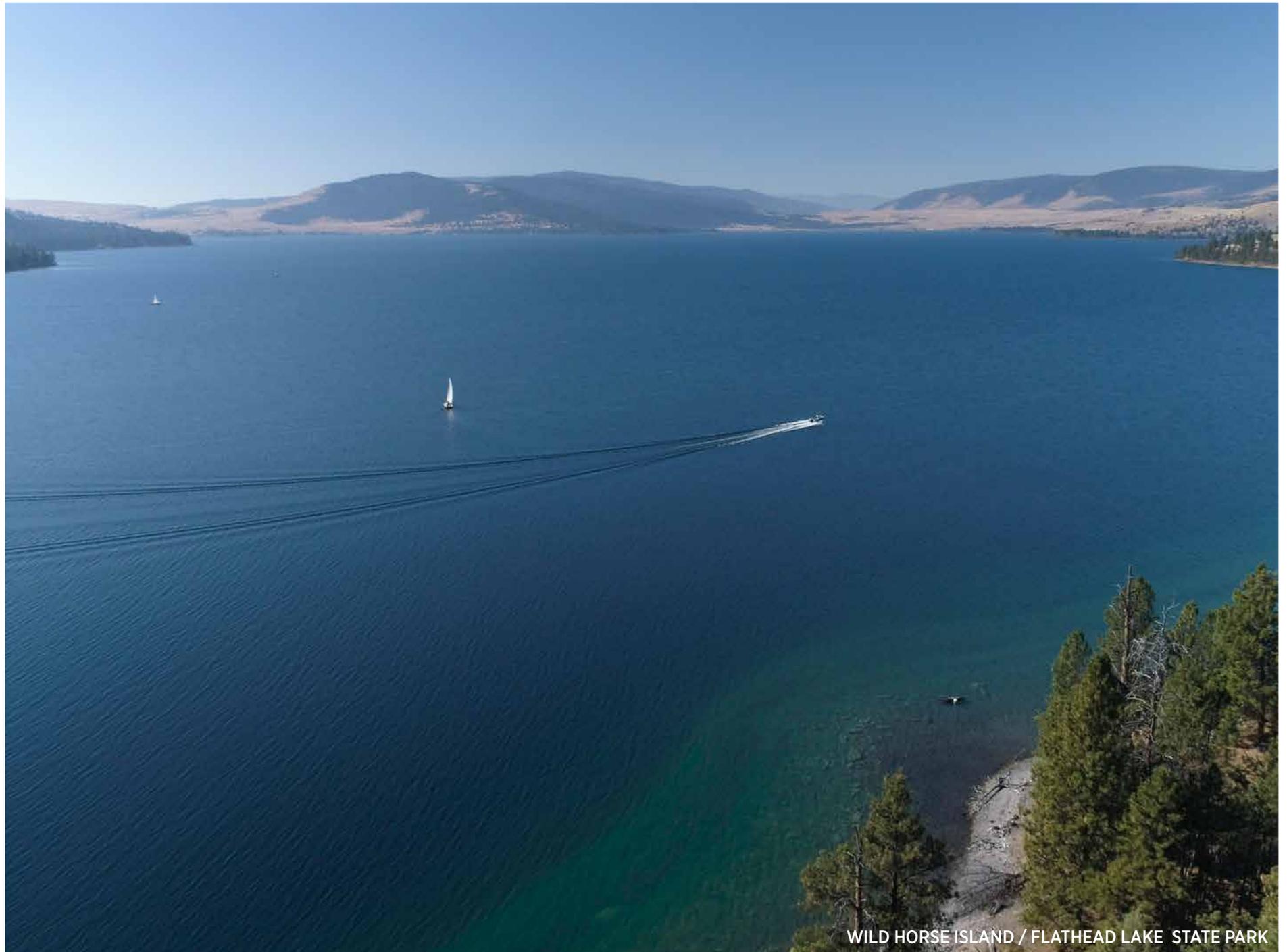
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WILD HORSE ISLAND / FLATHEAD LAKE STATE PARK

## *MONTANA PARKS IN FOCUS COMMISSION*

The purpose of the Montana Parks in Focus Commission is to provide expert, high-level, and independent recommendations to the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks on effective ways to implement the Montana State Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan.

The Governor of Montana created the Parks in Focus Commission to deliver results and accountability to the Montana State Parks and Recreation vision, while ensuring the financial, operational, and cultural challenges facing state parks are addressed under the management of the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

***[chartinganewtomorrow.com/parks-in-focus](http://chartinganewtomorrow.com/parks-in-focus)***

## *RESOURCES LEGACY FUND*

Through a formal partnership with the state, Resources Legacy Fund is coordinating the Parks in Focus Commission.

RLF is a nonprofit, public benefit organization that works with philanthropic partners to craft cutting-edge approaches to conserving natural resources, improving environmental sustainability, and diversifying conservation leadership and capacity.

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