



ANNUAL REPORT 2020





Dear Montana State Parks Supporters,

Three years ago the Montana State Parks Foundation set out to do something extraordinary; we sought to change the way state parks were used, viewed, funded, and loved by Montanans and the millions of visitors who spend time in the parks each year. We knew this would be no easy task.

After all, Montana boasts the third most state parks per capita in the country with the tenth most acreage. Simply caring for all those parks alone is a challenge. It's even more daunting when you learn that Montana ranks 49th in the nation in funding for operations and maintenance of those parks and just 44th in major capital investment into the parks.

However, we set our sights on a shared vision that inspires our work and inform every decision we make: Ensure we create state parks that reflect Montana's renowned outdoor recreation and heritage for all... forever. From this vision we have been able to grow, increase the scale of our impact, and make real improvements to our parks every year.

Three years ago the Directors of the Foundation and I developed a new strategic plan to guide our organization for the next 5 years. That plan shifted the focus of the Foundation's efforts and resources toward a more clearly defined mission:

The Montana State Parks Foundation raises private support to enhance the visitor experience and build advocates for Montana's state parks and recreation heritage.





MONTANA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION

This past fiscal year, we accomplished more work to improve Montana State Parks than ever before. A short list of our recent accomplishments includes:

- New archery targets at Lone Pine State Park near Kalispell
- A large, custom built shade and weather shelter at Lewis and Clark Caverns to help the park offer alternative caverns tours to visitors with mobility limitations
- Repaired and replaced critical components of the Tongue River Reservoir Fish Cleaning Station
- Trail maintenance and construction at Wildhorse Island
- Installed landing site kiosks, trail marker signs, and built new visitor information stations at Wildhorse Island
- Treated and manually removed several acres of invasive weeds and plants at Wildhorse Island
- Supported park events at parks by providing food or gifts for attendees at Chief Plenty Coups, Madison Buffalo Jump, and Cooney Reservoir State Parks.





MONTANA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION

In the year to come we plan to accomplish much more to enhance the visitor experience and improve Montana's State Parks.

Montana's State Parks need people like you. People that are passionate, solutions oriented, and willing to be a part of positive change. Without your help State Parks will continue to face over \$22 million dollars in unmet maintenance, infrastructure, and capacity needs. While the staff and volunteers at Montana State Parks do a great job keeping the parks operating as smoothly as they can, they can't keep holding it all together with duct tape and bailing wire forever.

So we have a choice. We can hope and wait for politicians in Helena and Washington D.C. to stop quibbling over partisan differences and do what is right for our public lands and our state.

Or we can step up and meet the problem head on. The Montana State Parks Foundation has been and will continue to do the latter by investing private money into critical improvements and enhancements to our State Parks. We invite you to join us and be a part of the solution.

Sincerely,

Coby R. Gierke

Coby R. Gierke

Executive Director
Montana State Parks Foundation
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Missoula, MT 59802.





Project Highlight: Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park

In 2019 and 2020 we worked to develop an alternative Caverns Tour that opened the caving, speleology, and spelunking opportunities at Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park to a much wider array of visitors.

The only tour of the caverns regularly offered at the State Park is an arduous hike and journey through a large portion of the caverns complex. The steep hike to the upper caverns entrance, frequent stooping, crawling and sliding makes the tour inaccessible for park visitors with many mobility or physical limitations.

Now being offered, the Paradise Room tour allows up to an additional 12,240 non-traditional visitors to explore the renowned namesake caverns of the State Park each year.

In order to allow parks staff to offer this new tour we constructed a large, durable shade and weather shelter near the lower caverns entrance for visitors to gather under prior to entering the cave. This space provides park guides to orient visitors, explain safety procedures, and time the entry of guests into the caverns from a scenic and sheltered location.





MONTANA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION





Project Highlight: Wild Horse Island State Park

The Wild Horse Island Unit of Flathead Lake State Park receives around 20,000 visitors annually who seek world-class wildlife viewing opportunities. We are working on several immediate project opportunities that would improve wildlife habitat, improve park access, and enhance the visitor experience.

Ponderosa Pine encroachment and noxious weed invasion threaten the Palouse Prairie that serves as the forage for the island's wildlife; mule deer, bighorn sheep, and the namesake wild horses.

Before Ponderosa Pine encroaching saplings grow to a larger, more difficult size to manage, Montana Conservation Crews would be utilized to hand thin these small saplings, thus conserving the grasses and forbs that sheep and deer depend on. Additionally, crews would be utilized to hand pull and spray noxious weeds, most notably Canada thistle and knapweed.

Additionally, over the past several years, Montana State Parks staff has worked to replace old landing site signage with new, aesthetically pleasing kiosks. These new kiosks are fabricated out of logs harvested from the island that create a unique aesthetic. Four of the six landing sites have been completed.

A fifth landing site has the structure, but no signage, no sign-in log and still has the old style self-pay station. A local welder would be commissioned to fabricate two of the new style fee boxes. A local sign shop would be utilized to fabricate the signage for the kiosks. A Montana Conservation Crew would be utilized to build the last log kiosk, install all signage and self-pay stations.





MONTANA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION

Providing clear, consistent information to visitors as they arrive to the park at one of six boat landing sites and again along trails as they traverse the island is critical to establishing appropriate human behavior and minimizing negative interaction between humans and wildlife. As visitation to Montana State Parks and Wildhorse Island increases, implementing cost-effective measures to protect wildlife habitat and ensure visitor safety will prove to be a very worthwhile investment.

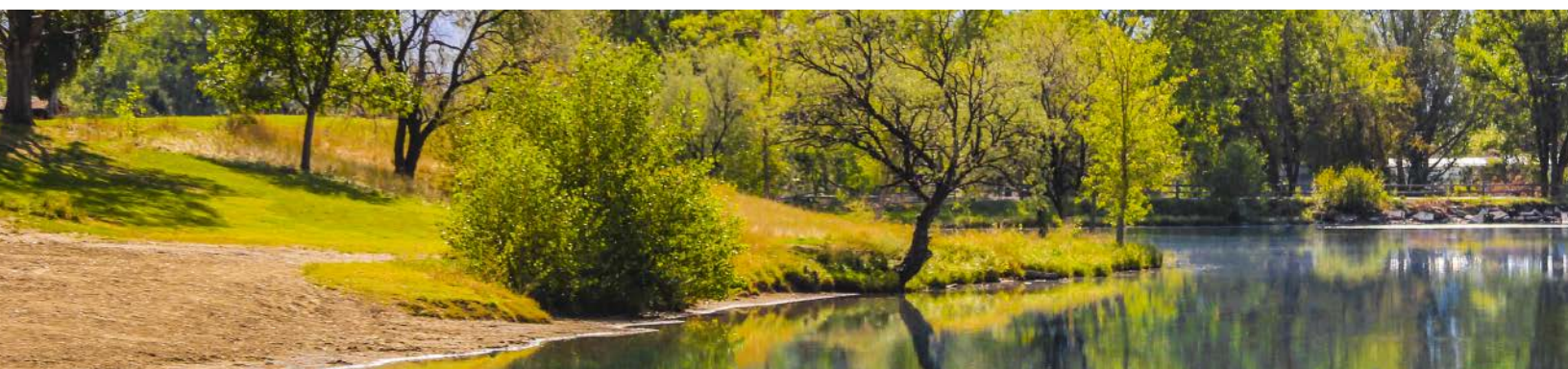




MONTANA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION

Project Highlights:

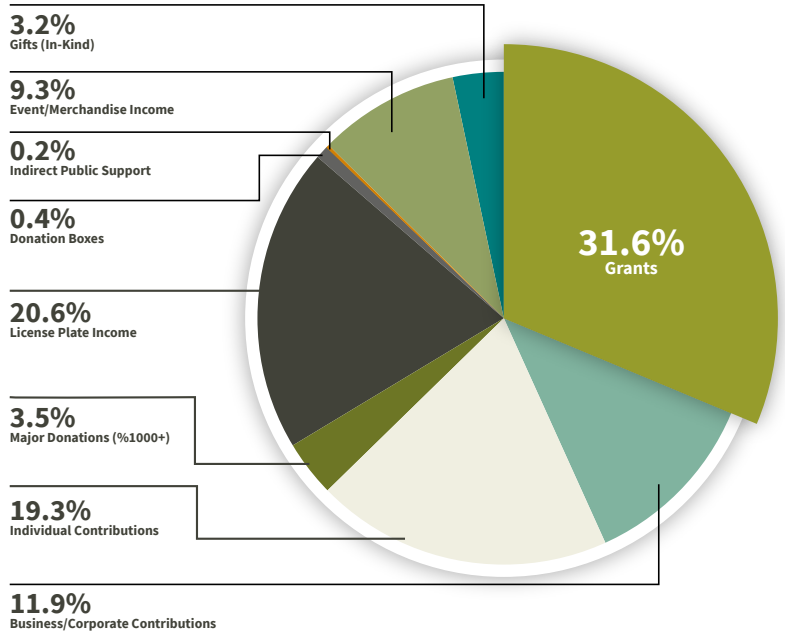
- New archery targets at Lone Pine State Park near Kalispell
- Repaired and replaced critical components of the Tongue River Reservoir Fish Cleaning Station
- Trail maintenance and construction at Wildhorse Island
- Provided critical visitor amenities and landscaping to Milltown State Park
- Supported park events at parks by providing food or gifts for attendees at Chief Plenty Coups, Madison Buffalo Jump, and Cooney Reservoir State Parks.
- Developed and launched a weekly parks information campaign with a weekly audience of over 100,000 parks' supporters.
- Developed an interactive State Parks map for all 55 of Montana's State Parks with trip and activity planning tools built-in.
- Created the Flathead and Southeast Montana Actions Funds to direct grants, gifts, and donations to critical projects in both regions.



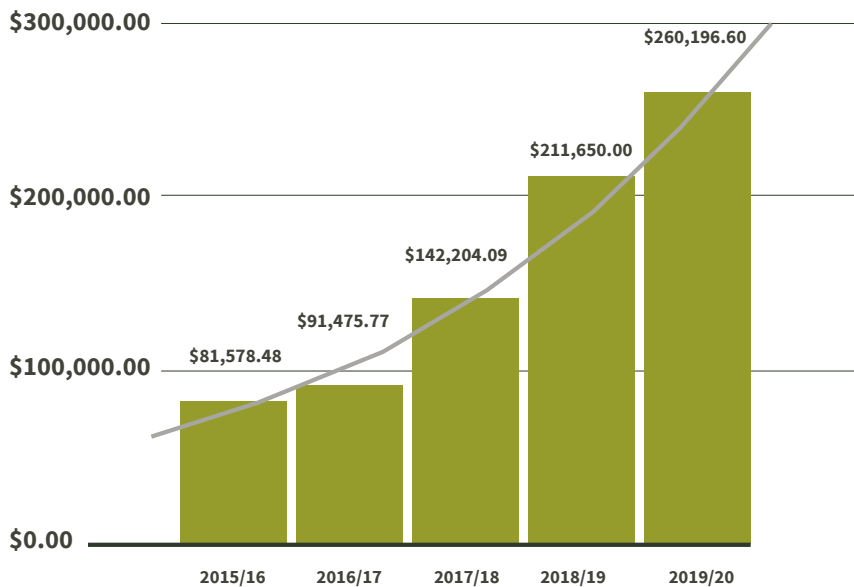


FOUNDATION REVENUE BREAKDOWN

FY 2019/20

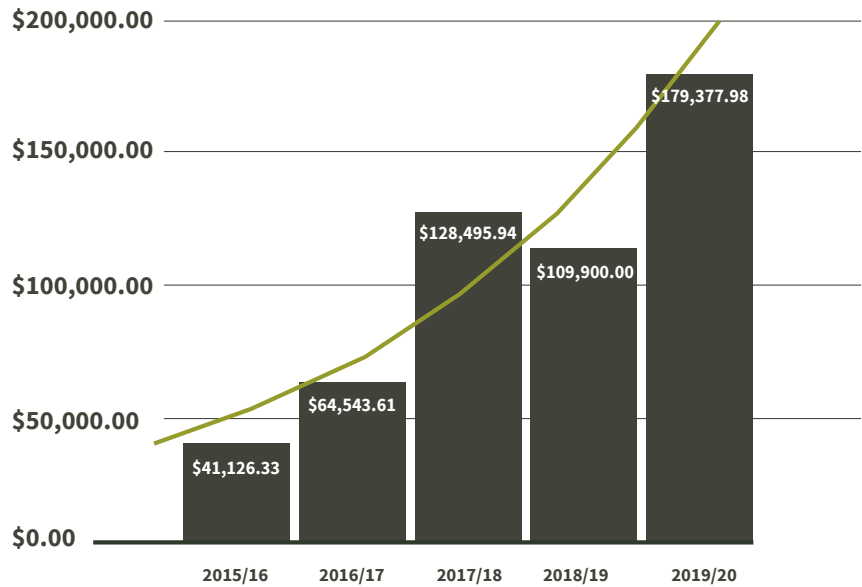


FOUNDATION REVENUE BY YEAR

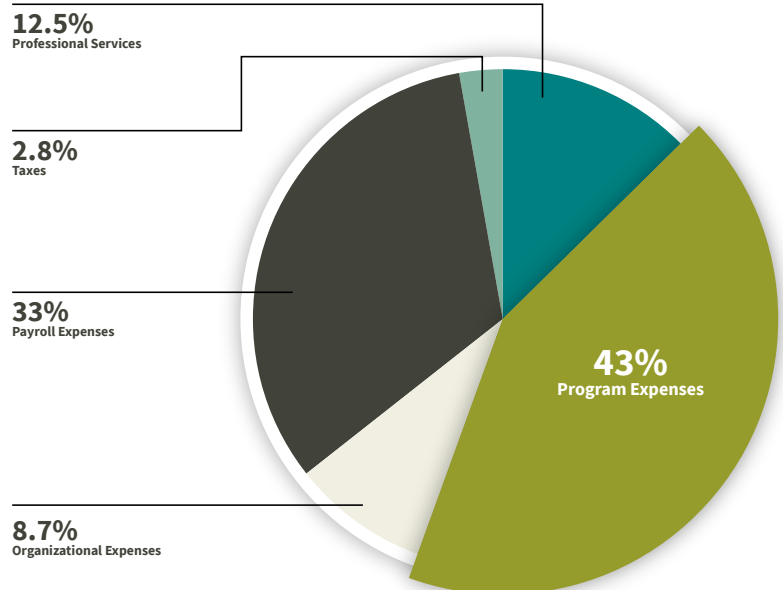




FOUNDATION EXPENDITURES BY FISCAL YEAR



FOUNDATION EXPENSES BREAKDOWN





GET INVOLVED

The Montana State Parks Foundation has been and will continue to support our State Parks system by raising and investing private money into critical improvements and enhancements to our State Parks.

We invite you to join us and be part of the solution.

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