

**MISSOURI-MADISON RIVER FUND RECREATION PROJECT
FY2027 GRANT APPLICATION FORM**

Project Name: Trail Creek Accessible Site Renovations – Part 1

Reservoir or River Segment: Madison River – Upper Bear
Trap Canyon County: Madison

Site Name (or project location): Upper Bear Trap Canyon/Trail Creek Recreation Area

Applicant Name: Kristen Ulery

Position and Agency: Outdoor Recreation Planner – Bureau of Land Management Dillon Field Office

Telephone: 406-490-9044

Email: kulery@blm.gov

All projects are required to have a Project Sponsor to be considered for funding by the River Fund. Project sponsors serve as active members of Missouri-Madison Regional Working Groups and will consult with applicants on projects. Sponsorship denotes that the proposed project meets the basic criteria for consideration (below). A project that does not meet the basic criteria or does not have a project sponsor will not be scored by the Regional Working Group.

Project Sponsor Name: Kristen Ulery

Position and Agency: Outdoor Recreation Planner – Bureau of Land Management Dillon Field Office

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The Basic Project Criteria below must be met for a project to be considered for funding:

1. The project is consistent with the FERC Project 2188 License.
2. The project occurs in the Missouri-Madison Project Area.
3. The project must be consistent with or support management plans in the Project Area
4. The project provides a public recreation benefit.

Refer to the Grant Application Instructions for further clarification on these criteria.

Awarded River Fund grant funds or NorthWestern Energy matching funds may be used for the purchase of materials, supplies, and equipment, or to pay contractor services or other non-agency project components. Project funds may not be used to pay agency or applicant overhead expenses, such as agency staffing costs for design and engineering, project management, or administrative expenses. Funds may be used to pay costs for contracted design and engineering, as appropriate. Accounting of project expenses must be included in status reports provided for the annual River Fund Board meeting.

Requests for review of draft applications must be submitted two weeks prior to the submission deadline.

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Project Cost Breakdown and Financial Request:

Complete the financial section below by providing total project cost (to the nearest dollar), contributions by applicant and cooperators, request for NorthWestern Energy match of agency funds (see detailed instructions), and River Fund Grant request. Document in-kind contributions by public agencies for determination of NorthWestern Energy match request. A description of funding sources and in-kind contributions should be included in the Project Description.

	<u>Nearest Whole Dollar</u>	
Total project cost:	<u>\$94,245</u>	
Applicant Contributions – cash	<u>\$10,000</u>	
Applicant Contributions – value of in-kind:	<u>\$9,000 (labor only)</u>	
Other Contributions – Please list by source:		
Madison River Foundation	<u>\$10,000</u>	
Click or tap here to enter text.	Enter amount	
Click or tap here to enter text.	Enter amount	
Click or tap here to enter text.	Enter amount	Percentage of Total Project Cost:
Total Applicant and Other Contributions:	<u>\$29,000</u>	31 %
NorthWestern Energy Match Request:	<u>\$19,000</u>	20 %
River Fund Grant Request:	<u>\$46,245</u>	49 %
Proposed Project Implementation Period:	<u>April/May 2027 - ~2 weeks</u>	

1. Has this project been previously submitted for funding consideration by the River Fund Board, either as a separate project or part of another project? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, please identify which years the application was submitted and, if the project was previously funded, list the amount funded by year.

N/A

2. **Project Description:** Provide a description of the proposed project. Be sure to include specific project elements that are planned, and any associated cost detail.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Dillon Field Office (DFO) proposes to renovate the existing Trail Creek Day Use Area on the Madison River below Ennis Lake. This project will restore accessibility, improve fishing and river access, upgrade visitor amenities, and enhance overall site functionality. Trail Creek occupies a distinctive ecological setting where the broad Madison Valley narrows into Bear Trap Canyon. The site's ancient geology, riparian vegetation, open grasslands, rocky terrain, and river habitat support diverse public recreation. Visitors utilize the area for angling, picnicking, birdwatching, wildlife viewing, and riverside relaxation. Unlike the high-traffic Kobayashi Beach and Lower Madison sites, Trail Creek provides a tranquil, family-friendly environment. It features a small beach with downstream views toward Bear Trap Canyon and upstream views toward Ennis Lake.

*The proposed activities will occur entirely within the existing developed recreation footprint. The project focuses on rehabilitating existing infrastructure and restoring disturbed surfaces rather than expanding the site. The existing 735-foot accessible route runs from the upper parking area through the corridor to the north beach. DFO will rehabilitate this trail by replacing deteriorated trail framing and compacting a new layer of crusher fines. The Independent Government Estimate (IGE) allocates **\$16,800** for 120 cubic yards of delivered and compacted crusher fines. It also includes **\$13,600** for 1,700 linear feet of 6" × 6" boundary timbers, **\$1,400** for 7 cubic yards of concrete material, **\$5,200** for 80 hours of skid-steer rental, and **\$2,720** for 40 hours of dump-truck use.*

*Additional engineering components include resurfacing the existing parking area and improving delineation of its perimeter. The budget allocates **\$8,125** for 125 cubic yards of delivered 1" surface-coarse aggregate to reinforce the parking surface, and like previous projects, engineering will acquire sizeable boulders for perimeter delineation without additional cost. Work will re-establish clear delineation to mitigate footprint expansion and vegetation damage, especially during hunting season when parking is heavily used by horse trailers and with improved signage, ensuring ADA-accessible and picnicking sites remain available during seasonal overlap. To mitigate sun exposure, contractors will install a 20' × 20' accessible metal shade shelter adjacent to the river, estimated at **\$24,000**. Workers will install a single-panel informational kiosk and regulatory signs at the upper parking area for **\$9,800**. The crew will rehabilitate the remaining picnic units by replacing deteriorated wood decking for **\$3,600**. Finally, workers will install an accessible picnic table beneath the shade shelter using excess DFO inventory.*

Hydrological and recreational access improvements include re-engineering the three existing rock fishing platforms. Workers will reshape and stabilize these features to comply with federal accessibility standards. This modification ensures stable, direct riverside angling access for visitors with limited mobility. Once complete, it will establish the corridor's only formally developed, river-adjacent BLM fishing site meeting universal accessibility designs.

*The total estimated FY27 project cost is **\$85,245**.*

3. **Project Phasing:** Briefly discuss whether the project could be phased over more than one year or construction season.

If full FY27 funding is not available, the Trail Creek Accessible Site Renovations project could be implemented in two phases while prioritizing restoration of public access and accessibility.

Phase 1 – Access: Complete rehabilitation of the approximately 735-foot ADA-accessible route, including trail framing and crusher fines; improve parking perimeter delineation and surfacing; rehabilitate picnic tables; and reconstruct the three existing rock fishing platforms to provide stable, accessible river-adjacent fishing opportunities. This phase would address the project's most immediate accessibility, safety, and deferred-maintenance needs.

Phase 2 – Amenities: Install the proposed 20' × 20' accessible metal shade structure and informational kiosk/signage, completing the visitor amenities included in the full project design.

While phasing provides a viable alternative if full funding is unavailable, completing the project in a single construction period is more cost-efficient. Current estimates and fabrication quotes are based on coordinated procurement and implementation. Delaying the shade structure and kiosk would require new fabrication quotes, expose those components to material and construction inflation, and require additional procurement, mobilization, administration, and labor. As a result, the combined cost of the two phases is expected to exceed the cost of completing the full project in FY27.

Additionally, the BLM intends to submit an FY28 application for a series of six themed interpretive and educational panels along the accessible route, with partner support already identified. Centered on the connections among stone, people, wildlife, and water, the panels would address a significant gap in corridor-wide interpretive opportunities while helping visitors develop a deeper connection to and sense of place within the larger Madison River landscape.

4. **Cultural Resource Management:** Cultural Resource Management (CRM) requirements for any activity related to this Project must be completed and documented to NorthWestern Energy as a condition of awarded River Fund grant funds or NorthWestern Energy matching funds. Grant and matching funds may not be used for any land-disturbing activity, or the modification, renovation, or removal of any buildings or structures until the CRM consultation process has been completed. Agency applicants must submit a copy of the proposed project to a designated Cultural Resource Specialist for their agency. Private parties or non-governmental organizations are encouraged to submit a copy of their proposed project to a CRM consultant they may have employed. Private parties and non-governmental organizations may also contact the NorthWestern Energy representative for further information or assistance. Applications submitted without this section completed will be held without any action until the information has been submitted.

Summarize how you will complete requirements for Cultural Resource Management.

No cultural sites are currently documented within the Trail Creek Recreation Area. The existing inventory and associated cultural work are more than ten years old. A new Section 106 Review Request has been submitted to the DFO's Acting Archaeologist and is pending.

The DFO is confident that any required consultation can and will be completed before project implementation.

5. **Scoring Criteria.** Respond to the following Scoring Criteria. Start answers after ►.

5.1 Does the project occur at a 2188 license site?

Yes. Upper Bear Trap Canyon/Trail Creek Recreation Area is a 2188 license site.

- 5.2 Project is for operation and maintenance of an existing recreation site. Describe if the project will meet operation and maintenance needs. Higher points awarded to projects that are higher priority and are not a recurring expense. Lower points awarded to projects that are low priority and/or have been previously funded. It is unlikely that the timeframe of River Fund would address emergency operation and maintenance needs but could support non-emergency operation and maintenance needs.

The project addresses high-priority, non-emergency maintenance needs through one-time rehabilitation of deteriorated infrastructure at the existing Trail Creek Day Use Area. The work will restore site functionality, improve accessibility and visitor safety, and extend the useful life of existing facilities. Routine maintenance, such as vegetation trimming and removal, noxious weed mitigation, removal of fallen trees and other obstructions, and basic periodic facility upkeep will continue as part of the BLM's ongoing site management. The project request is limited to the one-time rehabilitation work described above and does not seek funding for future routine maintenance or recurring operational costs.

- 5.3 *Project involves collaboration with other agencies or organizations.* Identify project partners other than NorthWestern Energy or River Fund, if any, and describe their participation. Document all funding sources and all in-kind support and services to a project, because all are sources of partnerships and in-kind contributions from public agencies qualify for calculation of NorthWestern Energy matching funds. If there are no project partners, explain why.

*The **Madison River Foundation** is committed to providing direct financial support for this project in the amount of \$10,000 (see Attachment) and is also interested in providing in-kind support through volunteer time assisting with non-engineering labor (picnic tables, ADA route framing/rock platform framing/stabilization), although those details have not yet been finalized.*

- 5.4 *Project provides a benefit to public recreation in the Project Area and addresses specific issues and goals of the Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan (CRP).* Identify how the project provides a benefit to public recreation and describe how the project specifically addresses issues and goals in Chapter 2-1 of the CRP.

The Trail Creek project directly supports the CRP goal to “continue to improve and expand recreation opportunities that offer universal accessibility”. It accomplishes this objective through the engineering rehabilitation of the existing 735-foot accessible route and the structural restacking of the accessible casting platforms. These modifications establish a continuous, formally developed accessible route from the parking infrastructure to the high-water line. Consequently, the site will provide purpose-built angling opportunities for a broader demographic of visitors with mobility limitations.

The project also advances the CRP objective to “maintain or proactively increase public safety for recreationists in the Project Area”. Restoring deteriorated infrastructure, repairing parking area delineation, and reframing and stabilizing the rock fishing platforms directly improve safe movement and public access throughout the site footprint. Additionally, the proposed 20' × 20' metal shade shelter serves as a critical public safety feature. This addition mitigates chronic sun and thermal exposure at an otherwise open, unshaded riverfront location. The new informational kiosk will further facilitate visitor orientation, environmental compliance, and site awareness.

Furthermore, the design satisfies the CRP's dual mandates for resource protection and sustainable recreation. By prioritizing capital rehabilitation of existing facilities, the project systematically concentrates public use within designated corridors and developed recreation spaces. Because all improvements remain strictly within the current development footprint, the project enhances site functionality and public utility without expanding the human footprint into un-impacted riparian habitat.

*Finally, partner financial commitments from the **Madison River Foundation** substantiate active collaboration with an external partner organization. Their organizational mission to “preserve, protect, and enhance the Madison River ecosystem for the mutual benefit of wildlife and all people who use it” aligns cleanly with agency objectives. This partnership validates the CRP's systematic emphasis on cooperative, inter-agency recreation management.*

- 5.5 *Project responds to a clearly identified need.* Describe and document the need for this project and how the project would address that need. Cite specific sources, as possible, to establish need and support the project. Discuss consequences if the funding request is unsuccessful. For a new

construction or acquisition project, identify how post-project, long-term costs (such as site maintenance and management) will be provided.

The proposed rehabilitation at Trail Creek directly responds to sustained recreation pressure, accelerating infrastructure deterioration, and a critical regional deficit: the complete absence of ADA-compliant, river-adjacent fishing infrastructure across the 19 developed BLM recreation sites within the Madison River corridor. Following a peak traffic surge of 10,362 seasonal vehicles in 2020, user volume within the Upper Bear Trap Canyon corridor consistently exceeded 8,000 vehicles annually through 2025. Specifically, NorthWestern Energy monitoring data logged 8,232 peak-season vehicles in 2025. This metric yields a conservative baseline of approximately 10,900 individual visitors after applying standard adjustments for localized commercial shuttle traffic and mean vehicle occupancy coefficients. Within this context, Trail Creek provides a crucial, low-density, family-oriented alternative to high-traffic hubs like Kobayashi Beach and the Lower Madison recreation sites.

The completed project will restore universally accessible riverside recreation and direct angling access while maximizing broader day-use utility across the river corridor landscape. Engineering interventions on existing facilities, combined with the installation of structural thermal shade, will systematically enhance public safety and user comfort parameters. This optimization establishes a highly functional, low-congestion riverfront asset situated in close geographic proximity to the communities of Ennis and Norris.

Conversely, a deficit in funding will critically delay necessary facility stabilization, extending the corridor's deficit in ADA-compliant shoreline angling access. Compromised assets will restrict the site's capacity to safely absorb persistent recreation demand or function as an accessible alternative to highly congested regional access points. Furthermore, progressive compounding degradation will likely inflate future asset recovery costs. The BLM will absorb ongoing operational upkeep through its established Madison River recreation program, and this proposal requests no recurring operations or maintenance allocations.

5.6 Project design options have been considered, estimated, and a preferred design selected. Well-designed projects reduce occurrences of budgetary overages, design changes, and additional complications. Discuss the current design phase for this project, demonstrate that the project has been well vetted, and include cost estimates.

BLM Engineering personnel have developed the Trail Creek rehabilitation design to maximize universal accessibility, structural durability, and public safety while remaining strictly within the existing developed recreation footprint. The project review process included comprehensive site assessments, peer engineering evaluations, and the generation of an Independent Government Estimate (IGE). The team evaluated a design alternative to limit rehabilitation to the accessible path section terminating at the upstream clearing. However, planners discarded this partial option to prioritize equitable access across the full spectrum of existing riverside recreation assets. Historical construction blueprints confirm that designers originally engineered the corridor to provide a continuous, accessible route terminating at the north beach, a finding that validates the preferred design to rehabilitate the complete path rather than truncate its intended scope.

Accessible Route and Parking Optimization

The existing 735-foot accessible route extending from the upper staging area to the north beach originally met all applicable accessibility standards. These specifications include a minimum 36-inch clear width, 60-inch passing zones where topographically required, and compliant running slopes, cross slopes, and horizontal transitions. The current proposal will stabilize this asset through the structural replacement of defective trail framing alongside the placement and mechanical compaction of crusher fines. This methodology restores a firm, stable, and slip-resistant surface while fully preserving the route's accessible parameters. Improvements will deploy surface coarse aggregate to improve durability, repair perimeter delineation to mitigate site expansion and vegetation damage and improve existing signage to further clarify ADA-accessible and

picnicking parking site use during overlapping seasons, systematically improving site functionality and visitor safety.

Shoreline Access and Site Amenities

Engineering interventions include the structural reconfiguration of the three existing rock fishing access platforms. Crew members will reshape and restack these features to comply with federal accessibility standards, ensuring direct, stable riverside angling access for visitors with limited mobility. Complementary improvements include the installation of a 20' × 20' heavy-duty metal shade structure adjacent to the shoreline to mitigate acute solar and thermal exposure. Crews will also erect a single-panel informational kiosk and regulatory signage at the upper parking area and replace degraded wood decking across the remaining picnic units. Collectively, these infrastructure upgrades optimize visitor comfort, spatial orientation, and broader day-use utility.

Independent Government Estimate (Cost Matrix Breakdown)

- Crusher Fines (Delivered, Installed, and Compacted): \$16,800
- Boundary Timbers (6" × 6" Treated): \$13,600
- Skid-Steer Rental (80 Hours): \$5,200
- Dump Truck Operation (40 Hours): \$2,720
- Surface-Coarse Aggregate (Delivered): \$8,125
- Platform Base Stability Concrete Material: \$1,400
- Installed Metal Shade Structure (20' × 20'): \$24,000
- Picnic Unit Wood Decking Replacement: \$3,600
- Informational Kiosk and Regulatory Signage: \$9,800
- **TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST: \$85,245**

5.7 Project supports or protects other resources and is consistent with or supports resource plans in the Project Area. Describe how this project will protect resource values (such as public access, water quality, fisheries, wildlife, habitats, and cultural resources) and support other resource and agency plans, including Project 2188 License plans and land use and land management plans in place in the Corridor. Management plans should provide justification for the project.

The project restores accessible river access and improves safety while concentrating recreation within the existing developed footprint. Rehabilitating established routes and fishing features limits new riverbank disturbance and vegetation trampling, supporting the Dillon Field Office RMP's objectives for quality recreation, facility maintenance, and resource protection (BLM, 2006, pp. 53-54).

Trail Creek is an identified recreation site under the Missouri-Madison Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2188), and its rehabilitation supports the CRP's accessible recreation and resource-protection goals. The project also supports Montana FWP fisheries priorities by maintaining public access to the Madison River, a designated Blue Ribbon trout stream and nationally renowned wild-trout fishery, while concentrating use at an established recreation site and limiting additional riverbank disturbance (FWP, 2019, p. 213).

At the national level, the project advances the EXPLORE Act's mandate to expand accessible recreation opportunities on federal lands and waters. Rehabilitation of Trail Creek's accessible route and riverside facilities directly supports Sections 214 and 215, which direct agencies to develop accessible trails and recreation opportunities, including improvements to existing facilities, consistent with federal accessibility requirements (EXPLORE Act, Pub. L. No. 118-234, §§ 214–215, 138 Stat. 2836, 2883–2885 (2025)).

6. Insert map(s) showing the location of the proposed project, drawings and design work related to the project, and a reasonable number of photos (as available) here.

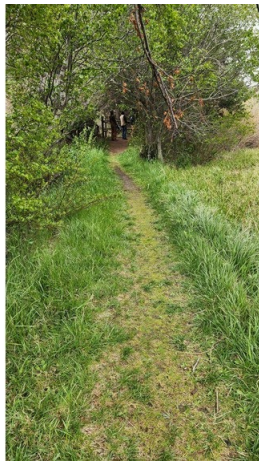
Trail Creek Accessible Site Renovations — Current Site Photographs



1. Parking, signs, ADA route start, vault toilet, proposed kiosk location



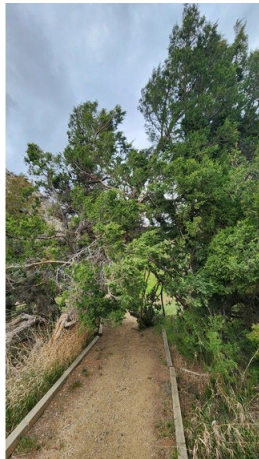
2. Current ADA route section at corner



3. Former ADA route heading to beach, overgrown



4. Former ADA route heading downstream, overgrown



5. Current ADA route section with fallen tree



6. Former ADA route and fishing platform, overgrown

Trail Creek Accessible Site Renovations — Current Site Photographs



7. Upstream view, picnic table, worn, inaccessible



8. Downstream picnic table, worn, inaccessible



9. Illicit fire ring in proposed shelter location, picnic table, worn, inaccessible



10. Downstream view, former ADA route along river, overgrown, inaccessible



11. Downstream beach looking toward former ADA route on right, worn, inaccessible



12. Original Photograph: rock fishing platform pre-stabilization

Trail Creek Accessible Site Renovations — Original Site Photographs



13. Original ADA route with fishing platform (post-stabilization)



14. Original ADA route entrance, vault toilet in background



15. Original picnic table, ADA route, downstream view



16. River view from fishing platform



17. Original ADA route heading downstream to beach



18. Original ADA route, heading towards entrance at top



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
CONTRACT ESTIMATE SUMMARY**

Contract/Project Name River Fund - Trail Creek Recreation Site Renovations - 100%				Estimator G.Anderson	Date 7/16/2026
Project Location Dillon Field Office - Upper Bear Trap Canyon Trail Creek Day Use on Madison River				Contract Number XXX	
Project Description					
Project consists of replacing boundary timbers, installing crusher fines surfaces for ADA access along the entire original 735' path and as needed in site infrastructure, installing a metal shade shelter, replacing picnic table decking boards, re-stacking fishing piers, and improving the parking area, including adding a single panel information kiosk with signage					
Trail Creek Day Use ADA Accessible Site Renovations					
Line Item No.	Pay Item Description	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Cost
A0001	CRUSHER FINES DELIVERED, INSTALLED, & COMPACTED	CY	120	\$ 140.00	\$ 16,800.00
A0002	BOUNDARY TIMBERS (6" X 6")	LF	1700	\$ 8.00	\$ 13,600.00
A0003	SKIDSTEER RENTAL	HR	80	\$ 65.00	\$ 5,200.00
A0004	DUMP TRUCK	HR	40	\$ 68.00	\$ 2,720.00
A0005	1" SURFACE COURSE AGGREGATE - DELIVERED	CUYD	125	\$ 65.00	\$ 8,125.00
A0006	METAL SHADE STRUCTURE (20' X 20') INSTALLED	EACH	1	\$ 24,000.00	\$ 24,000.00
A0007	PICNIC TABLE/BENCH DECKING REPLACEMENT	LS	1	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 3,600.00
A0008	INFORMATIONAL KIOSK AND SIGNS	EACH	1	\$ 9,800.00	\$ 9,800.00
A0009	CONCRETE MATERIAL/PLATFORM BASE FILL	CUYD	7	\$ 200.00	\$ 1,400.00
Total Project Cost				\$	85,245.00



MADISON RIVER FOUNDATION

PO Box 1527
Ennis, MT 59729
info@madisonriverfoundation.org
406.682.3148

September 13, 2026

Dear Members of The River Fund Selection Committee,

The Madison River Foundation (MRF) is pleased to express its strong support for the Bureau of Land Management's Dillon Field Office proposal to renovate the Trail Creek Day Use Area on the Madison River below Ennis Lake. We recognize this project as an important opportunity to improve accessible public recreation and fishing access while also protecting the natural resources that make this stretch of the Madison River so valuable.

Of particular importance to MRF is the project's emphasis on improving recreation within the site's existing developed footprint. By rehabilitating established access routes, fishing platforms, and other existing facilities rather than expanding development, the project will help concentrate recreational use in appropriate areas and limit additional disturbance to riverbanks, riparian vegetation, and habitat. We believe improving public access and protecting the river's natural resources can, and should, go hand in hand, and this project is a great example of that approach.

MRF is committed to supporting the FY27 Trail Creek Accessible Site Renovations with a \$10,000 financial contribution. Our support reflects MRF's mission to protect and enhance the Madison River watershed while connecting people with the river in ways that encourage responsible recreation and long-term stewardship.

We are also excited about the proposed FY28 interpretive panel phase and would welcome the opportunity to continue partnering with BLM as that effort develops. The proposed focus on fisheries, river ecology, wildlife, habitat, watershed connections, and public-land stewardship aligns closely with MRF's conservation and education work, and we look forward to discussing opportunities to support that phase as planning moves forward.

We strongly encourage The River Fund to support this application and look forward to working with BLM to improve public access, protect river resources, and foster greater understanding and stewardship of the Madison River corridor.

Sincerely,

Mia Cignoni
Conservation Programs Manager
Madison River Foundation
Mia@madisonriverfoundation.org