



*Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks*

# NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MAY 27, 2010**

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## **Lewis & Clark Caverns Announces June Promotion**

**WHITEHALL** - Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park, the magical place many Montanans may remember from a school tour long ago, has declared June "Family Month." The park will offer guided tours at \$20 for a family of four.

"We'd like to see parents share the unforgettable experience of a Lewis & Clark caverns tour with their children," said Lynette Kemp, Caverns park manager. "Those who have not visited the caves recently will notice how the new lighting in the Paradise Room illuminates features in dramatic ways we could not achieve before." The family discount includes two adults and two children. Additional family members will be \$10 per adult, \$5 for ages 6-11. There is no charge for children under the age of six.

Lewis & Clark Caverns, one of the most highly decorated limestone caverns in the Northwest, is lined with colorful stalactites, stalagmites, columns, and helicitites.

“We’d also encourage families to stop by the new visitor center that opened on May 15,” Kemp added. “The topographical relief map and other displays are a good way to orient oneself to all the park has to offer.”

While at the park, families might also enjoy a hike on the extensive trail system or participate in one of the interpretive programs. There are also several picnic areas, a large campground with showers, RV dump facilities, a rental tipi, and three rental cabins. The campground now features nine sites with electrical hookups. Many visitors use the Lewis & Clark Caverns campground as a “base camp” while enjoying several nearby state parks, attractions, and the adjacent Jefferson River.

Those planning to take advantage of the June family month discount may print out a coupon by going to the FWP Web page at [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov). Under “State Parks,” look for “Caverns Family Month.” Print out the coupon and take it to the park in June.

Additional family members beyond the four included in the special can join the tour at the regular rate of \$10 for adults or \$5 for children ages 6-11. Children under the age of six can participate at no charge.

Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park is located 22 miles west of Three Forks on Montana 2 or 18 miles east of Whitehall on Montana 2. For more information, call (406) 287-3541 or visit the Caverns Web page at [www.lewisandclarkcaverns.org](http://www.lewisandclarkcaverns.org).

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### **Roundup’s RiverWalk Heritage Trail is FWP’s Trail of the Year**

**ROUNDUP** - In celebration of National Trails Day, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will present the Musselshell Valley Community Foundation with its Montana Trail of the Year Award at 12:00 p.m., Friday, June 4, 2010, at the Riverwalk Heritage Trailhead, just east of Roundup. The Foundation’s Arts & Culture Committee, which is responsible for the bulk of work on the trail, will accept the award.

“We will also recognize the City of Roundup, Musselshell County, the Montana Arts Council, and the Montana Community Foundation as cooperating partners,” said

Beth Shumate, FWP Trails Grant Coordinator. “Local community spirit definitely had a hand in this project.”

Due to dedicated and ambitious community members, including Bill Milton and Elizabeth and Wilbur Wood, work on the Roundup Riverwalk Heritage Trail began in 2000 after this small group of concerned citizens began developing partnerships and initiating the planning process to secure grant funding.

“The RiverWalk Heritage Trail project has been an amazing journey. The work has resulted in cooperation and team-building between city and county officials, and the Arts and Culture Committee of the Musselshell Valley Community Foundation,” said Bill Milton.

The trail now stretches approximately three miles. It begins on the east side of Roundup and travels along the Sandstone Breaks and Musselshell River corridor. Since 2001, the Musselshell Arts & Culture Committee has written three successful RTP grant applications, resulting in approximately \$80,000 in funding for this project.

“What Roundup has accomplished in the last decade is inspiring. It shows the RTP program can help even small communities develop great trail systems,” said Shumate.

The Recreational Trails Program, administered by FWP, provides grants for such projects as trails ethics education, urban trail linkages near homes and work places, maintenance of front-country and back-country trails, trail-related weed control, restoration of areas damaged by trail use, and the development of trailside and trailhead facilities. The deadline for the next cycle of funding for the Recreational Trails Program grants is July 1, 2010.

National Trails Day is celebrated each year on the first Saturday of June. People are encouraged to get out and enjoy trails during this nationwide day of celebrating these important community assets. Many Montana state parks and other public agencies organize events such as guided hikes and volunteer work days.

## **State Parks to Determine Economic Impact**

**HELENA** - Montana State Parks is working with the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) at the University of Montana to understand the economic benefits that visitors to state parks bring to local communities and statewide. Visitors will be contacted by Parks staff and asked for their assistance during three one-week periods this summer, ending September 6.

The analysis will help Montana State Parks understand what expenditures visitors make during their trip on such items as gasoline, car rental, lodging, restaurant meals, groceries, and supplies. The data will help State Parks and their tourism partners understand revenue brought to local communities, personal income to Montanans, and the number of full and part-time jobs created due to non-resident tourism at state parks.

A similar survey was conducted in 2002, showing that over \$179.5 million was spent statewide by visitors to Montana State Parks. Non-resident spending generated over \$81 million to community economies, \$23.3 million in personal income to Montanans, and 1,170 full and part-time jobs.

Visitors to state parks may be asked by park staff if they are willing to answer a ten-to-fifteen minute telephone survey after they return home. If visitors are willing to participate, staff will send their name and contact information to BBER who will phone them within a week or two of their trip. A minimum of 400 Montanans and 400 non-residents will be surveyed.

Chas Van Genderen, State Parks Administrator, encourages people to share their time for this important study. "While visitor comment cards indicate a very high level of satisfaction with services and facilities, the future of state parks is not secure," he stated. "Because of that, people will be asked to provide feedback on ways of improving state parks during these challenging economic times. Montanans will need to respond to some tough management decisions in the next few years." The state parks program receives no general fund tax support or hunting and fishing license monies.

Montana's state parks hosted a record 2 million visits last year. "Trends nationwide indicate that people continue to recreate even when times are tough," said Van Genderen. "Getting outdoors strengthens families and supports communities."

## **Paint the Parks Events Begin at First Peoples Buffalo Jump**

**ULM** – Several Helena artists will gather at First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park near Ulm on Saturday, June 5 from 10 AM to 4 PM to capture images of the park in a “paint out” event. The public is invited to observe the artistic process, visit with the artists, and even purchase the artwork following the event.

The “Paint the Parks” series is a cooperative venture between the Art Center of Helena and Montana State Parks. At four state parks this summer, seven to ten artists will begin and complete at least one painting using a method known as “plein air,” a French expression which means “open air.” This is the technique used by artists that paint on location. Artists work quickly as they deal with changing light conditions and other outdoor elements such as wind and dust.

“We believe that Montana State Parks and Montana artists are a natural partnership,” said Chas Van Genderen, State Parks Administrator. “We often have local artists visit parks to create beautiful works. Collaborating with the Art Center of Helena has allowed us to organize these events in a way that will give visitors a chance to watch several artists at work and the artists an opportunity to sell their pieces.”

Artists will be set up at various locations throughout the park and be capturing scenes that may include flora, fauna, landscape, or possibly a historical event which may have occurred at that site. Cindy Rose, president of the Art Center, will be on hand to explain the artistic process to park visitors. Spectators are also invited to visit with individual artists.

Finished paintings will be ready for display and sale at the park visitor center approximately 2 weeks after the paint out.

Other Paint the Parks events will occur at Travelers’ Rest State Park near Lolo on July 24, Lone Pine State Park near Kalispell on August 7, and Missouri Headwaters State Park near Three Forks on September 4. All locations, weather permitting. For more information, visit the FWP Web site at [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov).