

DEQ Contract: 217013

Email solicitation for Ranching for Rivers Riparian Pastures Project

On behalf of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana (SWCDM) and the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council (MRCDC), we are pleased to announce another round of funding for *Ranching for Rivers*, a cost-share program to help ranchers with riparian pasture/fencing projects. Please share this information with your Board and any landowners you know of that may be interested in this program. This current round of funding is targeted to landowners along streams or rivers included in DEQ-approved Watershed Restoration Plans. A link to these plans and areas can be found [here](#). If you are unsure if your project is part of a WRP, please contact Jessica Makus, 406-443-5711, or [jessica@macdnet.org](mailto:jessica@macdnet.org).

The purpose of the program is to provide landowners throughout the state with the needed resources to voluntarily construct fences and/or other infrastructure (crossings, water gaps, offsite water, etc.) that enable them to better manage the riparian resources on their land. This program promotes the use of “riparian pastures” as an alternative to complete exclusion of the riparian area to livestock. A riparian pasture is a relatively small pasture that can still be grazed for a portion of the year. Operation benefits of riparian pastures include improved management flexibility, the ability to use livestock grazing to manage weeds and overgrown vegetation, increased usage of upland range habitat, and decreased maintenance costs of fencing and off-stream water resources. Natural resource benefits include improved riparian and vegetation habitat, improved water quality and quantity, improved wildlife and fishery habitat, and improved access for wildlife to stream areas.

Approximately \$70,000 in cost-share is available for landowners to construct riparian pastures to benefit their operation and its natural resources. The cost-share is designed to cover up to 50% of the cost of fence, other riparian pasture-related infrastructure, and construction costs. Unlike EQIP, landowners do not have to financially qualify for the assistance. This round of funding includes a technical grazing management component, providing participating landowners with a range specialist to develop customized grazing plans for the new riparian pasture, helping landowners maximize their investment and ensure pastures are used to their full potential.

Please fill out the application attached and return it to SWCDM by September 22, 2017. If accepted, SWCDM will conduct limited monitoring to establish a starting point for riparian habitat improvement. Selected landowners will have one year from award date to complete riparian pasture construction.

The first round of applications will be available on August 18, 2017 and will be due to SWCDM by 5 PM on September 22, 2017. Late applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and considered for the next call for applications.

For more information on this program, contact Rachel Frost ([mrcdc@macdnet.org](mailto:mrcdc@macdnet.org); 406-454-0056) or Jessica Makus ([jessica@macdnet.org](mailto:jessica@macdnet.org); 406-443-5711).

**Please submit completed applications to:**

Jessica Makus at [jessica@macdnet.org](mailto:jessica@macdnet.org);

or mail to

SWCDM – Ranching for Rivers, 1101 11<sup>th</sup> Ave, Helena, MT 59601

*Ranching for Rivers is a partner project funded and run by:*



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