



Solicitation for Ranching for Rivers Riparian Pastures Project

On behalf of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana (SWCDM), we are pleased to announce 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. 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.

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, off-stream 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 can cover up to 50% of the cost of fence, other riparian pasture-related infrastructure, labor, and equipment use. Landowners do not have to financially qualify for the assistance. 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. This is a program requirement; however, the service is included at no extra cost to successful applicants.

Funding will be on a reimbursement basis only upon completion of projects. Post-project photos will be required in order to receive payment.

Please fill out the application and return it to SWCDM. Be sure to include all necessary attachments listed on the application. Liability insurance will be required if applying for labor cost share. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis with application review occurring approximately quarterly.

If accepted, SWCDM will conduct limited pre-project monitoring to establish a starting point for riparian habitat improvement. Awardees will have one year from award date to complete riparian pasture construction.

For more information on this program, contact Jessica Makus (jessica@macdnet.org; [406-443-5711](tel:406-443-5711)).

Please submit completed applications to:

Jessica Makus at jessica@macdnet.org;

or mail to: SWCDM – Ranching for Rivers, 1101 11th Ave, Helena, MT 59601

This Ranching for Rivers funding is provided by:

