



## Ranching for Rivers

The Ranching for Rivers Program assists landowners with the development of “riparian pastures” or exclusion of the riparian area to livestock, for improvement of fisheries habitat, in-stream flows, and establishment of cottonwoods, willows, and other woody riparian species. A riparian pasture is a relatively small pasture that can still be grazed for a portion of the year. Benefits of riparian pastures include improved management flexibility, the ability to use livestock grazing to manage weeds and overgrown vegetation, improved access for wildlife to stream areas, and decreased maintenance costs of fencing and off-stream water resources.

## Program Eligibility and Priorities

### Eligible Groups

- Conservation Districts and Watershed Groups with identified projects
- Individual landowners who are working with a local Conservation District or Watershed Group
- Riparian pasture projects must be located on waterbodies listed by DEQ as impaired by sediment, nutrients, E-coli, or habitat alterations, or contributing such pollution to an impaired waterbody downstream. The list of impaired waterbodies can be found on:

<https://deq.mt.gov/Water/Resources/report>

### Priority Projects

- Priority funding will be given to projects that fall within an area with a DEQ-approved Watershed Restoration Plan. A status list of Watershed Restoration Plans can be found on:

<https://deq.mt.gov/Water/SurfaceWater/WatershedRestoration>

## Cost-Share

The Ranching for Rivers program offers 50% cost-share for project implementation and/or the development of a Grazing Management Plan. The 50% cost-share will be provided in the form of reimbursement following a completed project. Upon application acceptance, landowners are required to complete a landowner agreement requiring maintenance of the installed practice(s) for the expected life of the practice(s) (typically 10years).

### Eligible Costs:

- Fencing Material for complete exclusions or “riparian pastures”
- Livestock pipeline
- Materials for stream crossing
- Permanent drinking tanks & winter tanks with storage

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



- Contracted costs for the development of a Grazing Management Plan by a range specialist
- Conservation District and Watershed Group Staff time for technical assistance
- \* *NRCS rates, provided in appendix A of the Ranching for Rivers Application, can be used to calculate expenses for certain practices*

**Ineligible Costs:**

- Time & labor costs by associated with project installation
- Fencing/equipment maintenance or replacement

**Match:**

50% nonfederal match must be recorded and reported to SWCDM along with final project expenses and reporting. Match may include:

- Dollars provided by other non-federal grants used to complete the project
- Dollars provided directly by the landowner.
- Laboring or administrative costs by a Conservation District, Watershed Group, or landowner not already being charged directly to the Ranching for Rivers program.

**Conservation District/ Watershed Group Staff Time Reimbursement**

The Ranching for Rivers Program also includes partial funding for reimbursing CD & Watershed Groups for staff time associated with the program. Timesheets will be provided to the designated affiliate upon application acceptance for tracking project time and accomplishments. Timesheets and request for reimbursement can be reported following project completion.

- Aiding landowners in developing an application
- Aiding in Scope of Work/Contract/ Operations & Maintenance forms, and obtaining signatures
- Project site visitation for pre- and post-project evaluation & photos
- Calculating Load Reduction Estimations
- Final project reporting

**Application Process**

- Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis January – December 2020.
- Applications should be submitted to Stephanie Adams, SWCDM Director electronically to [stephanie@macdnet.org](mailto:stephanie@macdnet.org)
- Applications will be reviewed by a panel consisting of SWCDM, DEQ, and MRCDL representatives.
- SWCDM will submit a letter of acceptance, rejection, or recommendations within 60 days of application submission.
- If recommendations are presented to the applicant, the applicant must resubmit the application with suggested amendments for full consideration.
- If accepted, the landowner & associated Conservation District/Watershed Group will work with SWCDM to complete a Scope of Work, Operations & Maintenance Agreement, and Cost-Share Contract that must be completed and signed by all parties within 90 days of the acceptance letter.

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



## Reporting

- In order to receive the fully requested 50% cost-share, *all receipts and invoices* associated with project implementation must be reported to SWCDM.
- Completed and approved Scope of Work, Landowner Agreement, and Operations & Maintenance agreement.
- A Final Report using the provided reporting template, detailing final project outcomes and load reduction estimates (See “Reporting Load Reduction Estimates”).
- Include Completed “Photo and Bank Measurement Field Form”
- Provide before and after project photos.

## Reporting Load Reduction Estimates

Completed Projects must include estimate load reductions for Total Nitrogen (lbs./yr.), Total Phosphorous (lbs./yr.), And Total Sediment (ton/yr.).

- Common equations used for these calculation include the Mass Balance Equation: More details on the Mass Balance Equation can be found on page 33 of the [Montana DEQ Load Reduction Estimation Guide](#).
- Other methods used to calculate nutrient load reduction include the Agricultural (Livestock) Loading Estimate from [DEQ’s Lower Blackfoot Nutrients TMDLs and Water Quality Improvement Plan, Section 5.5.1.1](#).
- Measurements and photos required for load reduction calculations should be taken prior to project implementation.
- Questions regarding load reduction should be directed to either Stephanie Adams, SWCDM ([stephanie@macdnet.org](mailto:stephanie@macdnet.org)) or to Robert Ray, DEQ ([r-ray@mt.gov](mailto:r-ray@mt.gov)).

## Grazing Management Plans

Grazing Management Plans are eligible for cost-share funding and are highly encouraged in conjunction with a proposed structural project.

- NRCS has the capability to write GMPs free of cost, but focus on landowners enrolled in one of the conservation programs
- MSU County Extension Offices have resources/staff to develop GMPs
- Landowners can hire a consultant to write a GMP (pricing generally based on acreage)

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

