



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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Dear Montana State Parks' Supporter,

What a year!

After all the **madness and uncertainty** of 2020, it was only because of people like you that the future for Montana State Parks began to glow in early 2021.

My name is Coby Gierke, and I've been the Director of the Parks Foundation for over four years. Let me tell you, I couldn't be more excited and thankful for the future of our parks than I am today.

2021 ushered **record numbers of visitors** to State Parks across Montana, with water-based parks in places like Flathead Lake and Cooney Reservoir, **shattering 2020 records**.

It also meant a return of parks events like "Buzzard Days" at Makoshika or "Bannack Days" at Bannack. Families and visitors returned to explore our state's rich history and tribal cultures at parks like First Peoples and Chief Plenty Coups State Parks.

This year brought even greater appreciation for Park staff and volunteers who bravely showed up to care for the parks and visitors without a clear picture of the path of COVID-19.

More than anything, 2021 reminded us how to enjoy Montana's rich state park system, spend time with loved ones, hike, camp, swim, fish, and enjoy the outdoors safely and meaningfully.

As a community, we raised over \$230,000 to develop **Somers Beach State Park**, our newest state park.

We purchased property to double the size of Fort Owen state park and developed critical access, including a new road, parking areas, and found historical artifacts during an archeological study.

We helped develop and provide **critical housing** and alternative lodging for the staff, volunteers, and visitors at **Chief Plenty Coups and Makoshika**.

But we still have more to do.

With increasing visitation and flat budgets, Montana State Parks need your help more than ever.

During a recent road trip to visit parks in the Great Falls area, I decided to make a pit stop along the way to

Helena. That sunny, warm afternoon, I had Tower Rock, a state park I had only ever driven by, all to myself.

I couldn't help getting emotional. Our work and support for Montana State Parks is something close to every Montana park lover's heart.

Our parks represent the wide variety of landscapes, climates, communities, and most of all, outdoor recreation opportunities our huge state has to offer.

What would be of these places without the support of everyone who has donated to support this vital work?

For that and much more, your state parks are **grateful for you**.

How have our state parks impacted you? I ask you to consider supporting your access and outdoor recreation experiences by donating to the Montana State Park Foundation.

The Montana State Parks Foundation is open to donations of all sizes, no matter how big or small. **Every dollar counts**.

When you donate, **100%** of the support you give goes to improving Montana State Parks.

With your 2021 donation, you can help with things like public access to Flathead Lake, camping opportunities at Lewis and Clark Caverns, and ADA-accessible docks at Frenchtown Pond, among many others.

I invite you to join thousands in **exploring, enjoying, and supporting** Montana's State Parks.

Sincerely,

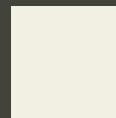
Coby R. Gierke

Coby Gierke

Executive Director

Montana State Parks Foundation
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You can support Montana State Parks too.

We constantly strive to create fun donation and fundraising opportunities for those who desire to support their state parks throughout the year.

Since September 2020, we have been running a coffee sales fundraising program with Rocky Mountain Roasters of Bozeman, MT.

As well, we've been selling masks and face shields since spring of 2020. Hundreds of masks were sold and donated to FWP for staff and volunteers.

We still have some available.

Please consider purchasing a mask for yourself and as gifts in the future.

Our marketing, communication, and awareness efforts weren't slowed down by this challenging year; on the contrary; they were even stronger.

We were awarded \$22,000 from the MT Office of Tourism and Business Development to expand our web-based State Parks interactive map and planning tools to all 55 parks in the state.

You can use it and get to know all the state parks near you here:
www.montanastateparksfoundation.org/visit-montana-state-parks

The WPS (Weekly Park Showcase) continues to be our flagship communications program. Our email audience is now close to 150,000, and our social media community has grown to 5,000 followers.

Reliable sponsors have made this project a success, and we will look to grow our sponsorship program in the coming months.



Our Major Projects



Project Highlight:

The Visions of Chief Plenty Coups Documentary Project

The “Visions of Chief Plenty Coups” documentary project is creating a lasting, accessible documentary series that captures the story of Chief Plenty Coups’ participation in the inaugural ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington, VA, and the subsequent service of the Chief Plenty Coups Honor Guard, and Drumming Group at the 100th anniversary in November 2021.

Chief Plenty Coups’ home and the legacy he left behind are well represented at his namesake State Park. This is a

chance to tell the story to a much broader audience than those who visit the park each year.

Two Native American filmmakers from Montana lead the project. Crow tribal members are guiding them in the production of a documentary-style film chronicling how his fellow Native American Chiefs selected Chief Plenty Coups to represent all native tribes at the inaugural ceremonies of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier 100 years ago.





Project Highlight:

Alternative Lodging Options For Parks

In 2021, we provided an alternative Lodging housing unit for park staff and volunteers at Chief Plenty Coups State Park.

Existing housing for staff and volunteers consisted of a dilapidated travel trailer that has badly deteriorated in recent years. Due to Chief Plenty Coups State Park's remote location, housing is unavailable in the private rental market.

Providing safe housing is critical in recruiting and retaining high-quality staff and volunteers to run the park.

We also selected and purchased a 20ft Yurt from Shelter Designs of Missoula to be placed on a bluff overlooking Glendive and the lower Yellowstone River Valley at Makoshika State Park.



Project Highlight:

Fort Owen State Park

We are working with MT Fish Wildlife and Parks to expand, preserve, and revitalize Fort Owen State Park near Stevensville.

This large project involves purchasing additional property, assessing historic resources, developing new access, restoring historic structures, consulting with regional Native American tribes, and developing new interpretive and educational amenities.

This project will span two years, with a target completion date of October 2022.



Project Highlight:

Somers Beach State Park

The Foundation was asked to help fundraise for the future development of Somers Beach State Park.

This rare property has an expansive sandy beach at low lake levels, and at higher lake levels, its shallow waters provide a safe area for families to swim and recreate.

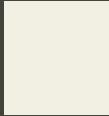
In April 2021, the Montana Legislature finally approved House Bill 5, which provides the authority needed for Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks to acquire Somers Beach.

And, with this approval, The Sliter family generously committed a \$125,000 matching challenge to raise needed funding for long-term operations and maintenance of the site as a State Park. We are glad to announce that we have accomplished almost 70% of the funding goal.

Critical amenities such as parking, restrooms, trails, benches, picnic tables, and others are needed. Habitat work such as invasive weeds control, protection of nesting grounds, and shoreline stabilization is also needed.

Help Somers Beach State Park by [donating](#) today!

All donations go directly to making a difference for our cause.



Project Highlight:

Lewis and Clark Caverns LWCF Match Project

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks finished a new hike and bike camp at Lewis and Clark Caverns in the summer of 2021.

They could fund this project thanks to Land and Water Conservation Funding that required a 50% match.

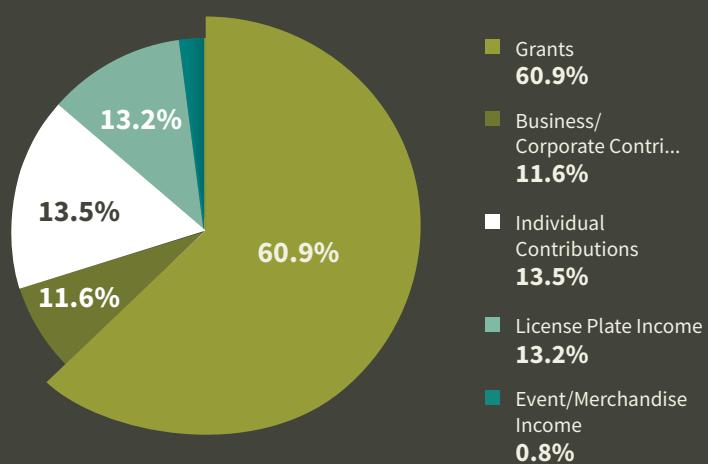
And it was the 50% match that the Foundation provided Lewis and Clark Caverns with a new shade/weather shelter that we constructed in the spring of 2020.

The project was completed in June of 2021 for a total cost of \$68,000.





FOUNDATION REVENUE BREAKDOWN



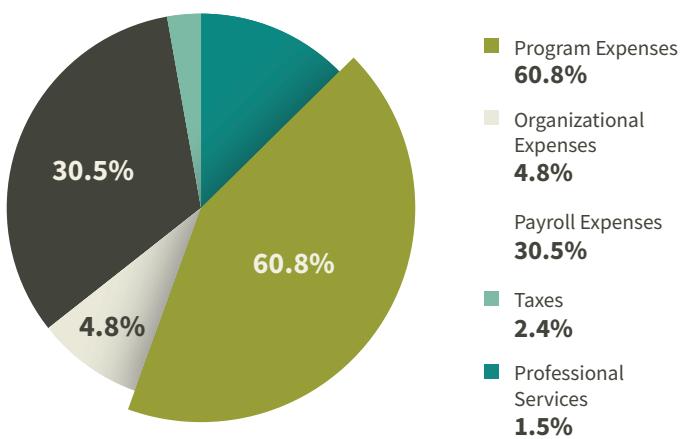
FOUNDATION EXPENDITURES BY FISCAL YEAR



FOUNDATION EXPENDITURES BY FISCAL YEAR



FOUNDATION EXPENSES BREAKDOWN





Get Involved

The Montana State Parks Foundation has been and will continue to support our State Parks system by raising and investing private money into critical improvements and enhancements to our State Parks.

We invite you to join us and be part of the solution.

Donate online:

www.montanastateparksfoundation.org/donate



Montana State Parks Foundation



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