



Friends of the
**MISSOURI BREAKS
MONUMENT**

Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument Newsletter

Protecting and preserving the UMRBNM through **advocacy, education and stewardship.**
Summer 2021

Big News From the Friends: We Have a New Executive Director

Help us in congratulating Mikayla Moss on her new role at FMB

Sometimes the best solution to a problem is the one that's right in front of you.

And so it was for the Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument when executive director Joe Offer was presented with a great opportunity, as we knew he would be, to return to his home state of Oregon to be closer to loved ones. At his urging, the board of directors appointed the Friends' program director, Mikayla Moss, as acting executive director in February.



Mikayla quickly demonstrated she has the talent, skills and commitment to fill the top spot. Without reservation, the board in June voted to drop the "acting" from her title.

The job is officially hers, and she's already leading our operations like a well-seasoned pro.

Those who participated in our first Boats on the Breaks canoe and kayak race on the Missouri River or have volunteered for our stewardship projects can attest to her leadership and organizational skills.

So, please extend your congratulations to her. As we continue our 20th anniversary celebration for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument and for the Friends and make plans for 2022 and on into the future, we are excited about the possibilities with Mikayla in charge.

Karen Datko, President

"The almost two years I have spent working for the Friends and for the monument have been some of the most rewarding and enriching in my life. FMB is an organization that fills a truly unique role in central Montana and has been a major contributor to lasting changes in environmental policy and management since its inception. I look forward to being able to carry this legacy forward by building new partnerships, developing dynamic programs and celebrating the history and cultures that make the UMRBNM such a special place. I'm humbled and honored to step into this role, and I look forward to working with you all in this new capacity."

— Mikayla Moss



FMB Holds its First Boats in the Breaks Canoe and Kayak Race



"Despite the extreme heat, haze from distant wildfires, and low flow, we participants enjoyed a wonderful day on the river."

—Rod Benson, solo racer

The Friends are happy to report that our first Boats in the Breaks canoe and kayak race was a huge success. On July 17, FMB was joined by racers from across Montana and beyond to celebrate the 20th anniversary of both the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument and FMB. Competitors traveled from all over Montana — from towns and cities like Plains, Billings, Columbia Falls and Belgrade. We even had folks join us from Baltimore and Texas. In total, 38 racers participated in our team and solo categories, with 30 boats competing. This being the first year we've hosted this event, we were thrilled to see so much interest and enthusiasm for our 20-mile canoe and kayak race.

Our racers braved hot weather and low water levels, but everyone came off the river with a smile on their face and another great day on the Missouri River under their belt. The winners of both the solo and doubles categories finished in less than 2.5 hours. Our solo winner, Dan Block, finished with a time of 2:22:09, and our winning doubles team, Need for Speed, finished in a respectable 2:14:17. You can view the race results on our website by visiting the events tab at missouribreaks.org and get an idea of the competition you'll be up against when you join us next year.

Once they got off the water, racers were greeted with an ice-cold beer provided by Golden Triangle Brew Co., of Fort Benton. They then headed into

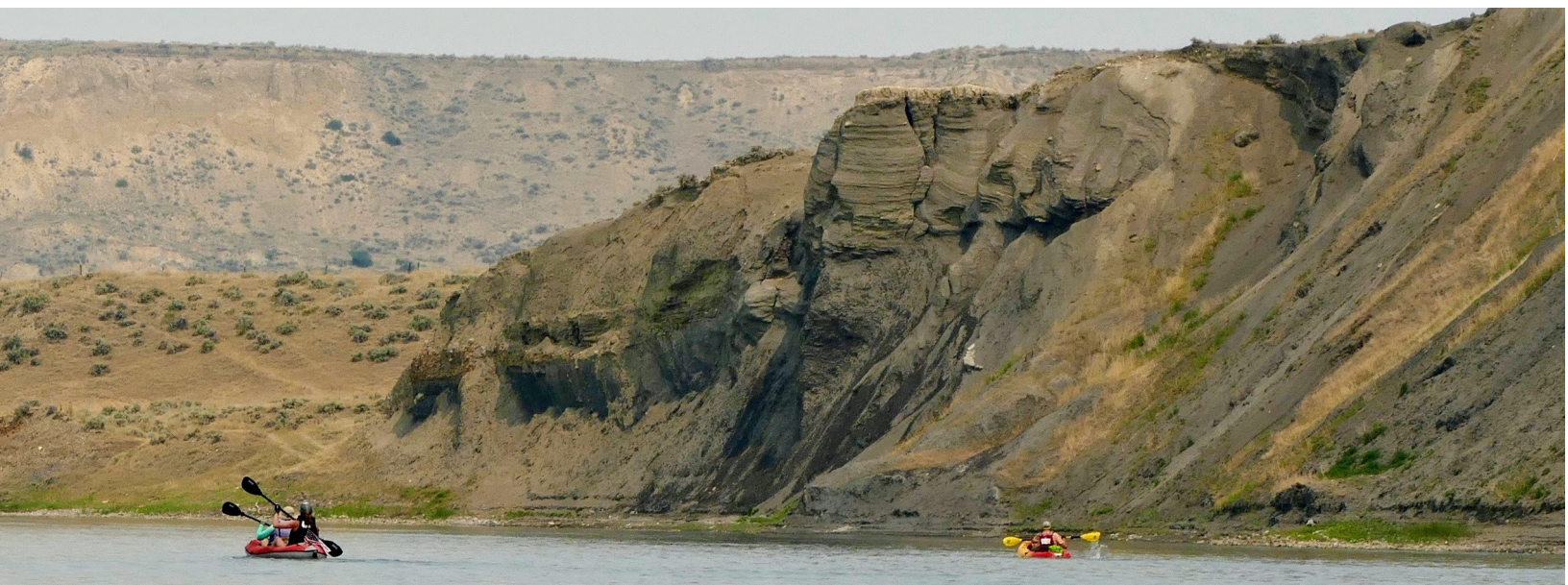
town to enjoy the Boats, Brews and Blues festivities along Fort Benton's Front Street. There, they were treated to some well-deserved food, drinks and musical entertainment, all put together by ChoCo Fun. Between bands, FMB hit the stage to hold an awards ceremony for our top finishers. Our top three team finishers each received a beautiful print of the Missouri Breaks from Helena graphic designer David Goodson, and our top three solo racers took home a Friends of the Missouri Breaks mug handmade for the occasion by Blake Sexton of Helena.

This event would not have been possible without the support of our generous sponsors and donors. Thanks again to the Bureau of Land Management, ChoCo Fun, Great West Engineering, Golden Triangle Brew Co., Power Townsend Co., The Base Camp, Helena Ultra Runners League, Capital Sports, Montana Outdoor Sports, Goodson Designs, Chouteau County Fairgrounds, First Christian Church, Missouri River Outfitters, and Outside Bozeman Magazine.

After a year of canceled events and isolation, we were excited to host an event that brought a broad range of individuals together to celebrate one of Montana's greatest treasures. We have received numerous messages from racers, volunteers and community members expressing their excitement about the race and its success and we are looking forward to bringing this event back next year, and making it even bigger and better.



Volunteer Sarah Moss, left, and FMB intern Nora Harper staff the registration table at Boats in the Breaks 2021.



Cottonwood Update

Summer 2021



Since 2013, the Friends have planted more than 800 cottonwood trees along the Missouri River in an effort to help restore the monument's aging cottonwood galleries.

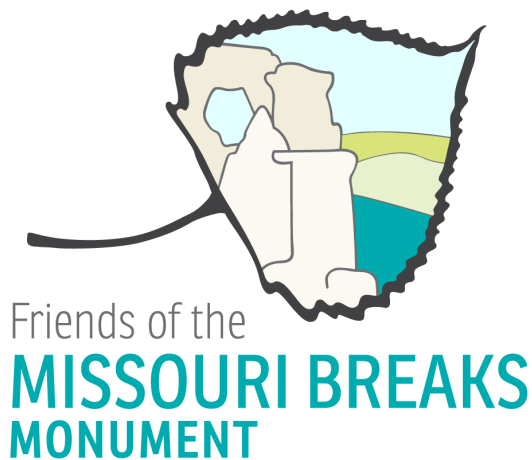
In partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, the Friends have worked to mimic natural regenerative forces by planting cottonwood cuttings along the Missouri and tending to the saplings with hopes of establishing the next generation of thriving cottonwoods in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

In late March 2021, the Friends were joined by BLM monument staff and a group of 25 volunteers to plant an additional 118 cottonwoods along the Missouri River near Loma. Since then, those trees have sprouted leaves and look like they are enjoying their new home along the river. FMB staff and volunteers have been visiting the site weekly to water the trees to help them beat the heat and increase survival rates.

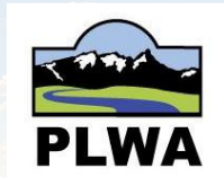
A few weeks ago, FMB's Montana Conservation Corps intern, Nora Harper, was joined on a watering detail by fellow MCC interns serving at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center this summer. Thanks to Lily, Isabelle and all our other volunteers for coming out to water with us. Without the help of our wonderful volunteers, this cottonwood restoration project would not be possible.

At the end of June, FMB staff was on the river conducting an assessment of past planting sites. They took the upper left photo at Eagle Creek. The cottonwoods were planted here in 2016 and are looking stellar after just five years.

FMB staff will be back on the water this week to gather data that will contribute to the ongoing assessment of our cottonwood regeneration effort. Staff will work to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on the cottonwood plantings, including tree height, diameter at breast height, tree vigor rating and crown density.



Welcoming New Partnerships



**PUBLIC LAND
WATER ACCESS
ASSOCIATION INC**
· EST 1985 ·

Building partnerships throughout the region is one of the priorities of the Friends. We are pleased to announce our newest partner, the Public Land Water Access Association. Since its founding in 1985, PLWA has worked to improve public access to public lands and waters by “educating and informing the public about their ownership and access rights, monitoring public access routes, initiating legal action when access has been illegally blocked” and more. PLWA has a long history of fighting hard and coming out on top in defense of our rights to access our shared lands. FMB is thrilled to have this organization as one of our regional partners, and we look forward to working closely with PLWA on a variety of issues relevant to the Breaks. Thank you for all you do, PLWA.

To find out more about PLWA, visit their website at plwa.org.

Monument Updates

Wondering what conditions are like in the monument as you start to plan your next trip? We are here to help. Check out these monument updates and current weather and water conditions as we move into August.

Water levels: Flows throughout the monument are very low this year. It's advised that floaters check levels before setting off and keep an eye out for gravel bars and exposed debris.

USGS water gauges:

USGS 06090800 Missouri River at Fort Benton MT:
CFS is hovering between 4,000 and 4,500

USGS 06115200 Missouri River near Landusky MT:
CFS median staying around 5,000

USGS 06109500 Missouri River at Virgelle MT:
CFS median around 4,500

For the most up-to-date info, check out the USGS interactive water gauge map [HERE](#).

Weather: It's not only dry in the monument, it's hot too. Floaters and recreators of all kinds should bring extra water and prepare for hot temps with sun hats, sunscreen, lip balm and cooling towels.

Fires: While there have been a few small fires within the monument boundaries this year, all have been quickly contained and none have been sizable or affected river recreation so far.

Use levels: User levels are higher than ever this year, so be prepared to share developed campsites and restrooms. While BLM staff and the Friends make every effort to keep vault toilets stocked, it is always a good idea to bring extra toilet paper along with you. All floaters are required to bring a waste disposal and containment system on the river with them, such as a groover or WAG Bags.

Campgrounds: Currently, there is no potable water at James Kipp Campground. Floaters must bring their own drinking water when preparing to float the lower stretch of the monument.

Raccoon activity has been increasing through the White Cliffs section of the river from Coal Banks to Judith Landing, particularly at Eagle Creek Campground. Floaters are strongly advised to keep food in animal-proof containers overnight and while away from campsites.





“I have experienced the wonders and majesty of the Breaks. ... now I believe we’ll be lifelong friends.”

— Nora Harper



Notes From Nora, Our 2021 Conservation Intern

After applying to the Montana Conservation Corps’ Individual Placement program in January, I was lucky enough to be placed with the Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument for my three-month term of service. Although I was born and raised in Montana, I had never had the opportunity to visit the monument before this summer. Since joining the FMB team as a conservation intern in May, I have experienced the wonders and majesty of the Breaks.

Much of my work has centered on our many volunteer and outreach events. I am honored to have had the opportunity to meet and work with a variety of supporters and advocates of the Breaks. I have gained invaluable experience in planning and organizing events, which I will take with me once my term concludes. Organizing events like this year’s Boats in the Breaks canoe and kayak race has been challenging at times, but to see it all come together and to receive so

much thanks and gratitude for hosting these community events makes it well worth it. The Friends community stretches far and wide, and it’s humbling to see folks from all walks of life come together to defend and celebrate a Montana treasure.

In addition to getting to know supporters of Breaks, I also had the opportunity to build a relationship with the landscape itself. From floats on the river and monitoring in Wilderness Study Areas to hours watering cottonwoods and driving on the backroads of the monument, I developed a deep appreciation and respect for this unique and noble landscape. This summer I have seen pronghorn bounding along the morning horizon and eagles kettling high above the river in the midafternoon, and heard the songs of more western meadowlarks than I had in my entire life in Montana. This summer I met the Breaks and now I believe we’ll be lifelong friends.

Join the Friends

Twenty years are officially in the books and we are just getting started here at the Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument!

Please consider becoming a member today and help us continue our work on and for the monument by visiting our website at missouribreaks.org/donate.

Montana Shares Raffle

Tickets are still available for the 2021 MT Shares Raffle, so don’t wait, buy today! Prize packages and individual items include art, camping gear, gift certificates, overnight hotel stays and much more. For a full list of prizes and to print off raffle tickets, visit our website at missouribreaks.org and click MT Shares Raffle 2021 under the events tab.



Upcoming Events

Read about what's coming up and learn how you can join in on the fun!

Bashin' Trash River Cleanup August 21, 2021

Save the date! Join the Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument for the Bashin' Trash River Cleanup on Saturday, August 21, 2021. Paddle 20 miles of Montana's Wild and Scenic Missouri River from Fort Benton to Wood Bottom Recreation Area while supporting the Friends' mission to protect and preserve the monument.

This year FMB is joining forces with nine partner organizations in a collaborative effort to clean up more than 140 miles of the Missouri River from Helena to Great Falls and the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. Organizers have adopted a number of river sections, parks and trails along the river where they will host cleanup events.

To learn more, visit the event website [HERE](#) or click on the link [HERE](#) to sign up today. Spots are limited for those needing to borrow a boat so don't wait!



National Public Lands Day September 25, 2021

Nothing is more important to the Friends than our shared public lands. Once again we will be joining organizations and individuals all around the country to celebrate National Public Lands Day by participating in a day of volunteer stewardship.

Work this year will take place at James Kipp Recreation Area and Campground, where FMB volunteers will join BLM staff to remove past planting materials, provide general campground maintenance, and help repair and remove flood damaged structures and debris.

Late September is the ultimate time of year to visit this part of the monument. Adjacent to the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, James Kipp Campground offers a spectacular opportunity to view elk herds in the peak of rut just a short drive down the road at Slippery Ann Elk Viewing Area.

Come enjoy fall colors, wildlife viewing and good people while providing an important service to the monument. James Kipp Campground is a Montana Dark Sky Destination, so come prepared for an array of stars and a really good time. Stay tuned for more info as we get closer to the event.



Racer Highlight:

Big Sky Walker joins us from Helena

FMB was lucky enough to have Rod Benson participate in our first Boats in the Breaks event. Rod captured some stellar photos of our event, including numerous aerial photos he took using his drone. We wanted to take the time to give him a shout-out and thank him for these incredible shots. Rod has taught high school science in Montana for 37 years and spends his free time traveling and hiking across the state. He documents his adventures on his blog, "Big Sky Walker." Each of his posts includes a photo tour, additional resources, and great historical and geological information. You can check out Rod's post about his experience participating in this year's Boats in the Breaks by visiting bigskywalker.com. Make sure to check out his photo tour of the race as well. Thanks again, Rod. We hope to see you again next year for Boats in the Breaks 2022.



FMB board treasurer Roger Otstot (left) and volunteer Brian Hauschild (right) replace old fire rings at James Kipp Campground during NPLD 2020.

Upcoming Events Continued...

Raise a Pint—Mighty Mo Brew Co.
August 16, 2021 from 5-8PM

Head down to the Mighty Mo Brewing Company in Great Falls on August 16th and grab yourself a pint. One dollar of every beer sold from 5 to 8PM goes directly to the Friends and gets put towards more great work on the monument. We will be hanging out at the brewery with an informative display so make sure you drop by our table and say hello. Cheers!



BLM Backcountry Byway Map

"Take a drive on the wild side!"

Looking for a way to explore the Breaks that doesn't involve a paddle? The BLM has recently released an interactive StoryMap to highlight some suggested backcountry routes for visitors more inclined towards four-wheels. Visit the map using the link [HERE](#) and continue exploring the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. **Note:** It is always a good idea to call the local BLM office before heading out on back roads to check on current road conditions and accessibility.

FMB Photo Gallery

A few more shots from our projects and events this year...



BLM Invasive Weed Specialist Kenny Keever shows a graphic of a leafy spurge taproot at an invasive species training in June.



Start line at Boats in the Breaks



Confluence Campout presentation



Monitoring at Woodhawk WSA



National Trails Day—Old Army Trail



Sweeping for flea beetles (leafy spurge biocontrol) at Wood Bottom