

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—February 5, 2019

## **Community Group to Host Feb 21 Missoula Area Rivers Celebration**

A new Missoula community group that is working together on issues and opportunities related to local rivers will host a public open house celebration Thursday, Feb. 21 from 5:30-7:30 at Conflux Brewing Company (200 E Main Street) in downtown Missoula.

The group, called Three Rivers Collaborative, includes local businesses, non-profits, and city, county and state agencies that came together over the past year to create a common place to discuss the Clark Fork and lower portions of the Blackfoot and Bitterroot Rivers in the greater-Missoula Valley.

“The Missoula community has strong connections to our rivers and what they offer,” said Morgan Valliant, Three Rivers Collaborative member and Conservation Lands Manager for the City of Missoula. “We wanted to create a central place for people to work together on river-related issues and ideas.”

The Collaborative formed to create that common space and now wants to engage more people and groups in discussing river conservation, public access, and recreation in the Missoula area.

“There are a lot of people and organizations that have a role and interest in this discussion, and if we can bring all that together, we can create more benefits for the river and the community,” said Randy Arnold, Collaborative member and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) Region 2 Supervisor.

Pelah Hoyt, fellow Collaborative member and Lands Director for Five Valleys Land Trust, says that there has been a lot of community interest already. Participants from early discussions have included Five Valleys, Clark Fork Coalition, local business owners, river guides, Trout Unlimited, Mountain Line Transportation, Missoula County and City, FWP, Missoula Downtown association, University of Montana, American Rivers, Audubon Society and others.

“The open house is a chance to celebrate the tremendous river resources that we have, share why this group came together and what our initial goals are, and invite community members to get involved on river issues that matter to them,” Hoyt said.

The open house is set for Feb. 21 from 5:30-7:30 at Conflux Brewing with a short presentation from group members and Mayor John Engen, Missoula County Commissioner Josh Slotnick and Director of the Montana Governor’s Office of Outdoor Recreation, Rachel VandeVoort, at 6 p.m., followed by light appetizers and a chance to visit with hosts and attendees. Participants will have an opportunity to learn about river use trends in the Missoula area, current river projects, and how to participate in future meetings and discussions.

For more information, please email [threeriverscollaborative@gmail.com](mailto:threeriverscollaborative@gmail.com). Or, at FWP, contact Randy Arnold at 406-542-5504 or [rarnold@mt.gov](mailto:rarnold@mt.gov).