



EXHIBIT 13
DATE Jan. 16, 2013
HB 6

**Adopt-a-Reach: Empowering Community Stewardship
Applicant: Montana Watercourse at MSU**

The Montana Watercourse seeks funding to partner with at least six volunteer community organizations to grow efforts to track water quality and specific river reach issues. The Adopt-A-Reach program is a pilot project designed to expand and advance a statewide water quality education and engagement program targeting civic and youth community organizations. This project combines clean-ups similar to Adopt-A-Highway programs and water quality monitoring by community organizations. It is designed to reach Montana residents who may have interest in water resource and watershed issues, but have lacked the required training and resources to take on the task of a river clean-up or water quality monitoring efforts. Each organization will adopt at least one river-mile for the duration of the grant. With support from Watercourse these organizations will engage in water quality investigations that lead to better understanding of local watershed issues and that identify actions to improve water quality.

Six Adopt-a-Reach pilot project groups will receive training, funding, and support by the Montana Watercourse through water monitoring trainings, on-site visits, water quality collection days, and river-reach clean-ups. The monitoring, and river cleanup events will be scheduled, designed, and conducted by the community organizations with input from MTWC. Additional, financial support to the Adopter groups includes monitoring equipment, supplies, funding for lab testing of water samples, funding for river clean-ups and restoration work, on-going support and training through webinars, professional expertise, and mentoring.

The preservation and conservation of freshwater resources is only sustainable if citizens are aware of the need to protect that resource. An educated community is crucial to build the support needed to promote watershed stewardship on public and private property, and ensure that future generations have the necessary tools and knowledge to continue to care for and protect Montana's watersheds. The Adopt-a-Reach project empowers citizens to make a positive change in a stream or river in their community. The infrastructure set up by this pilot project will allow the community to carry on the project past the life of this grant.

The Montana Watercourse is uniquely suited to carry out this education effort. We are the only statewide water resource program serving all water users, and are based on principles of neutrality, collaboration, and inclusiveness. Our approach to water education is to identify gaps in knowledge and local needs and then meet these needs through targeted outreach, training, and publications.

On a regular basis, our office receives requests for continued support from those groups involved in past stewardship efforts, and from newly forming groups. Willing groups, need a strong water education program with continued support to empower them to proactively engage in community *conversations* about local water. The volunteer work required for this project can be completed by any engaged community group if they are given some financial resources and necessary training and support while beginning this process. These organizations need science-based accurate information on watersheds and water resource regulations to better understand their watershed. Local understanding of these issues promotes educated decision making at all levels of the community, leading to improved stewardship and protection of the resources.

With RRGL funding, this project will provide support and funding to 6 community organizations and will reach approximately 200 community organization members across Montana with scientific, credible and useful water resource information and education. The community organizations, in turn, will reach

additional people in their local community through outreach efforts and information on their Adopt-a-Reach project.

Grant Outcomes:

- Increased understanding by local community groups on the conditions of the water.
- Increased likelihood of watershed protection and restoration by local community groups.
- Increased understanding and dialogue on watershed health between community groups and area residents.
- River clean-up at least 2 times a year for each river reach. (Three reach's grant Year One and a total of six reach's grant Year Two.)
- Water quality monitoring at least 2 times a year per river reach.
- Reach-specific evaluation of the stream and surrounding riparian area to identify any potential sources of impairment that may be negatively influencing stream function/aquatic life.
- Reach-specific streamside/riparian restoration plan and action.