

## **River Manager of the Year Award – Monica Zimmerman 2017**

This award recognizes field-oriented individuals and normally focuses on recent accomplishments. Monica Zimmerman was presented the River Manager of the Year award at a celebration in Idaho Falls, Idaho on March 31. A dedicated and highly motivated Outdoor Recreation Planner with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Monica has been an invaluable asset to the river management program in the Upper Snake Field Office since 2000. She manages nearly 200 miles of river, including the Main Snake, South Fork, Henrys Fork, Teton, and Falls Rivers -- all within southeast Idaho's Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. This river system receives an average of 250,000 visitors annually.

Monica manages an active water-based recreation program, including the Henrys Lake Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and the Snake River ACEC and Special Recreation Management Area. These areas support multiple Endangered and special status species and the most unique and bio-diverse ecosystem in Idaho. Monica serves as the field office lead for the Snake River Partnership, a nationally-recognized land conservation project that has protected approximately 28,000 acres of land as open space for recreation and conservation along the South Fork, Henrys Fork, and Main Snake Rivers and the Henrys Lake area.

Through partnerships with non-profit conservation groups, including The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and the Teton Regional Land Trust, Monica has been instrumental in leveraging \$65 million from diverse funding sources in fee title acquisitions (11,400 acres) and conservation easements (16,500 acres) on 92 properties. These conservation purchases have augmented 22,000 acres of BLM, Forest Service, and State of Idaho administered river lands.

In 2012, Monica was instrumental in the acquisition of the Fisher Bottom property on the South Fork. This 431 acre parcel is significant due to its location and is a culturally important part of Idaho history. It is the original homestead and historical ranch complex of the Fisher family and well-known author of the frontier Americana genre, Vardis Fisher. The historical landscape documents the struggles of everyday life of early homesteaders in Idaho. Monica has led the effort to manage the newly acquired property by ensuring public access while at the same time protecting the significant cultural and historic resources. She worked with the Shoshone-Bannock tribes and the Forest Service archaeologist on an interpretive trail on the property.

Monica leads an interagency working group that was formed with local, state and federal representatives to fund and operate 10 fee sites spread along a 62 mile stretch of the South Fork of the Snake River. Regardless of where fees are collected, the working group decides together where and how the money will be spent within the corridor to benefit their shared visitors. This effective partnership, consisting of the BLM, Forest Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and three county entities, gives local stakeholders a voice in the development and management of federal recreation facilities.

In collaboration with the Idaho Outfitter and Guide Licensing Board, the Forest Service, the University of Idaho, outfitters and guides, and the public, Monica recently concluded a seven-year capacity study that determined use thresholds within the rare and fragile Snake River planning area and the Teton River canyon. Monica led an unprecedented public involvement

effort, including working with University of Idaho to set up an interactive survey. The resulting document promotes protection of resources, while refining and clarifying rules for a wide array of special recreation permits for commercial uses (both outfitted and non-outfitted), competitive events, and organized groups, and a reservation permit system for designated camping. The final product of Monica's tireless efforts will result in consistent interagency management of special recreation permits and designated camping for many years to come.

Monica's endless professionalism, enthusiasm, and dedication to the river management program have resulted in frequent requests from within and outside of BLM to tap into her vast experience and expertise in the river management arena. Monica is constantly seeking opportunities to increase her skills as an outdoor recreation planner and to foster education of her peers. She instructs and develops training materials for a week-long Outdoor Recreation Planner course, she instructs a week-long interagency Motorboat Operator Certification Course, and she serves on a watercraft safety team. She also serves on an interagency wild and scenic river council whose goal is to provide consistent management and guidance through technical reports and to secure grants to develop interagency training related to Wild and Scenic Rivers. In addition, Monica serves as a subject matter expert on a national team to develop training materials for implementing the new Wild and Scenic River manual.

Monica led a team that completed an activity/operations plan for the Snake River planning area in 2008. She continues to manage ongoing implementation of the plan, which includes new infrastructure development, public education, and compliance monitoring. Implementation of the plan has been a great success due in large part to Monica's diligence and passion to protect the unique resources within the Snake River ACEC.

Monica's dedication to preserve southeast Idaho's rivers and their unique and fragile ecosystems will leave a priceless legacy for generations to come. The BLM and those who recreate on the rivers in southeast Idaho are very fortunate that she has chosen this path for her career and personal life. Monica Zimmerman is more than deserving of the River Manager of the Year Award. Thank you for this opportunity to sing her praises and to give her the recognition she deserves.