

December 28, 2008

Dear Robin Rung and 319 Grant Review Committee,

I am writing this letter to express my support for the Montana Watercourse grant application "Riparian and Wetland Buffer Education." Healthy riparian and wetland buffers are a common sense, economical and effective way to protect Montana's water quality. These valuable areas are disappearing at an alarming rate. Buffer education and resources for Montana's youth and their mentors is needed to promote a culture that truly understands the value of these areas and works to restore and protect them. MTWC is a trusted source of information and programs for water resources and is in a good position to deliver effective on the ground buffer education.

Montana Watercourse proposes to target Montana's educators and students in areas that are experiencing development and that are also targeted in a Riparian Campaign currently being funded by a 319 grant. By leveraging awareness generated through this campaign and the resources of local partners, MTWC will provide complimentary, on the ground, buffer-related resources and programs. With support from this grant and partnerships with local groups and experts, MTWC will conduct outreach to educators and students through buffer service learning projects, tours, curriculum, resource development and a mini symposium for partners of Eric Vincent's "Riparian Repair Teams". Leveraging other statewide watershed efforts, MTWC will coordinate with other statewide entities such as the Governor's Riparian Task force and the Montana Watershed Coordination Council. An educational campaign aimed at educators and students will be a powerful way to involve Montana's youth in first-hand, experiential learning of the importance of riparian protection.

As a partner of the Riparian Education Campaign, I will work with the Montana Watercourse to ensure that the programs are coordinated and relevant to the local community. I will support this effort by further developing our Riparian Repair Teams throughout the state. We currently have over 150 middle and high school students participating in our program and are projecting to build this to over 500 in 2009. In addition to building our numbers, our group seeks to work in conjunction with Montana Watercourse to expand our knowledge in effective riparian and wetland management and restoration. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Eric Vincent
Director, Riparian Repair Teams of Montana