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**Montana Department of Commerce Tourism Campaign Invests in Eastern Montana:  
Launches New *Montana High Plains* Campaign**

(HELENA) – In an effort to showcase central and eastern Montana, the Montana Department of Commerce Office of Tourism recently launched a campaign to help grow awareness and fuel visitation to this area of our state.

“Montana truly has treasures all across our vast landscape” said Governor Brian Schweitzer. “I am excited to see our distinctive ‘High Plains’ receive this added attention and encourage Montanans to venture out and discover this impressive part of our great state.”

Dubbed *Montana’s High Plains*, this campaign initially targets drive traffic from within Montana, as well as drive traffic from neighboring North Dakota. Over time this campaign will be expanded into other surrounding states and regional markets. This is the first major campaign the Montana Office of Tourism has developed to specifically spur travel and visitation to less well-known parts of our state.

“I am pleased to see our tourism industry responding to the recent shifts in travel habits that have emphasized closer-to-home travel” said Anthony Preite, Director of the Montana Department of Commerce. “As many scale back on their vacation plans, encouraging the residents of Montana and surrounding states to experience the beautiful landscapes, wide open spaces and from-the-heart hospitality of our High Plains country is more timely than ever. By doing so, we are helping sustain the livelihood of our tourism industry which is largely comprised of small business owners and hard-working Montanans.”

“Historically, when competing for tourism dollars against other states, we have generally defaulted to western Montana, as destinations like Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks are our best known, easiest sell “icons” to first-time visitors. At a national and international level, this strategy continues to be our strongest pitch. However, we realize we have an amazing resource for travelers to the eastern part of our state and have developed a multi-tiered campaign to grow this opportunity,” said Consumer Marketing Manager, Katy Peterson.

A mini-website, [www.MontanaHighPlains.com](http://www.MontanaHighPlains.com), has been created to help travelers understand what *Montana's High Plains* is from both a geographic as well as a travel perspective. The mini-website helps define three nationally recognized, iconic areas of *Montana's High Plains* – the Missouri River Breaks National Monument, the C.M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area. In addition, it also provides travel ideas to help visitors plan their trips. *Montana's High Plains* and the new mini-site are currently being promoted through radio, magazine, internet and newspaper with further elements to be added as the campaign proceeds.

Devoting more attention and resources to promoting Montana, east of the Rocky Mountain front, is part of a larger branding campaign and promotional strategy developed by the Montana Office of Tourism and managed by Brand Manager, Angela Wong. “In assessing the best long-term plan for promoting Montana, research shows that we will be best served by increasing the scope of our promotional efforts to tell our entire state’s story. While first time visitors will still most likely key in on our national parks and surrounds, repeat visitors and regional travelers offer a healthy tourism opportunity for *Montana's High Plains*,” said Betsy Baumgart, Administrator for the Montana Office of Tourism.

*Montana's High Plains* campaign is just one more component in the roll out of an extensive branding initiative undertaken by the Montana Office of Tourism over the past eighteen months. There are three defining tenants of Montana upon which the Office of Tourism is developing all of its promotional strategies and campaigns. They are: 1. Montana has more spectacular, unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48. 2. Montana’s vibrant and charming small towns serve as gateways to our natural wonders. 3. Montana offers breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality at night.

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana’s leading industries. In 2008, 10 million people visited Montana spending \$3 billion during their stay. Over 42,000 jobs are directly and indirectly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$1 billion in total personal and proprietors’ income for Montana residents.

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