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**Nominations Requested for Montana's Tourism Awards
-- Deadline is March 12, 2010 --**

(HELENA) – The Governor's Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) is accepting nominations for the 2010 Montana Tourism Awards. Nominations for Tourism Person of the Year, Tourism Community of the Year, Tourism Event of the Year and Tourism Partnership of the Year will be accepted.

“The success of Montana's tourism industry is a genuine testament to the dedicated and hardworking Montanans within this industry that continue to steer it forward,” said Governor Brian Schweitzer.

Commerce Director Anthony Preite encourages the submittal of nominations to formally recognize those that work diligently on behalf of Montana's tourism industry.

“These awards recognize individuals, events, communities and partnerships whose efforts to promote and develop Montana's tourism opportunities have preserved and enhanced tourism's role in Montana's economy,” said Preite.

The award winners will be announced at the 36th Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation scheduled for April 8-9, 2010, at the Red Lion Hotel in Kalispell, Montana.

Nomination forms are available from the Department of Commerce – Montana Office of Tourism by calling Barb Sanem at 406-841-2769 or e-mail bsanem@mt.gov. The forms are also available electronically at www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference/awards.asp. The deadline for nominations is 5 p.m. March 12, 2010.

The 2009 award winners include: Tourism Person of the Year - Rhonda Fitzgerald of Whitefish, Tourism Event of the Year - Missoula's River City Roots Festival, and Tourism Partnership of the Year - Crown of the Continent Geotourism Council.

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's largest industries. In 2008, 10 million people visited Montana spending \$3 billion during their stay. Over 42,200 jobs are directly and indirectly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$1 billion in total personal income for Montana residents.

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