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University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "KUFM launches project to extend radio signal" (1997). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 14622.
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NEWS RELEASE

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Feb. 14, 1997

KUFM LAUNCHES PROJECT TO EXTEND RADIO SIGNAL

MISSOULA --

Thanks to a federal grant and help from dedicated listeners, KUFM, Montana Public Radio is nearing its goal of expanding its service throughout Western Montana to reach some 102,000 new listeners.

The Montana Public Radio Signal Extension Project is slated for completion by the end of August, expanding KUFM's reach by 70 percent and providing new service to Butte, Dillon, Hamilton, Helena and Kalispell. The project also will improve the Montana Public Radio signal to Great Falls and Missoula.

The bulk of the project funding will be provided through a nearly \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, but KUFM is responsible for raising a "local match" of \$175,000 by Aug. 31.

"This project is a direct response to Western Montanans' requests," said Madelaine Thompson, KUFM assistant director of development. "For many years, KUFM has received letters from Montanans who live in areas that receive a marginal signal or no signal at all asking that the station extend and/or improve its signal to their communities. The new system will overcome the obstacles of limited signal reach and Montana's mountainous terrain."

The project will upgrade KUFM origination facilities on The University of Montana's Missoula campus. A digital signal will be sent to a satellite, then down-linked for broadcast to approximately 102,000 additional listeners in the expanded signal area.

The Department of Commerce grant will cover 75 percent of the project cost, the largest

possible percentage awarded under this program. Because of reductions in federal funding, this is the only time that this project can be realized, Thompson said.

KUFM staff and dozens of volunteers in communities that will receive new service have been working to raise the local match for several months, she said. Early in the campaign, the MPCo/Entech Foundation in Butte made a donation of \$5,000 to the project. Donations from individuals, businesses and foundations bring the total to nearly \$22,000.

Montana Public Radio has served Montanans for more than 31 years with a schedule of diverse programming to meet its listeners' needs, including music programs of blues, jazz, classical, opera, folk and ethnic selections, as well as 36 hours per week of in-depth local, national and international news and commentary. Special offerings include the longest continuously running children's programs on public radio, the locally produced "The Pea Green Boat" and "The Children's Corner." Overall, KUFM produces 70 percent of what it airs.

The Radio Reading Service, a public reading service for blind and print-impaired listeners, is available on all KUFM transmitters and translators through a sub-carrier.

Montana Public Radio's plan to build a comprehensive satellite delivery system is critical to its mission to deliver a reliable, high-quality signal to as many people in Western Montana as possible, Thompson said. KUFM is asking its listeners to make donations so that many more people in their area can enjoy Montana Public Radio. This is a special, one-time project, separate from the station's annual fund-raising drive.

For more information, call Thompson at (406) 243-4215 or, toll-free, (800) 325-1565.

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Contact: KUFM Station Manager Terry Conrad, (406) 243-4931 or (800) 325-1565.

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