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For Immediate Release: May 23, 2005
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**MAEDC APPLIES FOR GRANT TO STUDY POTENTIAL IMPACT OF
A MISSOULA-AREA DESTINATION RESORT
UM's O'Connor Center to study Resort Proposal**

MISSOULA – (May 23, 2005) – The Missoula Area Economic Development Corp. (MAEDC) today announced that the agency is applying for a \$25,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to identify and study area economic impacts of a proposed Missoula-area destination ski resort. The application is the result of a May 10 board resolution identifying the need to gain an objective analysis of the resort opportunity, and its potential role in the regional economy.

The grant will be used to fund a study by the University of Montana's O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West (www.crmw.org). Dr. Larry Swanson, associate director of the Center and head of the Center's Regional Economy program, will be the study's principal investigator. The Bitterroot Resort is a proposed project on the Maclay Ranch that seeks to utilize National Forest land on Carlton Ridge and Lolo Peak.

“The MAEDC board believes that the high level of interest in Bitterroot Resort warrants sound data analyzing the possible effect this project would have on area communities,” said Dick King, MAEDC president and CEO. “This project has significant implications for the development of the regional economy. We look forward to investigating the options that are available to our citizens and hope the USDA will offer their support for this initiative.”

If approved, the study will begin this summer and will be funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Rural Development. Completion is expected in early fall and the findings will be released to the public at that time. Bitterroot Resort has offered to assist in funding the study if the full grant request is not awarded.

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“We believe that an objective assessment and independent analysis of our region’s rural development options is needed,” said King. “As our valley continues to expand, increased cooperation between Missoula and Ravalli Counties will be required to help shape the future landscape of our valley.”

About the Center for the Rocky Mountain West

The Center for the Rocky Mountain West is a regional studies program at The University of Montana in Missoula. Through its three regional program areas of policy, humanities, and economy, the Center offers courses, lectures, scholarships, research, conferences and publications that help foster a sense of regional identity as well as an understanding of shared regional challenges and opportunities.

About the Missoula Area Economic Development Corp.

MAEDC is a Missoula-based, non-profit organization that was established in 1980 to serve Missoula, Mineral, Granite, and Ravalli Counties. MAEDC works on business expansion, relocation, and can provide area demographic and statistical information. The Corporation also provides loan fund programs for job creation and business retention.

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