



These Ain't No Pansy Ass City Races

The 5th Annual Big Sky Marathon

July 21, 2019



RUNNERS INFORMATION PACKET

The Second Longest Downhill Road Marathon on Planet Earth

Race Time and Date

- Sunday, July 21, 2019
- All Runners Starting Time: Approximately 7:30 AM.

Race Check In

- Check-in and race day registration – Two Options

- **Saturday, July 20, 2019** – Just as in years' past, packet pick-up will be arranged at Willies Distillery on Main Street in Ennis. This will be from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. There will be a box of SWAG bags with bib numbers for all the runners. A Willies Distillery staff member will hand out your package and check your name off the list. He/she may not be able to answer detailed questions about the race or its logistics. Also, be aware that Willies Distillery customers come first and you may have to wait until the staff is free to get your race packet. Please be patient. Race volunteers may not be available because we will be working the Madison Marathon that same day.
- **Sunday, July 21, 2019** – Race Day Check In and late signup

Volunteers will check runners in on race day morning in Ennis. This will be from 5:00 to 5:30 AM near the Exxon Town Pump gas station in Ennis. Look for the big yellow school buses. If space is available, runners can sign up and pay on race day morning.

Double Marathoners can pick up both packets at the Madison Marathon check in on Friday.

Race Day Logistics & Schedule

- **Morning Shuttle Bus:** The shuttle buses will leave from Ennis (near the Exxon Town Pump Gas Station) for the starting line by no later than 5:45 AM. Any runners taking the shuttle should be at the shuttle stop by 5:15 or earlier to allow time for check in. This bus is for runners who do not want to drive their cars up to the race course. All runners are strongly encouraged to take the shuttle bus rather than drive on your own. Please note that the route is from the top of the Gravelly Range back down to Ennis. So, if you are driving up to the starting line, you'll need a second driver to bring your car back down the mountain. Please park your cars in parking lot of Ennis High School which is right next to the Exxon gas station.
- **Shuttle bus arrival at the Starting Line:** The buses should arrive at the starting line (near Mile 19 on the Madison Marathon route) by 7:00 AM. All runners will disembark to loosen up and use bathrooms as needed. For runners who are camping on the Gravelly Range, they need to arrive to the starting line by 7:00 AM.
- **Race Start:** All runners will start the race at approximately 7:30 AM.
- **Awards Ceremony for Half Marathon** – The awards ceremony for the half marathon will be at approximately 9:30 AM at the half marathon finish line (in a large alfalfa field on the Bar 7 Ranch). After this, the runners will be shuttled into Ennis at approximately 10:00 AM. Half marathoners are encouraged to hang out in Ennis and cheer on the full marathon runners as well as attend the awards ceremony.
- **Awards Ceremony for Full Marathon** – The awards ceremony for the full marathon will be at approximately 12:00 Noon at Lion's Club Park in Ennis which is the finish line.

- **Last Call for Runners:** Since the race finishes in Ennis, the race director will allow up to nine hours to finish the race. The race director will make all the final calls for the race including pulling someone out of the race due to injury, potential injury, or time.

IMPORTANT: There is VERY limited cell phone coverage in the Gravelly Range. The cell phone coverage will be spotty on the way down the mountain, but will get progressively better the closer the runners get to Ennis.

This race is operated under special use permit with the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.

Staging Area

For the Big Sky Marathon, the staging area is the starting line. The finish line is at Lion's Club Park in Ennis. The finish line for the half marathon is exactly halfway on this route.

Since the finish line is in Ennis and we provide transport to the starting line, we do not anticipate any cars parked at the starting line for any duration. If for some reason you do park your car there, please do so at the extreme side of the road. For half marathoners, we will give you a ride into town after you complete the race.

The physical location of the starting line is at the following coordinates: **45.094411, -111.862213**

This location is quite near the turn-around point for the Madison Marathon.

Drivers Information to Staging Area

The best means to get to the starting line of the race is the shuttle. However, if you are driving to the start on your own, use the following information to get onto the Call Road which is the route of the race:

From Ennis, get on Highway 287 and drive west as if you are going to Virginia City but you will turn left towards the Varney Bridge about two miles outside of Ennis. From this turn-off drive towards, but not all the way to, the Ennis Fish Hatchery on Varney Bridge Road. The distance from Ennis to the turn-off to the Ennis Fish Hatchery is about 10 miles. There will be one intersection where you will turn right to the Fish Hatchery. Stay on this road and keep to the left at the sign for the Ennis Fish Hatchery turn-off and drive on the Call Road which passes through the Bar 7 Ranch and eventually leads you to national forest service land (it is about 10 miles to the national forest service gate from the Bar 7 Ranch).

You will be on Road 292, but will be following signs that will lead you to Road 290. The race is on Road 290. Shortly after you pass the headquarter gates to the Bar 7 Ranch, you will make a big climb to get on top of the ridge where you will enter the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest at a well-marked gate. There are several forest service signs along the way.

Look for Big Sky Marathon signs (or the previous days' Madison Marathon signs) as well. From the National Forest gate, keep driving and following the signs until you reach the

starting line which will be past Crocket Lake and quite near the turn-around point for the Madison Marathon.

NOTE: Allow a minimum of one hour to get to the starting line from Ennis, Montana. If there is heavy rain the day before, please allow for more time as the road may be slick. The road is in generally good condition (i.e. you do not need a four wheel drive or even a vehicle with high clearance), but it is gravel the entire length and narrow in certain areas. There are a lot of high hills to climb, but the race director could easily get up there in a Toyota Corolla sedan.

If you have any questions or problems on race day, call Sam at 406-570-4531. BE AWARE that he may not be in cell coverage range.

A portion of the Big Sky Marathon is being run on National Forest Service land under a special use permit. A key criteria for receiving the permit each year is that the race will not create any negative impacts on the land and the environment. For this reason, we highly encourage using the shuttles instead of driving on your own. At any rate, if you drive on your own, you'll have to figure out a way to get your car back down from the mountain top. If you are camping on the Gravelly Range, please read the camping information below.

Level of Runner Support

The **Big Sky Marathon will be a limited support race.** This means there will be some form of water and/or hydration approximately every three miles on the route, but not many aid stations. We will have an EMT and there will be mile marker signs along the route.

Please do not expect a high level of runner support like other marathons can offer. The logistics and distance from the town of Ennis makes this kind of support very difficult. In addition, we have to be careful about impacting the environment since it is at a high altitude, remote, and on National Forest Service land.

Lastly, only the first several miles of the race are on National Forest land. Once runners cross a cattle guard gate, they are running on a Madison County road that crosses private land. Eventually, runners will arrive on public land that parallels the Madison River and other land that goes through various sub-divisions.

We encourage runners to carry their own timing devices, water bottles and food/gels as needed. **BE AWARE AND PREPARED: This is a high altitude race and an extreme downhill.** It has a net drop of over 3,600 feet.

Cautions:

- **IMPORTANT:** All runners will be required to sign a waiver before running the race. If these waivers are not signed, the runner will not be allowed to run the race and will forfeit their entry fee.

- There will be EMTs on the route, but he/she may be some distance from a runner in trouble. If a runner experiences any problems due to exhaustion, the altitude, dehydration, etc... it is their responsibility to inform race volunteers and others for help.
- As part of our permit for the races, the Forest Service required us to distribute the following information on sheep and sheep dogs found on the Gravelly Range. Please review the information below carefully. The Big Sky Marathon route does not pass through the areas where the sheep are *generally grazed* though they could be there as well.
- The race director has seen these sheep dogs and they are extremely huge! The advice provided by the Forest Service is very good and should not be dismissed as being overzealous or overly dramatic. The race director will contact the shepherds in the area prior to race day to request them to move their sheep away from the road on race day if they are in or near the Big Sky Marathon route.

Sheep Guard Dogs



From the US Forest Service

This is a Great Pyrenees Guard Dog. These types of dogs are in use as Sheep Guard Dogs on top of the Gravelly Mountains. They are trained to guard the sheep. **They will chase you if you run.** If you have a dog with you, the guard dog may see it as a threat to the sheep. They are not pets. The sheep herders have little control over them. They may be seen anywhere.

If you come upon one or it comes up to you. **STOP**, stand still, let the dog sniff you and check you out. Tell it to **“GO TO THE SHEEP”** It will then most likely wander away. **WAIT** for the dog to move off and leave a far distance. Then resume your travel. **DO NOT RUN** when the dog can see you. **DON’T FEED IT, DON’T TRY TO PET IT!**

Camping Options

For those of you who have not been on the Gravelly Range, it is incredibly beautiful. Aside from acclimatizing yourself to the elevation in order to get ready for the race, it is an enjoyable place to camp for a night or two. There are several camping options right along the course route as well as very near the route. You will have to haul your own water to the sites. You will also have to

observe 'leave no trace' camping ethics such as building fires in existing fire rings only, burying all human waste, packing everything out, and storing all food and refuse properly. The most ideal camping location for the Big Sky Marathon is likely Clover Meadows. There will be a lot of activity there on Saturday for the Madison Marathon, but it will quiet down greatly by the evening so you'll get plenty of quiet rest for the following day's race (Sunday).

Food and Refuse Storage Requirements

In the Daytime - all food and refuse must be acceptably stored or attended. Attended means that someone is within 100 feet and in sight of accessible food and refuse.

At Night – unless being transported, eaten or prepared to be eaten, all food must be properly stored. Refuse must also be properly stored.

To be properly stored food, refuse and other attractants must be secured in an enclosed hard sided vehicle (including pick-up camper shell or horse trailer); a certified bear resistant container; or suspended at least ten feet clear of the ground at all points and four feet horizontally from any supporting tree or pole.

Items requiring proper storage – anything (excluding unflavored water and bailed hay) that can be eaten to provide nourishment, including soft drinks, canned food, alcoholic beverages, pet food, processed livestock feeds and grains, personal hygiene products, and refuse, including empty food and beverage containers.

There are some forest service cabins available for rent. The Forest Service rents these out through its website at www.recreation.gov. You will need to key in the state and the time frame and review the options. According to the Forest Service office in Ennis, there are cabins at Black Butte, West Fork, Wall Creek, and Vigilante which are relatively near the race route, in particular Black Butte and West Fork. You need to reserve these and pay for them with a credit card.

There are two campgrounds in the area. Clover Meadows, as noted above, is the staging area and finish line for the Madison Marathon. It is also a campground. There is one outhouse toilet and a few fire rings for building fires. This is a free campground and no reservations are required. Cottonwood Campground is on the Ruby Road leading up to the Gravellys. It is also free with no reservations required.

Finally, dispersed camping is allowed in the Gravelly Range only at sites identified by a wooden or fiberglass post with a tent symbol as shown in the photo below. This means you can camp at the obvious site behind the sign. These signs are generally a few yards off the side of the road and easy to spot. You can only use an existing fire ring to build your fire and you must observe all leave no trace camping ethics. Be aware that fires may not be allowed if it is an unusually dry year. The US Forest Service will make this call and this information will be forwarded to all runners.



We have identified tent sites (there could be more that we did not find) at the following locations along or near the race route coming from the Call Road and heading towards Clover Meadows and the starting line of the Madison Marathon. If you camp at any of these sites, it will not take long to get to the starting line of the Big Sky Marathon (i.e. less than 30 minutes in most cases):

1. The first site is about one mile from the entrance to the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest as you climb up the Call Road from Ennis. It will be on your right. This site is about 12 miles from Clover Meadows.
2. The next site is at the junction of Road 292 and Road 290. Road 292 is the Call Road that you will take up to the course from Ennis. Road 290 is the road that the race will be held on. From here, you are 10 miles from Clover Meadows. This is quite near the starting line of the Big Sky Marathon.
3. The next two sites are just a few miles further along Road 290 heading towards Clover Meadows Campground. They will be on your right side as you drive towards Clover Meadows.
4. The next place to camp along this road will be Clover Meadows campground itself.
5. A few miles past Clover Meadows, heading south, there is another campsite on your left side.

The Races

There are two race categories: full marathon and half marathon. All runners will start at the same place and at the same time at 7:30 AM.

The Course Route

Start: 45.094411, -111.862213

Near the turn-around point of the Madison Marathon on the Gravelly Range Road
Elevation: 8,641 feet (approximately)

Finish: 45.349268, -111.724506 (full marathon)

Main Street Ennis – Lion’s Club Park next to the Madison River
Elevation: 4,990 feet

Net Drop: Approximately 3,651 feet

Route: The starting line is within the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest and the route runs on the Gravelly Range Road to the US Forest Service Gate and then on the Call Road to Varney Bridge Road near the Ennis Fish Hatchery (all gravel roads). Then, it runs along Varney Bridge Road to Highway 287 (pavement). From the turnoff onto Highway 287 to Ennis, the route will run along the highway. There is a broad shoulder well off the main road that eventually turns into a road. The route then runs along this main road to the Main Street of Ennis and eventually to the finish line at Lion's Club Park in Ennis. The final stages of this route may be altered to ensure runners' safety.

The finish line for the full marathon is Lion's Club Park in Ennis. The finish line for the Half Marathon will be 13.1 miles from the starting line. Effectively, this will be in the middle of a large alfalfa field on the Call Road as it passes through the Bar 7 Ranch. There will be a yellow school bus to shuttle runners all the way into Ennis after the race.

A good means to describe the route in terms of its challenges and level of difficulty is to break it down into three sections.

Section One – This is from the starting line to the point on the route where the significant downhill begins. The starting line is at approximately 8,600 feet above sea level. It's quite near the turn-around point for the Madison Marathon. The runners will not drop in elevation too significantly over the first seven or eight miles. There are few or no uphills on this section of the route. It is essentially flat and on top of the Gravelly Range though everything is eventually headed downhill. This entire section is within the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest. As runners get close to the border of the National Forest, there will be long, gradual downhills of two to three miles in length, but they will not necessarily be quad burners. The estimated distance is eight to 10 miles.

Section Two – This is the quad burner section. It begins almost immediately after runners leave the National Forest. Runners will cross a cattle guard gate and then the next several miles will be a quite steep downhill. This is a series of switch backs that drop the runner from 8,500 feet to 6,000 feet in a relatively short distance. The "official end" of this section is when the road hits a t-junction after going through the Bar 7 ranch. The estimated distance is four to seven miles. The half marathon finish line is on the flats towards the end of this section.

Section Three – This section is a flat area that gradually declines in elevation. The lower part of the Bar 7 Ranch is approximately 6,000 feet and Ennis is at 5,000 feet. The first few miles will be on gravel road, but eventually the runners hit pavement near the Ennis Fish Hatchery turn-off. From here, the route is on the Varney Bridge Road and it eventually parallels the Madison River. Eventually, it reaches Highway 287 and then runners will be about two miles from the finish line at Lion's Club Park in Ennis. The estimated distance of this section is 10 to 12 miles.

Good Luck!!!