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# PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release through March 31, 2017

## Mount Jumbo South Zone Closure Extended to March 31

The Mount Jumbo winter wildlife closure has been extended to protect wintering elk. The south zone, which includes all points south of the Saddle Road, will re-open to public use on Friday, March 31, weather permitting. The area traditionally opens March 15. Jumbo's North Zone (all points north of the Saddle Road) will remain closed until May 1. The Saddle Road bisects Mount Jumbo's conservation lands and can be reached at the north end of Lincoln Hills Drive.

About 60-70 elk have been frequenting the top of Mount Jumbo this month, as documented by Parks and Recreation volunteer "Elk Spotters" and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks biologists. "Early spring is a really important time for elk because they're coming out of the winter in the poorest physical condition they'll be in all year," says FWP Wildlife Biologist Liz Bradley. "Right now, the Jumbo herd is feeding on emerging vegetation on Mount Jumbo's lower slopes. This nutritious food is critical to replenish the physical reserves they lost over the winter. The herd has been very visible on the mountain lately and has even been seen out feeding during the day—they are clearly telling us this is an important place for them to be right now. As the green-up progresses to higher elevations, the elk will begin to move off the mountain and toward their summer range in the Rattlesnake Wilderness." Bradley added.

The "L" trail and the US West easement road will remain open. Hikers must stay on the designated trails only; off-trail travel is prohibited. Dogs must be leashed on the "L" trail during the winter closure. Mount Jumbo's North Zone remains closed until May 1. For closure maps and more information, visit [missoulaparks.org](http://missoulaparks.org).

Those who violate the wildlife winter closure may be cited for trespassing and may incur fines and penalties. Please call 911 to report closure violations. Vehicle license plates or other identifying characteristics will help law enforcement identify trespassers.

The Mount Jumbo winter closure is mandated by the Mount Jumbo Management Plan and the City Conservation Lands Management plan, both of which were adopted by the City Council after extensive public processes.

The City conducts an inter-agency review with Montana FWP and others when considering adaptations to the regular closure dates. Changes to the seasonal dates of the winter wildlife closure are largely based on weather conditions and movements of wildlife on the mountain. For more information, visit [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org) or phone 721-PARK.

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