
MISSOULA PARKS AND RECREATION PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

For immediate release through December 21, 2021

Residents invited to share ideas for downtown river access improvements

Missoula Parks and Recreation invites residents to comment on plans to improve river access in downtown Missoula via a brief [online public comment questionnaire](#) through December 21.

The questionnaire, posted at www.engagemissoula.com, is part of the City's [Clark Fork River Restoration and Access Project](#), funded by the 2018 Open Space Bond. Residents are asked to view and comment on initial plans to restore and stabilize the riverbanks throughout Missoula's urban core, including improved river access at McCormick and Caras parks and the Madison Street and Beartracks (Higgins) bridges.

Recreational use of the river has increased dramatically over the last 15 years, says Nathan McLeod, Missoula Parks and Recreation's Parks and Trails Design/Development Specialist. The extra visitors have significantly impacted the river's banks and beaches.

"Increased river traffic has created a network of informal river access trails which have caused erosion and destroyed stream-stabilizing vegetation. Erosion degrades water quality, destabilizes the banks and threatens adjacent City infrastructure," McLeod says. The Restoration and Access Project, started in 2014, builds on years of research and planning including river user surveys, ecological monitoring and inventory, preliminary restoration and access site selection criteria and design concepts. In addition, the project addresses the need for improved, more sustainable user access and seeks to balance recreation needs with the health of the river ecosystem.

The project scope includes about 70 specific sites selected for restoration or improvement in a 4-mile stretch of the Clark Fork between Riverside Park west of Russell Street and Ben Hughes Park in East Missoula. Project partners include Parks and Recreation, the City's Storm Water Division, the Clark Fork Coalition, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and the Missoula Water Quality District.

Throughout 2021, the City has hosted open houses and stakeholder meetings to gather additional public input on the project's design. Project partners have worked closely with residents to design intuitive walk-in river access points to meet the community's diverse needs. The new access points, which include features like rock stairs, accessible ramps, boulder seating and habitat improvements, will encourage responsible

recreation and promote the health and aesthetics of the Clark Fork. While the enhanced access points are the most visible improvements, a comprehensive riverbank restoration program is an integral part of the project and will be implemented throughout the project area.

The selected design and engineering consultant, RESPEC Company, has developed site restoration plans and prescriptive treatments. When initial plans are approved, RESPEC will initiate the permitting process and produce preliminary construction plans for the improved river access points. Construction of the project will occur in phases, with phase 1 beginning as soon as Fall 2022 as funding becomes available.

Take the survey by December 21 and learn more about the project at www.engagemissoula.com. The [Engage Missoula site](#) includes conceptual drawings of proposed improvements, a map of the project area, and access site definitions and selection criteria. For more information, email Nathan McLeod at Missoula Parks and Recreation, mcleodn@ci.missoula.mt.us or phone 721-PARK (7275.)

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