

Contact:
Morgan Valliant
Missoula Parks and Recreation
Phone 406-552-6263
mvalliant@ci.missoula.mt.us

600 Cregg Lane
Missoula, MT 59801
Phone 406-721-7275

Missoula Parks and Recreation

Vickie Edwards
Wildlife Biologist
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
(406) 542-5515
vedwards@mt.gov

Public Service Announcement

For distribution March 10, 2011 through March 25, 2011

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Mount Jumbo South Zone closure extended to March 25

Mount Jumbo's elk herd, numbered at an all-time high of around 90 head this year, is staying put on Jumbo's lower elevations, prompting wildlife managers to extend the South Zone closure from March 15 to March 25. Depending on weather conditions and snowfall, the South Zone (south of the Saddle road to the "L"), will re-open to public use on March 26.

"Although the snow is starting to burn off, we still have a substantial amount of snowpack in the mid-to-higher elevations—and those elk are going to need the security and habitat of the South Zone for another couple weeks," says FWP Wildlife Biologist Vickie Edwards. "Also, the elk continue to utilize habitat in the lower elevations near the "L". When we see elk that low in late February and into early March, it is an indicator of the amount of snowpack on the mountain and the need to extend the closure," she added.

During harsh winter months, when food is scarce, elk must strike a balance between the reduced calories they consume and the energy they expend to stay warm and move through the deep snow. Even during mild winters, the food available at Jumbo's lower elevations is crucial to the elk's survival. Human disturbance causes elk to flee, thereby expending energy at a time when they need to conserve it the most. Usually, by the traditional March 15 opening date, the elk are able to move north of the Jumbo saddle. This year's deep snowpack at higher elevations prevents the elk from moving up and away from humans and their dogs. In the coming weeks, wildlife managers will re-evaluate the herd's location and may extend the closure beyond March 25. Parks and Recreation will post updated information at trailheads and on the department website, www.missoulaparks.org.

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North Mount Jumbo (areas north of the Saddle Road) remains closed until May 1. In these areas, cow elk will be seeking undisturbed refuge during the last few weeks before calving.

Three areas of Mount Jumbo are open all year: the U.S. West road above I-90, the trail to the "L," and the road linking Upper Lincoln Hills Drive with Tamarack, including about 40 acres below. Dogs must be leashed on the "L" trail and U.S. West easement during the winter closure. Violations of the Mount Jumbo winter closure are punishable by fine. Please call 911 to report closure violations. Vehicle license plates or other identifying characteristics will help law enforcement issue citations to those who violate the closure.

The new Parks and Trails map, available for \$4 at Parks and Recreation, features detailed trail maps of all City open space and surrounding public lands. For more information, call 721-PARK or visit the Parks and Recreation website at www.missoulaparks.org.

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