



CITY NEWS

Sept. 5, 2013

---

## **Open Space Program Manager Jackie Corday Leaves Missoula With Lasting Legacy of Work**

When Jackie Corday looks back as she leaves Missoula for her new job in Colorado, she'll see her accomplishments in the rear-view mirror – and she can come back and visit them any time.

It's hard to count everything in nine years of work: conservation easements on the old family ranches in South Hills that mean open views for everybody; 300 acres of North Hills protected in partnership with Allied Waste and Five Valleys Land Trust; a Milwaukee Trail section that connects the once-dead end at Russell Street all the way to Reserve Street; 1,036 acres preserved with a conservation easement on the Deschamps land near the Wye west of town.

Then there are the things you can't see: subdivision regulations overhauled to make designated parklands meaningful and functional for people and an active transportation concept that includes amenities on and off the streets and trails. And then there are the partnerships between City and County, City and land trusts, City and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, to name just a few.

“You are in this position to advocate for quality of life – parks, trails, open space,” she said recently during one of her last days in her office in the Currents building in McCormick Park. “People in Missoula value that. They know those things mean quality of life. It was definitely a dream job for me.”

When she began in April of 2004, Corday brought to the job an undergraduate degree in environmental biology from Humboldt State University and a law degree from the University of Oregon at Eugene, where she concentrated her study in environmental law, land use and real estate. She also had owned a plant nursery for five years and worked as a planner for the city-county planning office in Missoula for two and a half years. And she had experience in advocacy.

The 1995 Open Space Bond helped preserve some big places dear to Missoulians: big parts of Mount Jumbo, Mount Sentinel, the North Hills and Fort Missoula land. But there was only about \$650,000 left in the bond when Corday took over, enough for two or three small projects. And the Open Space Plan was nearly 10 years old.

Corday began an update with the Open Space Advisory Committee and an appointed group of citizens and worked through 2005. Mayor John Engen was elected that fall on a platform that included passing a new Open Space Bond. The plan was adopted by the City Council in September 2006, and the new City-County bond of \$10 million passed in November.

“It was very exciting,” Corday said. “It was a huge achievement when 70 percent of the populace voted for it. It wouldn’t have happened without John’s vision and dedication.”

Corday has had disappointments. Recently, hard work to acquire a 300-acre Bitterroot Riverfront parcel in Miller Creek fell through in the last hour when the owner decided to sell to another buyer. Efforts to secure a large open space parcel for citizens to use and enjoy in the Miller Creek and Mullan Road areas have been frustrating. Corday believes strongly that the City should secure open space lands in every part of town.

Corday leaves Missoula for a job she couldn’t pass up, an opportunity to do the work she loves but on a state-wide scale in Colorado, acquiring wildlife habitat and parks for state agency Colorado Parks and Wildlife. She will miss Missoula, and she will be missed.

“She has done so much to further our community goals of healthy built environment, personal and place wellness and quality of life,” said Donna Gaukler, director of the Missoula Parks and Recreation Department and Corday’s boss for nine years. “And she has done all this with partners from virtually every interest and demographic in our community. I think her success has much to do with her integrity, ability to truly listen and have empathy for all sides and views, her in-depth knowledge of laws that apply, her ability to see the larger vision and her unique sense of fairness, her fortitude and her insistence on being and expecting the best of herself and others.”

#