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PRESS RELEASE

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Parks and Recreation to launch pilot program for special events on City Open Space

Missoula Parks and Recreation is launching a pilot program later this year to evaluate the impacts of educational programs, fun runs, celebrations and other special events on City open space. The department invites citizens to learn more about the pilot program and comment at www.missoulaparks.org. Conclusions from the pilot program will be used to finalize the department's open space special events permit.

The City receives dozens of requests each year to permit special events on Mount Sentinel, Mount Jumbo, and other open space lands. When the Conservation Lands Management Plan was adopted in 2010, citizens asked Parks and Recreation to consider allowing limited special events on select open space areas with restrictions in place to minimize impact on trails, habitat and vegetation.

"This pilot program is a direct response to citizen feedback," says Conservation Lands Manager Morgan Valliant. "During the CLM plan public process, folks told us again and again we should consider allowing limited, low-impact special events on City Open Space." In a series of public meetings in 2013, the Conservation Lands Advisory Committee, the Parks and Recreation Board and department staff drafted a policy and set of criteria for permitting such events.

Valliant says the pilot program will permit up to two special events later this year to assess special events' impacts on the environment and staff resources and evaluate the possible benefits. Parks and Recreation is also seeking citizen feedback about the program. Comments about the new policy or special events themselves may be submitted online at www.missoulaparks.org or emailed to mvalliant@ci.missoula.mt.us. Prior notice of permitted events will be posted on the department's website.

The new policy allows only four large (50-500 participants) events on all City open space per year. Fun runs or other competitive events are limited to primitive roads or developed trails at least 60 inches wide. Special events are prohibited in sensitive or environmentally fragile areas like the Mount Jumbo Backbone Trail and the North Hills Ridge Trail, or any single-track trail segment. No more than two large events will be permitted annually on any one trail segment. If an event crosses into USFS and Montana FWP lands, event planners will also be required to obtain permits from those agencies.

To test the new policy, Valliant has asked Run Wild Missoula (RWM) to design a fun run for the pilot program. The running club has submitted a permit to host a run on Mount Jumbo's North Loop in November, 2014. The club must also obtain permits from the USFS and Montana FWP. No City permits have been issued at this time.

Valliant says special events on open space could be beneficial. "Special events expose more citizens to our conservation lands and give us an opportunity to educate large numbers of users about responsible recreation practices. Managing special events for positive educational and financial gains with minimal impacts to resources is at the core of our special event policy." Fees collected from special events will be used for conservation land management. The new policy will also ensure the department is notified of smaller events like classes, educational tours and trainings which are already taking place on open space.

To learn more about open space special events, visit www.missoulaparks.org, Open Space. To receive occasional e-mail or text updates about Open Space, visit <http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/list.aspx> and sign up for Open Space News, or email bgoodrich@ci.missoula.mt.us to be added to the list.

Like all City boards and commissions, the Conservation Lands Advisory Committee (CLAC) and Parks and Recreation Board meetings are open to the public and have a public comment period. Meeting minutes and agendas can be found at <http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/655/Agendas-Minutes>.

CLAC meets up to eight times per year, September through April, and will meet next on February 3, 2014, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Currents Aquatics Center. The Parks and Recreation Board meets on the second Tuesday of each month, at 12 p.m., at Currents Aquatics Center, 600 Cregg Lane. Sign up to receive the Boards and Commissions calendar via email or text at the City website's "[Notify Me](#)" section: <http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/list.aspx>.

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[Policy For Permitting Events On City Conservation Lands](#)

[Conservation Lands Special Use Permit](#)