

MEDIA ALERT

For immediate release, January 5, 2015 through January 31, 2015

Call 911 to report trespassers on Mount Jumbo during winter wildlife closure

While Missoula's recent snowfall may look tempting to skiers, the City of Missoula reminds citizens that most of Mount Jumbo is closed to the public during the winter. Citizens are urged to call 911 if they spot trespassers on Mount Jumbo. Two trails in Jumbo's South Zone remain open during the closure: the "L" trail beginning at Cherry Street and the US West trail above I-90.

The closure protects about 90 head of elk on their winter range, and remains in effect through March 15 on Jumbo's southern slopes, and through May 1 on Jumbo's North Zone. (See attached map.) Last year's fatal avalanche on Mount Jumbo, which was triggered by a snowboarder in violation of the closure, also has city officials concerned. While the risk of avalanche on Mount Jumbo is slight, citizens should be aware that avalanche warnings have been issued for much of western Montana. The City received reports of ski tracks on Mount Jumbo over the weekend, near the site of the February, 2014 avalanche. Unfortunately, witnesses didn't see the trespassers on the mountain and were therefore unable to contact law enforcement.

The Mount Jumbo winter wildlife closure provides a safe buffer for the elk at the edges of the urban area, enabling them to feed, maintain an energy balance, and continue to live through harsh winters—away from human disturbance and away from our neighborhoods and gardens. A habituated elk becomes a dangerous nuisance, as the average cow elk weighs in at around 500 pounds and stands over 4' tall—and is naturally more aggressive than a typical deer. By contrast, the average whitetail buck weighs about 200 pounds.

Trespassing during the wildlife closure is prohibited by law and violators may be fined up to \$500. When calling 911 to report trespassers, please provide a description of the person and/or his vehicle and license plate number if possible. The Mount Jumbo elk herd is a valuable natural resource and the animals need your help to stay wild and survive in an urban environment. For more information, visit www.missoulaparks.org or phone 721-PARK.

Fast Facts

- Much of Mount Jumbo is closed to recreational use during the winter months to protect wintering elk.
- The North Zone, including areas north of the Saddle Road, is closed December 1 to May 1.
- Jumbo's South Zone, south of the Saddle Road, is closed December 1 to March 15.
- The "L" and I-90 trails remain open all year, and dogs must be leashed during the winter closure.
- Call 911 immediately upon witnessing a trespasser on the closed areas.
- Call 721-PARK or visit www.missoulaparks.org for more information.

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Frequently Asked Questions About Mount Jumbo Elk

What's at stake if folks ignore the closure?

The loss of the Jumbo elk herd. The 90 or so elk that winter on Mt. Jumbo face serious danger. Their chances of survival dwindle if disturbed repeatedly by people and dogs.

Are people really the problem?

Yes. Elk view people as predators, and run from them. Racing through deep snow takes enormous energy at a time when elk are already stressed by the cold and effort it takes to paw through snow for food. Every time elk run, they deplete the fat reserves they need to survive the winter.

Why can't the elk just move elsewhere?

Mt. Jumbo makes up about 2/3 of the elk herd's winter range. The remaining range is too small to support the entire herd. The elk migrate from points north in the Lolo National Forest to Mt. Jumbo, their only choice for finding enough grass, shelter and solitude.

Hikers and Skiers DO have options—elk DON'T

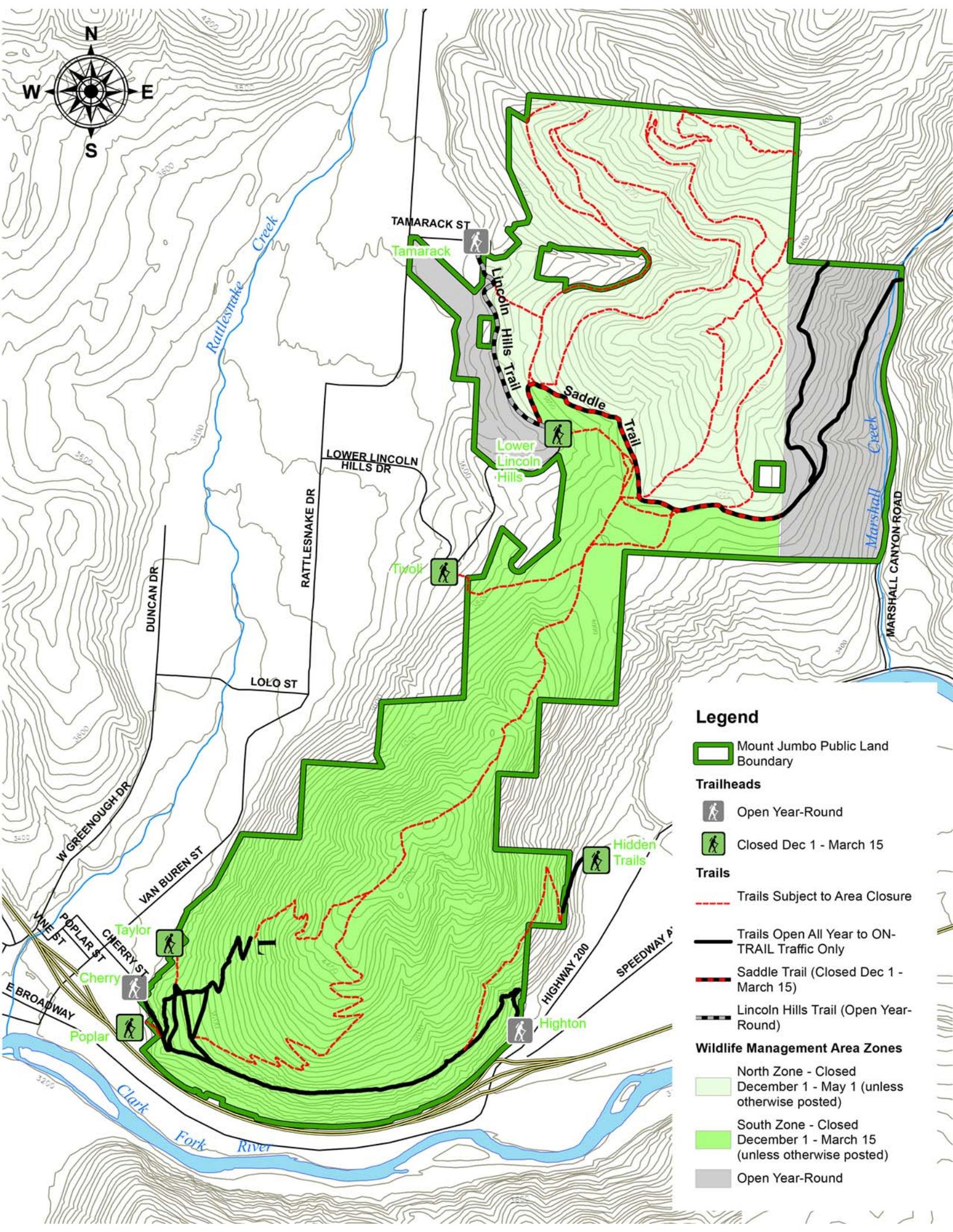
Under the closure, hikers may climb to Mt. Jumbo's "L" or follow the trail paralleling I-90. Leash dogs and remember that elk and deer are nearby. Winter hikers and their canine companions can enjoy the numerous trails, scenic views and varied terrain on the North Hills, Mount Sentinel, Rattlesnake Greenway, and in the Rattlesnake, Pattee Canyon and Blue Mountain Recreation Areas. Visit www.missoulaparks.org for more information about winter walking and hiking opportunities.

Viewing Jumbo's Elk

Watch them from the Rattlesnake Valley or from downtown. Mornings and evenings usually are best. Look for horse sized animals moving high on the west and south facing open slopes, not far from sheltering trees.

For more information, call Missoula Parks and Recreation, 721-PARK, or visit www.missoulaparks.org.

See attached map.



Legend

Mount Jumbo Public Land Boundary

Trailheads

Open Year-Round

Closed Dec 1 - March 15

Trails

Trails Subject to Area Closure

Trails Open All Year to ON-TRAIL Traffic Only

Saddle Trail (Closed Dec 1 - March 15)

Lincoln Hills Trail (Open Year-Round)

Wildlife Management Area Zones

North Zone - Closed December 1 - May 1 (unless otherwise posted)

South Zone - Closed December 1 - March 15 (unless otherwise posted)

Open Year-Round