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MISSOULA PARKS AND RECREATION PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

For immediate release

Mount Jumbo South Zone closure extended

Jumbo's "L" Trail and the US West Road remain open

In consultation with state wildlife biologists, Parks and Recreation has extended the Mount Jumbo South Zone winter wildlife closure beyond the scheduled March 15 opening date. The annual closure protects the 75 to 95 elk and other animals inhabiting Jumbo's lower elevations to feed and regain strength after a long winter. Cold winter temperatures and extended snow cover have delayed Jumbo's spring green-up, leaving elk and other wildlife without adequate food at higher elevations.

Most of Mount Jumbo is closed annually on December 1 to protect wintering wildlife. The South Zone, including all points south of Jumbo's Saddle Road, will open in the next few weeks as spring vegetation arrives on Jumbo's upper slopes and the elk move into the still-protected North Zone. The North Zone, which includes all points north of the Saddle Road, remains closed until May 1 or later each year. The "L" Trail and US West Road remain open all year.

According to FWP Wildlife Manager Liz Bradley, early spring is a critical time for elk because they are coming out of the winter in their poorest physical condition. "For elk and deer, the spring green-up can't come soon enough—so they can start replenishing the physical reserves they lost over the winter. Most years, we see the hillsides starting to green up by mid-to-late March, but that hasn't happened yet this year," Bradley says. "The female elk and deer are doubly stressed as they try to push through these tough conditions carrying young they will deliver in late May and June."

Parks and Recreation staff regularly monitor elk presence throughout the winter with assistance from the [citizen science Elk Spotters Program](#). Starting in early March, staff regularly monitor spring vegetation status further north on Mount Jumbo. Resource managers balance elk presence, vegetation green-up, and spring weather forecasts to determine an appropriate South Zone opening date to protect overwintering elk.

Please check the [Conservation Lands Closures webpage](#) for real-time updates on the South Zone reopening date.

The City of Missoula would like to thank residents for their cooperation in protecting Mount Jumbo's unique natural resources. Visitors must stay on the "L" and US West trails and leash their pets to protect wildlife. Please call 911 to report wildlife closure violations.

For more information, call 721-PARK (7275.) Visit www.missoulaparks.org for maps and more information.

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