

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

For immediate release through March 15, 2026

Winter Wildlife Closures on Mt. Jumbo, Mt. Dean Stone Begin December 1

Fast Facts

Mount Dean Stone:

- Upper Mount Dean Stone Preserve trails are closed **to dogs** to protect wintering elk and other wildlife from December 1 to May 1, but some lower trails remain open to dogs year-round.
- The Barmeyer and Sousa trails remain open to dogs during the closure.

Mount Jumbo:

- Most of Mount Jumbo closes to **all recreational use** during winter to protect wintering elk, deer and other wildlife. The closure also helps protect recreationists and neighbors from avalanche danger on Jumbo's steeper slopes.
- Jumbo's North Zone, including areas north of the Saddle Road, is closed from December 1 to May 1.
- Jumbo's South Zone, south of the Saddle Road, is closed from December 1 to March 15.
- The "L" and I-90 trails remain open all year, and dogs must be leashed during the winter closure.
- Parks and Recreation is seeking volunteers for the "[Elk Spotters](#)" program.
- Call 406-721-PARK or visit www.ci.missoula.mt.us/206/Conservation-Lands-Closures for more information.

Missoula Parks and Recreation reminds hikers and bikers that some City open space areas are closed in the winter months to protect wildlife. Upper Mount Dean Stone Preserve trails are closed to dogs to protect wintering elk from December 1 to May 1; however, the Barmeyer and Sousa Trails remain open to dogs year-round. Most of Mount Jumbo closes to all recreational use during winter to protect wintering elk, deer and other wildlife.

Winter weather brings Mount Jumbo's own elk herd back to its traditional winter range. When winter snows deplete forage at higher elevations, about 120 elk move to Jumbo's lower slopes to feed. To help increase the herd's chance for winter survival, critical areas of the mountain are closed seasonally to recreational use.

Mount Jumbo's North Zone, from the Saddle Road to the north, is closed from December 1 until May 1. The South Zone, from the Saddle Road south to I-90, will be closed from December 1 to March 15. Maps and more information are available at www.missoulaparks.org. The Saddle Road is located at the north end of Lincoln Hills Drive.

WINTER WILDLIFE CLOSURES BEGIN DECEMBER 1

Several trails on Mount Jumbo are open all year, including the U.S. West road above I-90 and the "L" trail, both of which are accessible at the Cherry Street trailhead. Short trail sections beginning at Hidden Trail in East Missoula and Marshall Canyon will also remain open. The short section of road linking Upper Lincoln Hills Drive with Tamarack Street and the 40 acres below the road are also open all year. Dogs must be leashed on Mount Jumbo during the winter closure. Hiking or skiing off-trail is strictly prohibited in these areas as [avalanche conditions may develop](#) and result in loss of life and significant property damage.

Missoula Municipal Code 12.40 prohibits trespassing during the wildlife closure, and violators may be fined up to \$500. Please call 911 to report violations. If possible, please provide a description of the person and/or his vehicle and license plate number. [Trespassers risk their own safety and the safety of others.](#)

Winter hikers can enjoy the numerous trails, scenic views and varied terrain on the North Hills, Mount Sentinel, Rattlesnake Greenway, and in the Pattee Canyon, Blue Mountain, and Rattlesnake Recreation Areas. The Parks and Trails map, available at Currents Aquatics Center and local retailers, features detailed maps of open space trails. Hikers are reminded to leash dogs where posted and remove their pet's waste.

Parks and Recreation is seeking volunteer "[Elk Spotters](#)" to help visually track the Jumbo herd's movements over the winter months to learn more about how the animals use the mountain. Resource managers will use the data to make timber and vegetation management decisions on Mount Jumbo. Those interested in committing to elk spotting daily may contact Graham Johnson, Research & Monitoring Coordinator [via email](#). Schools and other organizations are encouraged to participate.

Call 406-721-PARK or visit www.missoulaparks.org for more information about winter walking and hiking opportunities.

Media note: Please see FAQs and map below.

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Frequently Asked Questions About Mount Jumbo and Mount Dean Stone Elk

What's at stake if residents ignore the closures?

The loss of both herds is at stake. The 120 or so elk that winter on Mt. Jumbo and the North Sapphire herd that winters on Mount Dean Stone face serious danger. Their chances of survival dwindle if disturbed repeatedly by people and dogs.

Are people really the problem?

Yes. Elk view people and dogs 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 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 at 406-721-PARK, or visit www.missoulaparks.org.

