

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

For immediate release, December 1, 2015 through March 15, 2016

Mount Jumbo Wildlife Closure Begins December 1

Fast Facts

- Most of Mount Jumbo closes to recreational use during the winter months to protect wintering elk.
- The North Zone, including areas north of the Saddle Road, will be closed December 1 to May 1.
- Jumbo's South Zone, south of the Saddle Road, will be 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.
- Parks and Recreation is seeking volunteers for the "Elk Spotters" program.
- Call 721-PARK or visit www.missoulaparks.org for more information.

Wintery weather brings Mount Jumbo's own special elk herd back to its traditional winter range. When winter snows deplete forage at higher elevations, about 75 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. About 50 elk have recently been spotted in Jumbo's North Zone.

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.

Trespassing during the wildlife closure is prohibited by law 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.

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 new Parks and Trails map, available at Currents Aquatics Center and local retailers, features detailed maps of open space trails. The map is priced at \$4. 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 decisions about timber and vegetation management on Mount Jumbo. Those interested in committing to elk spotting on a daily basis may contact Chris Carlson, Research Program Specialist at ccarlson@ci.missoula.mt.us. Schools and other organizations are encouraged to participate.

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

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Media note: Please see FAQs below.

Frequently Asked Questions About Mount Jumbo Elk

What's at stake if folks ignore the closure?

The loss of the entire herd is at stake. The 75 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.