



City of Helena

**HELENA OPEN LANDS MANAGEMENT  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
SUMMARY  
February 14, 2017**

**City Members Representative**

- Betsy Miller
- Eric Sivers
- Jeff Shirley
- Dan Wirak
- Vacant

**City of Helena Staff Representatives**

- Brad Langsather, Open Lands Manager
- Greta Dige, Code Enforcement

**City-County Parks Board Representative**

- Dave Payne

**Helena Citizens Council Representative**

- Denise Roth Barber

**Helena Tourism Alliance Representative**

- Jennifer Davis

**Prickly Pear Land Trust Representative**

- Nate Kopp

**LOCATION: City of Helena Parks and Recreation – Room 326**

**TIME: 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm**

**Call to Order**

**Welcome/Introductions/Visitors**

Welcome to Denise Roth Barber, Helena Citizens Council Representative. Dan also introduced Jennifer Schade, Administrative Assistant to the City of Helena Parks and Recreation Department.

**Minutes Approval: January 10, 2017**

With no noted corrections, minutes were approved as submitted.

- **Update/concern of agenda item from last meeting:** Dan mentioned his concerns over the Lodge Pole parcel. It seems odd that the city has a piece of property totally surrounded by residents who have complete access to it while no one else does. If there is any way we could sell this piece of property and do something with it, Dan would be in favor of that. He feels we should be given access to this property.

**History:** Brad stated that in the 80's the BLM transferred ownership of several BLM properties that were in and/or adjacent to the city limits. One such property was a 20 plus acre parcel that has been in the parks system for a number of years. Lime Kiln road sits below this piece of property. Lodge Pole drive sits to the north. The city has no legal access to the property at this time. This property is also deed restricted, stating it must remain BLM parkland forever. So you can't sell the property unless you have approval from the Department of Interior. The logical step is to contact the new owner of the adjacent piece. If this is exhausted, it may be time to contact the BLM. It is time to start the process as it will take time in solving the problem.

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- Dan mentioned one other point – at the last meeting, Jennifer asked about the possibility of water access at the Beattie street trailhead. Dan recommended we put this in the plan. As Beattie street progresses, we can note that it is part of the plan to install that water line.
- Brad stated that Public Works has asked about water in the past but we have said no because of vandalism issues. Brad will research this further. He added he feels a cistern with an underground tank and a hand pump would be the best way to go. The ground temperature would keep the water cool. We would have potable water delivered. If this is successful, we can look at putting in the same system at Mount Helena.

### **HOLMAC Action Items:**

#### Beattie Street Grant

- Brad thanked everyone for their input. We received 16 letters to submit with the grant. The grant application was successfully submitted. We requested \$43,500. We fell into the “regular” grant category. Our match is around \$30,000. Our match will include signage, a kiosk, picnic tables, trash receptacles, and pet waste stations that city parks would purchase and install. This would match the delivery and the installation of the restroom.
- The elevational survey is completed. Engineering submitted a preliminary drawing that was submitted with the grant application. They sized the area around 40,000 square feet and preliminary located the parking lot and restrooms. It will be a horse-shoe type area with diagonal parking. All spaces have to be ADA accessible and the preliminary plan accommodates that.
- Next steps – once we have a firm plan, we will hold a neighborhood meeting and present this to commission.

#### Update on the 2017 Open Lands Work Plan

- Brad reviewed the 2017 Helena Open Lands Work Plan. Greta will handle the weeds. Greta will post this plan on our website to give HOLMAC and community members the opportunity to comment and/or make suggestions or additions. We have the next 30 days to include that information into the plan prior to the open house forum. This plan outlines land management activities scheduled for implementation in the next 12 months. The work plan is updated annually to address land management needs that have emerged as a result of input from the citizens of Helena, HOLMAC, and/or city staff. Land stewardship activities shall be designed and implemented in a manner that will preserve, restore, and enhance the natural character of Helena’s open lands and provide Helenans with accessible natural open lands. To review a copy of this plan or to share comments please go to: <http://www.helenamt.gov/home/news-item/article/public-comment-2017-helena-open-lands-work-plan.html>.
- The first item reviewed was the Forest Management Objectives.
  - We are wrapping up the 2015 MCC and 2016 Open Lands Crew projects. The state is holding back \$4,500 because we came in under budget and don’t have enough match. We also don’t have all piles burned. We need to close by the end of March.
  - The FEMA project we have been working on is close to being finalized. We had two extensions and it expires the 28<sup>th</sup> of February. We will need to pay out about \$25,000 in cash and will recoup approximately \$120,000 in funds that we have already paid out from FEMA. We may get a little less if we don’t accomplish all of our assigned tasks. Brad will process final reimbursement requests and associated project close-out documents.
  - We have a project on Mount Ascension that doesn’t expire until the end of 2019. We are doing the initial forestry treatments on some of the areas we took ownership from PPLT

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on. Last year we did 18½ acres. That was all hand-piled and will be burned next year. We will do approximately 20 acres. This is an area that Brad would like to look at as a wintertime area for cross country skiing/tubing opportunity, but we need to get the forest opened up and the piles burned. We recouped a little under \$30,000 from last year's work.

- Open Lands PSR – we took ownership of the grant last year which was a \$100,000 grant that will expire at the end of May. Therefore, we will need to complete 65 acres of forest fuel treatment by the end of May.
- We received a \$150,000 grant from the DNRC to start work on the Douglas fir area (above 1906 Trail) in the first fir thicket and then between Prairie and 1906. This is a 120 acre project – we have three years to complete. Brad's goal is to complete 40 acres this year. He met with MCC who and committed to 8 weeks of a full MCC crew at \$5,000 per week (\$40,000 commitment). This is a fuel treatment project. We will also host all of their trainings this year.
- We will begin the agreement with the USFS. Our first project will be on the McKelvey Trail/South Dump area. We will prepare and complete approximately 60 acres of forest fuel and hazard tree treatment. This is a 5-year project. They will do 220 acres of forestry maintenance work within the Open Lands system. This grant will help fund our seasonal employees this year.
- Brad stated he won't be as aggressive with grant applications this year because we are carrying several grants at this time.
- Brad will continue work on the issue of transient camps. Brad showed members a sticker that will be placed on camp tents which states "No camping on city property. Remove tent immediately". It also states that we will discard property if not removed by the date on the sticker. There has been a terrible problem with this. The forest service allows people to camp for 14 days. Brad asked the forest service to create areas adjacent to city property that is no camping areas. Greta added that if anyone sees an issue, please be specific as possible and if you can, use GPS included in the attached photos. This will help us know exactly where the camp is located.
- Eric asked where the forest service posted the change to their camping regulations. Brad stated it's at Rodney Ridge. Greta is working on getting this information posted. Areas to post include McKelvey, Rodney, and the Archery Range.
- Brad stated we will continue to do forestry outreach as opportunities arise (such as Youth Day with PPLT, assist schools with any type of nature activities, speak at any venue we are invited to, etc.).
- Brad will continue the firewood distribution work with Narrate Church. They will harvest, forward, and process approximately 100 cords of firewood material for clients of Low Income Energy Assistance Program (aka LIEAP). We will continue to do this at Donaldson until we repurpose that property.
- We will continue to assist in the completion of property acquisition grant applications as opportunities become available. We will respond to public and partnership requests regarding potential purchase, sales, and exchange of open lands properties.
- Greta – we are looking at a treatment area of 200 acres of property. This may increase if we are awarded the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant. This figure may double the dollars and acres of property we treat on open lands.

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- Greta's goal is to better educate people on new invaders as opposed to being concerned with Dalmatian Toadflax, Spotted Knapweed, and Leafy Spurge. Dan asked if there was a map of information at the trailheads to show people where some of this may be. Greta said that amount of information would most likely overwhelm people. Her thought is to cycle through a QR code at the trailhead where people could scan that and get a short list of weeds and maybe rotate through the list.
- Our bio control has expanded so we are looking to get some more releases for that. We have been asked by the bio control state coordinator to participate in training and to potentially get some equipment from them.
- Greta is still marking an addition 10-15 past release sites.
- Our insect release map continues to be updated to include newly marked sites.
- We will continue to coordinate groups for weed pulls throughout the summer.
- The 2017 Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant is pending. Greta has her grant presentation on February 28, 2017. With adjusted chemical costs, Greta said the grant request is for a little over \$16,000. Greta said she had a great response from adjacent landowners. Over 40% of 186 landowners responded with letters of support for the grant.
- Dan inquired how the general public gets in touch with Greta if there is a weed outbreak. Greta stated there is a Nuisance Vegetation and Weed Complaint for that can be completed. Once submitted, it goes to Greta and/or Brad for follow-up. The form can be found at: <https://lcchelenamt.seamlessdocs.com/f/16NuisVegWeedCom>.
- There is some big thistle as you are going down the Show-Me-The-Horse trail. Brad stated this might be a good one to fit into the 360 plan.
- Brad reviewed the trails and recreation management objectives. As part of this, Brad included what PPLT will be doing as part of their contract this year. He mentioned that Eric Sivers brought an idea to Brad on taking a trail off the north face of MT Ascension off the first switch-back and leading it across and wrapping it around the hill. This would give people the option of doing loops rather than dead-heading. This would be approximately 7,500 feet of new trail construction (Brad referenced a map).
- Brad then reviewed the construction activities at Mount Ascension Trail (2006 to Entertainment), Mount Ascension Trail (Easy Ride to Prickly Pear), and the Bull Run Trail (Gold Rush Avenue to South California Street).
- Last year PPLT worked on the Bull Run Trail. We widen this trail and are preparing to install a pedestrian bridge to cross the dry gulch. They will extend this trail up to Gold Rush.
- Trail Improvement: Chairman, Dan Wirak brought an idea forward for doing some work at the Dump Out Trail. This trail does need some attention. The plan is to widen and re-route as needed to more easily accommodate bicycle traffic. We have some dollars we can use to go out and locate some of the obstacles that need to be worked on. Dan mentioned that with the work to be done on Park street, this will make it more important that people can get over to McKelvey within the open lands system. Another maintenance item will be the maintenance of drainage features on Powerline Trail. It has been effective to place rocks along the edge of the trail to keep people from veering from the trail.
- After further discussion about trail improvement, Greta reminded HOLMAC members that when talking to others about thinning projects at the trails, please remind people to pay close attention to closure signs. This is for their safety.

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- PPLT will continue to facilitate the Adopt-A-Trail Volunteer Program. We will proactively engage individuals and groups for participation in an Adopt-A-Trail Volunteer Program. At the end of the season, Brad would like to produce an annual activity report for the program and deliver a completed report to the City of Helena. Eric stated PPTL will revisit this and work to make this a more robust program. Greta stated we can create an online form for the ease of reporting. This could be helpful. This will tie right into condition reporting.
- Mapping – South Hills Trail Map Update: Provide GPS data to City including trail re-routes and/or new trails, improved trails, parking areas, proposed routes, etc.
- PPLT will work to close social trails occurring along 2006 trail mostly as a product of trail braiding between the switch-back. They will be working on putting in obstacles to keep that minimized.
- PPLT will continue to coordinate volunteer activities (to include workdays, Boy Scouts, Corporate and NGO's, Weed Pull events, etc.).
- Brad will investigate the transfer of privately owned parcel ownership to City ownership.
- Nate and staff will complete trail user counts using electronic tally devices that will include chronological line charts depicting monthly use that are organized by type (foot, bicycle), and trailhead. The report shall include a narrative for each collection point that outlines methodology, assumptions and any data irregularities that may have been noted. This will be a coordinated project with Helena Tourism Alliance.
- Brad reviewed some of the projects he is working on. The pedestrian bridge along Bull Run Trail is almost completed.
- We will be hiring a person though parks maintenance who will be dedicated to the trailheads. We will purchase a vehicle for this position. As part of this position, the hired individual will walk the entire trail system on a monthly basis. He will watch for defaced signage, transient camps, etc. This will be the same person that will service the trailheads. Parks staff will also install carsonite signs (identification posts and markers for recreational facilities are built to withstand impacts, harsh weather conditions, corrosive elements, and damaging UV exposure).
- Facilities works will include: completion of the Beattie Trailhead project; installation of trash receptacles and pet waste stations at the Meatloaf and Old Shooting Range trailheads; expansion of the Lower Davis Street parking areas; completion of the Waterline Extension Trail parking area; construction and installation of a kiosk at the Saddle Drive parking area. We agreed with the Folf Course members that a kiosk is needed in this area. This will be done in conjunction with the wayfinding efforts. Lastly, we will work on the installation of park and trail use rules/etiquette information at the Mount Helena Trailhead.
- The Lewis and Clark county Archery Range group contacted Brad to renew their 5-year lease with the City of Helena. Projects at the Archery Range include the installation of a new entrance gate and installation of road edge markers at the intersection of Davis Street and the Archery Range entrance road.
- We will continue with fence construction and removal as needed.
- Boundary identification: verify open lands boundaries as budgets allow; install boundary identification posts at 50 foot intervals where encroachment situations are identified.

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- Brad reviewed the wayfinding signage efforts. Wayfinding is about creating community and connectivity, making amenities, like parks and trails, accessible to residents regardless of ability. As part of this process, Brad asked members for their suggestion of six trailheads.
  - **Mount Helena Trailhead** (remain the same).
  - **Beattie Street Trailhead** (remain the same); however, another recommendation was **Mount Ascension Trailhead**.
  - **Tubbs Trailhead** (remain the same).
  - ~~Old Shooting Range~~ (Brad stated we should reevaluate this name. The committee agreed on **Rodney Meadow Trailhead**).
  - ~~Lower Davis~~ (**Davis Street Trailhead**)
  - Dump Gulch – **Grizzly Gulch Trailhead** was one suggestion; however, committee members asked for more time to think about other possibilities.
  - Brad stated we can do that; however there is money left on this grant and it is our goal to use these six trailheads in as our participation in the kick off efforts. Our signs will include the symbol of the pinecone. Renaming the trailheads will be a great benefit to all in the community.
  - Brad then had one more recommendation. At the Folf Course, rather than calling it the Saddle Drive Trailhead, we should call it the **South Hills Disc Golf Course**. The parking lot is primarily used by the folfers. The trail is used by the walkers.
  - Brad will need to submit a list of names so the signs can be manufactured.
  - **We will include this as an agenda item for the next meeting.**
- Van Hook raised walkway and land purchase **Tabled**
- Davis St. parking lot, Water line parking on Orofino, Beatty street parking. **Any updates**
- Counters, any further discussion?
- PPLT trails committee report, Nate or Eric
  - PPLT is working on the contract with Brad.
  - They are getting geared up for the season.
- Other
  - We will get the minutes on the website. We also have minutes in an electronic file.
  - We are still planning a memorial for Jimmy Phillips at Beattie Street Trailhead. Brad is working on this project and will keep HOLMAC updated.
  - Jennifer announced that they submit for a grant to ITRR (Institution for Tourism and Recreation Research) with the University of Montana to do a study on the economic impact of mountain biking visitors in Montana as well as the local impact and were approved. They will be working on this during the summer. They will be looking for an intern or retire person to assist with the data collection.

## **Parks and Recreation Report – Brad**

### **Reports from Subcommittees:**

- Weeds – Greta
- Report from PPLT
- Cultural Resources
- Wildlife
- Forestry

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**Public Comment:**

**Next Meeting Date:** April 11, 2017

**Future Agenda Items:**

- Recommendations for renaming six trailheads.

**Adjournment:** With no further business, the HOLMAC meeting adjourned at **what time???**

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