



**HELENA OPEN LANDS MANAGEMENT  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
SUMMARY  
February 13, 2018**



City of Helena

**City Members Representative**

- Betsy Miller
- Eric Sivers
- Jeff Shirley
- Dan Wirak
- Karen Reese

**City of Helena Staff Representatives**

- Brad Langsather, Open Lands Manager
- Greta Dige, Code Enforcement
- Jennifer Schade, Recorder

**City-County Parks Board Representative**

- Dave Payne

**Helena Citizens Council Representative**

- Denise Roth Barber

**Helena Tourism Alliance Representative**

- Jennifer Davis

**PPLT Representative**

- Evan Kulesa

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

**TIME: 5:30 Pm – 7:00 pm**

Amy Teegarden, Nick Sovner, Phil Johnson

**Call to Order**

**Welcome/Introductions/Visitors**

**Minutes Approval – January 9, 2018**

- Evan’s last name is **Kulesa**. Jennifer will correct.
- With no further corrections, Jeff moved to approve the January HOLMAC minutes as amended. Eric seconded. Motion carried.

**HOLMAC Action Items**

Review all 2018 Helena Open Lands Work Plan Comment Forms received during the January 9, 2018 to January 31, 2018 calendar period.

- On comments sheets that were distributed, Brad noted highlighted sections. These are additional comments that came in since the January HOLMAC meeting. If anyone wants to make recommendations on items read, this is the time to do so.
- It was noted that these are the largest amount of comments received to date. Last year we had only 13 comments to the work plan. This year there was significant increase.
- In reviewing additional comments, Dan mentioned the comment regarding mountain biking on page three. Is there a way to address this? Brad stated that everyone has a right to comment; however, it may be difficult to address this or other issues. Not all comments made will be incorporated into the work plan. In managing the trail system, it is our responsibility to address all issues.
- The next step in the process is for HOLMAC to bring recommendations based on comments. Brad will go through the items he has directly addressed.

- One of the items mentioned was how we addressing the nesting season with our thinning projects. It was asked if we are violating the Federal Migratory Bird Act. We are not. We are one of few entities that goes out and selects all retention trees that will be retained on-site. It is during this process that we examine the trees to see if there is an active nest. That tree, regardless of it's form, would be retained (unless extremely diseased). The fact that we are working by hand lends us a good opportunity to thoroughly examine the trees.
- The next area of concern that Brad addressed was from a community member who does not want to see the east face of Mt. Ascension thinned. This area has already been thinned. Brad stated he will reach out to this individual.
- There is concerns about how we are going to address parking on Mt. Ascension. There is just starting to be a sporadic parking problem. Brad added this to work plan as an assignment for us to work on this summer. Because it is companioned to the directional trail, if we feel we want to be proactive, we can do an amendment to the work plan and address this problem. Denise asked if we might expand the current parking lot at top. Brad stated that is correct. We will look at options but expanding the upper lot makes more sense. Dan agreed with Brad and stated the upper parking lot expansion is a great idea. However, he is also in favor of developing the lower lot.
- Another item mentioned is that many would like to see Entertainment Trail retained in its current form. It is on the work plan to address some of the issues. Brad stated that he added a section under "Trails and Recreation Management Objectives" to include the following:

***Trail Improvement***

***Entertainment: HOLMAC will designate a team of at least two members (can be more or someone who is not a HOLMAC member) to be assigned the task of completing a field walk-through with the selected trail coordination contractor for the purpose of reviewing and approving the location and design of the scheduled trail improvement work prior to implementation. The field walk-through will be scheduled to occur early this spring at a date and time that is convenient for the assigned HOLMAC members.***

- Brad would like to see a few different opinions on this before we move forward with improvements. Dan suggested that as weather permits we should walk this area. Evan has reached out and sent emails to some of the folks who commented on this issue. He invited people to walk with him. There were concerns with the word "flatten". We are proposing to flatten the cross slope. Evan would like to see some of those who expressed concerns participate on the walk. There will work above and below the new bridge.
- The three issues Brad feels we need to address include: the drainage issues on Jeep Trail, addressing issues on bike bypass itself (as you look at the bridge site, Eric pointed out areas along the old portion of the trail that need attention), and the final issue is the two switchbacks as you descend from Davis. Anytime we do a major trail improvements, we want to get all opinions.
- Last item Brad incorporated into the plan was comments on the desire to formalize the trails accessing the climbing rock at 1906.

***Mount Helena Rock Climbing Area***

***Currently climbers are using existing game/social trails to access the base of the Mount Helena cliffs. The Helena Climber Coalition proposes to improve the current trails being utilized to access the climbing areas to make them more easily to identify and use. Additionally, as part of the planned trail work, the Helena Climbing Coalition proposes to improve flat rectangular pads at the base of the rock where established climbing routes occur. Concurrent with these efforts, the Helena Climbing Coalition will conduct a route development event that will require a temporary closure of the 1906 trail while rock-fall mitigation/cleaning work is underway.***

- In working with Brad Maddock, Brad incorporated the Helena Climbing Coalitions ideas and one more day of rock cleaning. This is now formalized into this plan.

#### Weed Management

- Based on comments submitted, Greta reorganized the weed management section. She broke this section into two categories: Public Education and Noxious Weed Treatment.
- **Public education** – based on comments it was apparent that we need to get more information out about how areas are selected for treatment. Greta will begin to use the website more in an effort to educate the public on the city’s integrated pest management program and practices. Some topics may include:
  - How areas get selected
  - Looking at and identifying areas of high use and targeting them
  - Grant opportunities available to property owners
  - General information regarding herbicides and its effects on targeted plants
  - Post proposed annual treatment locations/maps
- **Noxious weed treatment** – Herbicide: We try to treat approximately 200 acres or more based on our funding. We will implement a targeted spot treatment program focusing on small infestations. We will target fuel reduction units and pretreat if possible. We will prioritize high use access routes. Biocontrol: We will participate in insects collection, assist in monitoring insect release sites for potential collection, mark an additional 10-15 past release sites and update an insect release map to include newly marked sites. Weed Pulls: We will continue to schedule and participate in weed pulls on open lands. We will continue the Department of Agriculture Adopt-A-Trail program and will administer the MDA 2017-2019 Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant.

#### Motion to Approve the Work Plan

- Brad is recommending to HOLMAC that we table the Beattie Street Trailhead plan project and approve the rest of the work plan as presented.
- Evan asked to generalize the trail user counts devices as opposed to putting in specific trailheads. This may give us a chance to look at a long-term strategy for the trail counters. Brad stated he is fine with that change. Brad added that we will purchase additional counter equipment; however, that does not need to be included in the work plan.
- Evan then stated he noticed under Objective 1 – Forest Management that two individuals recommended we seek assistance from a qualified wildlife biologist regarding some management techniques in thinning. Brad stated that he is an Environmental Biologist with a strong background in wildlife especially in Rocky Mountain wildlife management. When we have a special issue, Brad will coordinate with forest service wildlife biologists but our issues are not that extreme. We don’t have critical habitat components. We do identify denning areas and nests and when Brad has seen big game bedding areas, these are areas that are not thinned. If we do have a situation, Brad will reach out for assistance.
- Citizen Phil Johnson stated he does not like the homogenous situation we are creating out there. We need to understand that there is more to forestry management than fuel reduction. Phil doesn’t believe we are addressing the wildlife issue. Open space is not just for humans.
- Brad stated he agrees; however, both Mt Helena and Mt Ascension ecosystems are completely unbalanced by the lack of wildfire as the natural managing agent. We are not benefitting the ecosystem by maintaining it in an unnatural situation. We have far too many trees on our open space.

- After further discussion, Brad recommended that he and Phil get together in the spring and walk around some of the areas discussed and talk about these issues/solutions. He added that he is willing to schedule forestry/nature walks.
- Betsy – partner with the Audobon Society to see what is happening in open lands. Brad stated that to date, most of the Audobon’s comments/suggestions have been more related to snag retention.
- How can we educate the ecological style of your management position? Brad stated we did that in our 10-year plan. We must keep public safety at the forefront of our plan. As thinning happens, and growth comes back, it is beautiful!
- HOLMAC expressed thanks to Brad for all his hard work.
- With the slight change made to “Miscellaneous Tasks” – trail user counters, Slight change to the counter, HOLMAC voted unanimously to approve the 2018 work plan minus the Beattie Street Trailhead project.

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

#### Helena Area Regional Trails Committee Update

- Last week at the city-county parks board meeting, Amy made a recommendation to ask the commissions to form a Helena Area Regional Trails System/Steering Committee. A regional trails steering committee will provide a collective vision and strategic management direction while being a liaison for and between, land managers and the Helena Area Trails Committee (implementation group). An integrated regional approach will result in high-level, cross – jurisdictional planning and management of an interconnected trail syste.
- The resolution to the commission would identify the following stakeholders:
  - ✚ Forest Service Representative (no name)
  - ✚ City Representative (no name)
  - ✚ County Representative (no name)
  - ✚ PPLT Representative (no name), and
  - ✚ Adjacent Property Owner (no name)
- The steering committee will provide guidelines. This will strengthen our collaboration with many of our partners.
- If all goes as well, we hope to present this to the commissions at the March 1<sup>st</sup> work session.

#### Beattie Street Trailhead Improvement Update

- Brad presented a draft of the open house invitation that will be sent to homeowners adjacent to Beattie Street Trailhead and the surrounding areas.
- Engineering completed the conception today.
- We will hold two open-house events - February 20 and February 27 at 5:00 pm in room 426.
- The letter will be mailed out with the graphic designs.
- We hope to have a final vote by March 13, 2018.

#### Trailhead Snow Maintenance and Trail Condition Update

- Snow maintenance is a big issue at this time. We have a park maintenance employee assigned to trailhead maintenance.
- Poor trail conditions will be addressed by Greta or Brad.

### Financial Update

- We are currently working on FY2019 budgets.
- Brad is working on expenditures paid during the year and getting grant reimbursements.

### **Reports from Subcommittees**

#### Weeds – Greta

- Nothing more to report.

#### Report from PPLT

- PPLT has its annual meet on Thursday. This is open to the public. There will be two speakers with a one-hour breakout time where people can visit. There will also be a beta version of the digital trail map. The event will be held at Free Ceramics, 650 Logan Street. Everyone is welcome to attend.
- Download the latest PPLT Trail Map at <http://pricklypearlt.org/trails/>.

#### Cultural Resources

- Lime Kiln has been placed on the state historical registry.
- There has been no more progress on aftershock bridge. The stringers have been set, but we still can't get the chipper out. Brad will continue work on this.

#### Wildlife

- None.

#### Forestry

- None.

### **Public Comment**

- There was further discussion about the Beattie Street Trailhead. Brad encouraged everyone to attend at least one of the open house events to learn more information.

### **Other**

- Members discussed a memorial plaque for Jim Phillips. All agreed that we should highlight Jim's passions and condense them to fit on one plaque which will be placed on the bridge currently known as the Aftershock Bridge. Brad will reach out to Jim's good friends.

**Next Meeting Date: March 13, 2018**

### **Future Agenda Items:**

- Jim Phillips Dedication

### **Adjournment:**

With no further business, the January HOLMAC meeting adjourned at 6:47 pm.

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