



**HELENA OPEN LANDS MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SUMMARY
May 14, 2019**



City of Helena

GENERAL MEMBERS

- Betsy Ross
- Eric Sivers
- Jeff Shirley
- Karen Reese
- Brian Barnes

CITY OF HELENA STAFF REPRESENTATIVES:

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

CITY-COUNTY PARKS BOARD REPRESENTATIVE:

- Ross Johnson

HELENA CITIZENS COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE:

- Denise Roth Barber

ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS:

Helena Tourism Alliance Representative

- Andrea Opitz

PPLT Representative

- Evan Kulesa

LOCATION: City-County Building, Room 326

TIME: 5:30 Pm – 7:00 pm

Call to Order

Welcome/Introductions/Visitors Nick Sovner

Minutes Approval – April 9, 2019

- Denise mentioned a correction on the second bullet of page two – the first line should read as follows:
 - We also received a comment regarding mitigation “options” ...
- Evan noted a change on the report from PPLT:
 - Sentence 1 should read “trailhead etiquette will be coming out soon”.
- Betsy moved to approve the minutes with noted corrections. Karen seconded. Motion carried.
- Denise had a suggestion. She stated that the minutes are very detailed. At other boards Denise serves on, the members have decided to only have the minutes reflect actions, not the conversations. The conversation would be noted. Denise asked board members if they want to continue with detailed minutes or a more scaled-back version of the discussion.
- After some discussion, it was agreed to keep the process going as is.

HOLMAC Action Items

- None.

New Business

Current Status – Open Lands Recreation Plan Update

- We have a signed agreement with a consultant to review the Chapter 7, Open Lands Recreation Plan Update. Brad distributed a copy of the schedule in the agreement (attached).
- The kick off is scheduled for Memorial Day.
- We will give the consultants the stakeholder list to include everyone who was initially contacted. At that point, the consultant will decide how to outreach to the stakeholders.
- Some of this will evolve as they meet contact groups.
- The update will include working on goals and objectives and working through the process.
- The goal for completion is late August / early September.
- The consultant is CDR out of Boulder, Colorado. They will be working with a local facilitator, Nedra Chandler with Cadence, Inc.
- The stakeholders will include those who responded to our request and others as they deem necessary. They may not have a formal working group process. They hope to meet with stakeholders and determine the issues/concerns.
- Brad stated CDR may use our initial approach (i.e., working through one trail at a time) or they may determine, based on meetings with different groups, a different approach.
- The board reviewed the information provided by Brad.
- Betsy - in reference to the timeline on the second page, is late August a realistic date of completion? Brad stated his understanding is the consultants will utilize an online digital platform which will allow for advanced data analysis. This process will allow the community to identify specific locations of interest. Utilizing an online platform will provide the consultants necessary feedback in a timely manner.
- The total cost of the consultant is \$52,630. This includes the advanced digital platform.
- Nedra will facilitate some of the meetings and assist with sending out information.

2019 Helena Open Lands Work Plan Update

- The 2019 Open Lands Work Plan was on the commission agenda, but has been tentatively moved to June. The process is moving along slower than in the past.

Forestry Treatment Schedule – May – December

- At this time, our contract crew is working above the 2006 trail at the steel gate. This should be done by the end of next week. We will then move up to forest service east of the McKelvey Trail and work on a unit at this location. He would like this unit to have a little more time for driving. Because we already did the corridor, it won't affect the day to day operation on the trail.
- Brad has had a request from the forest service to work on a portion of the Ridge Trail. Brad will work on a schedule for that. This is a portion they would like us to complete in conjunction with the Capital 360 project.
- Regarding the MT Helena North Face project we have been working on the last couple years: We effectively have two years to complete this project, so rather than having all the activity in one year, Brad wants to do the section between Prairie and 1906 (down below Prairie below Tubbs) this year and set this up as a RFP. We will mechanically chip below Prairie and hand pile.
- Yesterday we finished the tall grass seed burning up MT Helena for this year. Today crews were seeding the Directional Trail for the second time and will work on everything that was burned on MT Ascension.
- We had a collapse of the west-side water tank this year and so crews had to do an emergency access on the property. We just finished re-habilitating and seeding that area.

- We have solicited a RFP for the west face of MT Ascension by the Entertainment Trail. We have to have this completed by October. We will enter into negotiations with the contractor and will have a crew come back and work between the two branches of Entertainment. This shouldn't cause much disturbance. The contractor has worked in this area for a decade.
- We have a small piece that is undone on our parcel that we own between Gold Rush and South Hills Drive (between Chrystal and Winscott) and it looks like they are pushing these lots above Gold Rush harder now. This area is absolute thicket by the power line. We need to get this area cleaned up before construction takes off in this area.
- We have completed our first treatment (1,100 acres) throughout the open lands system and we have pending around 200 acres. Maintenance cycles in about eight years after initial treatment. We have a lofty maintenance goal this year. Brad needs to get more contractors.
- Brad reminded everyone that when we thin the trees, it makes them healthier in the forest. We currently have three times the growth than when we were stagnant. They need more room to grow.
- We have a brand new summer seasonal crew this year. They will go through a one-week training and will work until they have to return to school. The intent was to begin off an isolated piece on Lodgepole; however, we don't have access to the area and the adjacent owners have not responded to Brad's
- Brad visited with the State Entomologist and we have a problem with Douglas Fir Engraver Beetles. They engrave on the limbs of the trees. She asked us to do that work first. If we don't move forward with the Lodgepole property, we will move on to the Winnie Water Tank above Virginia Dale off of Lodgepole. From there, crews will work on the Tubbs Trailhead and then onto the Powerline area.
- The South Hills area is deed-restricted so it has to remain public forever. This is a beautiful piece of property. Deed restrictions definition is a deed restriction is a provision in a deed that imposes a limitation, condition or other restriction upon how the grantee may use the property being conveyed by the deed. A common restriction on land we obtain is that the property must remain public forever. When needing access to a piece of property, we ask for a temporary easement. There are approximately eight landowners bordering this area. This is a 25-acre area.
- The more Brad's crew can stay engaged on maintenance, the better as this work falls under the Capital 360 Grant. They are currently doing grass seeding. The stuff on the Directional Trail facing south has already germinated and is growing.
- When asked, Brad stated the way to rid the area of the Douglas Fir Engraver Beetles is to take their habitat and chip it. They are very destructive.
- Does Open Lands offer Christmas Tree permits? Greta stated non-profits have contacted the department and we have cut trees for them to donate to families in need; however, we do not offer permits to cut trees on open lands. We focus on areas that need to be thinned.

Summer Field Trip Ideas / Schedule

- June 2019: Mount Ascension Arrowroot Trailhead off of Arrowroot Road; Post recovery of the Directional Trail
- July 2019: Park City; Mount Helena Ridge Trailhead parking area off Prospector Gulch Road
- August 2019: VanHook Wetlands

Reports from Subcommittees

Weeds – Greta

- Greta stated that due to the late snow season, we are somewhat behind on weed work. Weeds are growing.
- Greta met with the Montana State Bio-Controller who is based out of Missoula around to 4 – 5 sites on our open lands and city parks and we are doing our first ever collection for stem weevils on the back side of MT Ascension. This will take place on June 12. There will be a presentation beginning at 9:00 am. The presentation will be on the hybrid toadflax. Stay tuned for more information.
- The presenter is a four-front researcher on toadflax and actually started many of our releases years ago.
- Collection will be opened to the public and other agencies that will want to participate.
- Presentation is at 9:00 am and the group will then head to the collection sites.
- Does the city uses round up on city property? Round up is short-term. Usually this product is use at growing sites (i.e., gardens). Greta will find out what is used on city property and open lands and will bring that information back to this board. Greta added that with all herbicides, you MUST follow the label instructions. Greta pulls her information from the EPA website.

Report from PPLT

- PPLT staff have been out with volunteers on city land doing some maintenance work.
- June 1 is National Trails Day. PPLT will partner with Montana Conservation Corps, Helena Climbers Coalition, City of Helena Open Lands, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. These groups will meet at the MCC Headquarters and will disperse into different groups. Climbers and interested parties will be working on some of the paths and maintenance of trails to the climbing spots. If we have enough volunteers, we hope to have a group go to MT Ascension and do year-after work. Most volunteers will be asked to help finish the connector trail on FWP land that connects Centennial Trail to 10-Mile Creek Park. The surface is prepped to have decomposed granite placed.
- June 1; 9:00 am – noon. PPLT will provide lunch.
- Evan added that thanks to the help of Andrea and Tourism Alliance, there has been a social medial campaign regarding trail etiquette. Many user groups have shared the information on their social media.
- The “Don’t Fence Me In” Trail Run occurred last Saturday and was a great success!

Public Comment

- None.

Next Meeting Date: June 11, 2019 – Field Trip

Future Agenda Items:

- Field trips.

Adjournment:

With no further business the May 14, 2019 the HOLMAC meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

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