

## **2019 HELENA OPEN LANDS WORK PLAN (FINAL DRAFT)**

PRINCIPAL GOAL OF THE HELENA OPEN LANDS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HOLMAC) WORK PLAN: To outline land management activities scheduled for implementation in 2019. The recommended work plan will be updated each year to address land management needs that have emerged as a result of input from the citizens of Helena, HOLMAC, and/or city staff. In accordance with the goals and objectives defined within the Helena Open Lands Management Plan, 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 accessible natural open lands.

The Open Lands Work Plan Draft was made available for public comment on the city's website on March 11, 2019 and formally reviewed by HOLMAC and the public at an open house in April.

This is the revised version of the work plan that went out for final public review at the end of June. We held a public open house on July 25 with four members of the public attending and received four written public comments. No changes were made to the revised version of this final plan.

### **FOREST MANAGEMENT:**

- 1) Community Forest Western Bark Beetle and Mt. Ascension Fuel Reduction Grants
  - a. Complete 20 acres of slash pile burning.
- 2) Mt. Ascension Forest Fuels Reduction Project
  - a. Complete 20 acres of slash pile burning.
  - b. Prepare and complete approximately 60 acres of forest fuel treatment work within Mt. Ascension Natural Park.
  - c. Process all project close-out documentation.
- 3) Mount Helena Fuels Reduction
  - a. Complete 20 acres of slash pile burning.
  - b. Prepare and complete approximately 25 acres of forest fuel treatment work on the north face of Mount Helena.
- 4) Participating Agreement (Capital 360)
  - a. Prepare and complete approximately 30 acres of forest fuel and hazard tree treatment work on U.S.F.S. ownership in Grizzly Gulch.
  - b. Prepare and complete approximately 50 acres of forestry maintenance work within the Open Lands system.
  - c. Prepare and complete approximately 85 acres of forest fuels and hazard tree treatment work on the Whyte Property.
- 5) Forest Fuel Treatment Grants
  - a. Complete applications as opportunities arise - individual grants require commission approval

- 6) Forestry Visuals
  - a. Remove retention tree and boundary identification flagging from all forestry projects completed to date.
  - b. Respond to trash dumping and abandoned transient camps as needed.
- 7) Forestry Education
  - a. Participate in community forestry outreach efforts as opportunities arise.
- 8) Firewood Distribution
  - a. Harvest, forward, and process approximately 100 cords of firewood material for clients of the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP).
  - b. Assist in the organization of volunteers involved in the splitting and distribution of accumulated firewood material during the January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 timeframe.

**FACILITIES:**

1. At the Van Hook Wetlands, in the northwest corner of the property, install an access trail (decomposed granite surface) that proceeds south from Silsbee Avenue for an approximate distance of 200 feet to a viewing platform that will be supported by a treated wood retaining wall. The viewing platform will either be constructed from compacted granite or treated lumber. If the City's Parks Department elects to install with mechanized equipment, an assessment of the associated environmental impact will be completed.
2. Install informational signs on the Van Hook Viewing Platform.
3. Facilitate the installation of two-four disc golf holes by Disc Golf Helena to be located in the SW corner of Govt. Lot 1, Section 4, T. 9 N., R. 3 W., Lewis & Clark County, MT (Donaldson Property).
4. Install an informational kiosk adjacent to the SW corner of the Disc Golf Parking Area (Donaldson Property) near the intersection of Saddle Drive and Cabernet Drive intended for the display of a map of the Saddle Drive Disc Golf Course, Fire Danger Ratings and any additional information deemed necessary.
5. Research potential to improve safety and security at trailheads in response to recent theft and vandalism at trailheads.

**FENCE CONSTRUCTION & REMOVAL:**

1. To prevent ongoing private land trespass activities associated with City open lands system trail use, install approximately 2,000 feet of post and rail fencing on the western & southern borders of the SW ¼, Section 31, T. 10 N., R. 03 W., Lewis & Clark County, MT & the eastern side of the Little Moab Trail in the N1/2NE1/4SW1/4, Section 31, T. 10 N., R. 03 W., Lewis & Clark County, MT

2. Install post and rail fence along approximately 550 feet of the northeastern corner boundary of the Donaldson property to detour persistent vehicular trespass activity.
3. Install approximately 600 feet of post and rail fence in the SW corner of Govt. Lot 1, Section 4, T. 9 N., R. 3 W., Lewis & Clark County, MT (Donaldson Property).
4. Identify sections of dysfunctional wire fence occurring upon City of Helena open lands properties and schedule removal.

#### **BOUNDARY IDENTIFICATION:**

1. Verify open lands boundaries as budgets allow. Prioritize open lands boundary identification needs according to program of work and emerging management issues.
2. Install boundary identification posts at approximate 100-foot intervals where encroachment situations are identified.

#### **TRAIL IMPROVEMENT AND RECLAMATION (PARKS DEPARTMENT STAFF):**

1. Install a supportive structure on the downslope side of a rocky portion of the Aftershock Trail to retain fill material required to level the trail tread.
2. Install rolling drainage dips on road (double track) sections of the Eagle Scout, Easy Rider, Meat Loaf & Catch Up trails to repair/prevent erosive gulying that occurs during the spring snowmelt and summer thunderstorm seasons. If the City's Parks Department elects to install the drain dips with mechanized equipment, an assessment of the associated environmental impact will be completed.
3. Utilize a grass seed mixture containing one or more of the following native grasses: Slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus* ssp. *trachycaulus*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis* variety Joseph or Nez Perce), Bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum* or *Pseudoroegenaria spicata* var Goldar)/
  1. Monitor previously seeded areas.

#### **VOLUNTEER TRAIL WORK:**

1. Trail Improvement – Montana Bicycle Guild:
  - a. Install two wood features on the southern face of Mt Ascension. One feature consisting of a wooden berm located on the eastern directional trail, and a second feature consisting of a wooden ramp leading onto, and off, a natural rock feature on the western directional trail (The installation of the aforementioned wood features was presented to Helena City Commission on 11-14-2018 and approved

on 11-28-2018 – because this has already been approved, work may already be in progress).

2. Trial Improvement – Prickly Pear Land Trust
  1. Powerline:
    - a. Clean sediment traps & transfer accumulated material to eroded areas.
    - b. Repair and reconstruct rock water-bars to aid pedestrian passage.
    - c. Repair pedestrian damage caused by the bypass of rock water-bars and orient rock material to discourage excessive migration of the trail surface.
  2. No Trail:
    - a. Clean sediment traps & transfer accumulated material to eroded areas.
    - b. Enhance existing drainage features as deemed appropriate.
  3. Daisy Hill, Bitterroot Way, Quarry:
    - a. Recruit soil material from adjacent terrain and fill/level eroded areas occurring within impacted trail segments.
    - b. Install additional drainage features where deemed appropriate.
    - c. Seed & reclaim segments of the trail that have been artificially widened by pedestrian traffic. Grass seed will be provided by the City.
  4. Old Chevy & Road to Mars:
    - a. Recruit soil material from adjacent terrain and fill/level eroded areas occurring within impacted trail segments.
    - b. Enhance existing drainage features as deemed appropriate.
  5. McKelvey & Dump:
    - a. Clean sediment traps & transfer accumulated material to eroded areas.
    - b. Recruit soil material from adjacent terrain and fill/level eroded areas occurring within impacted trail segments.
    - c. Enhance existing drainage features as deemed appropriate.
  6. Lower Prospect Shafts:
    - a. Clean sediment traps & transfer accumulated material to eroded areas.
    - b. Recruit soil material from adjacent terrain and fill/level eroded areas occurring within impacted trail segments.
    - c. Enhance existing drainage features as deemed appropriate.
  7. Ambrose:
    - a. Seed & reclaim segments of the trail that have been artificially widened by pedestrian traffic. Grass seed will be provided by the City.
    - b. Prune tree limbs that are obstructing the trail.
    - c. Excavate and remove tree stumps located adjacent to the trail tread that are deemed to be a safety hazard.
  8. Swaney & Prairie:
    - a. Seed & reclaim segments of the trail that have been artificially widened by pedestrian traffic.
      - i. Grass seed will be provided by City.
    - b. Prune tree limbs that are obstructing the trail.
  9. Lower Prickly Pear:
    - a. Clean sediment traps & transfer accumulated material to eroded areas.

- b. Recruit soil material from adjacent terrain and fill/level eroded areas occurring within impacted trail segments.
  - c. Enhance existing drainage features as deemed appropriate.
- 10. Bompert Connector:
  - a. Widen trail segments that have developed a narrow tread width.
  - b. Level trail segments that have excessively out-sloped surfaces.
  - c. Enhance existing drainage features as deemed appropriate.
- 11. Entertainment:
  - a. Shape and configure that portion of the trail that is located downslope from its intersection with the aftershock Trail to effectively convert an old two track jeep trail into a single track trail.
- 12. Bull Run Trail (Gold Rush to California Portion):
  - a. Transport and distribute decomposed granite material onto the trail surface by using wheel barrows to transport and dump. City staff will stage the granitic material at a point on Gold Rush Avenue that is within close proximity to the intersection of the Bull Run Trail & Gold Rush Avenue.
- 13. Miscellaneous Tasks: (Prickly Pear Land Trust)
  - a. Coordinate volunteer activities (Workdays, Boy Scouts, Corporate and NGO's, Weed Pull events, etc.)

**PROPERTY ACQUISITION/EXCHANGE:**

1. Assist in the completion of property acquisition grant applications as opportunities become available.
2. Respond to public and partnership requests regarding potential purchase/sale/exchange of open lands properties.
3. Complete and implement Whyte Property acquisition and assessment.

**WEED MANAGEMENT:**

1. Noxious Weed Treatment and Public Education
  - a. Coordinate groups for weed pulls throughout the summer. (PPLT Weed Social).
  - b. Create a webpage educating public on the city's integrated pest management program and practices.
    - i. Include control method selection.
    - ii. Information on biocontrol agents.
    - iii. Weed identification stress importance on identifying new invaders early detection and eradication.
    - iv. Grant opportunities available to property owners.
    - v. General information regarding herbicides and its effects on targeted plants such as some plant may flower but won't produce viable seed.
    - vi. Post proposed annual treatment locations
  - c. Monitoring/mapping
    - i. Visit set locations and identify weed infestations for treatment.

- ii. Train volunteers on mapping and monitoring techniques.
  - iii. Setup mapping applications for volunteers to enter data.
- 2. Weed pulls
  - a. Schedule and participate in weed pulls on open lands.
  - b. Look to continue the Department of Agriculture Adopt-A-Trailhead program
    - i. An example of this includes: The Old Shooting Range area was adopted by the Department of Agriculture in memory of Greg Ames. They guarantee to pull weeds 2 times a year)
  - c. Look to increase events per year with assistance of PPLT
- 3. Herbicide
  - a. Treat approximately 150 acres or more based on annual funding amount.
  - b. Implement a targeted spot treatment program focusing on small infestations along high traffic corridors such as trails or trailheads.
  - c. Target fuel reduction units and pretreat if possible.
  - d. Prioritize high use access routes.
- 4. Biocontrol:
  - a. Participate in insects collections for Dalmatian Toadflax, Leafy Spurge, and Spotted Knapweed coordinated by the state bio control coordinator.
  - b. Assist in monitoring of insect release sites for potential collection.
  - c. Mark an additional 10-15 past release sites.
  - d. Update insect release map and include newly marked sites.