



# Sustainability and Recycling

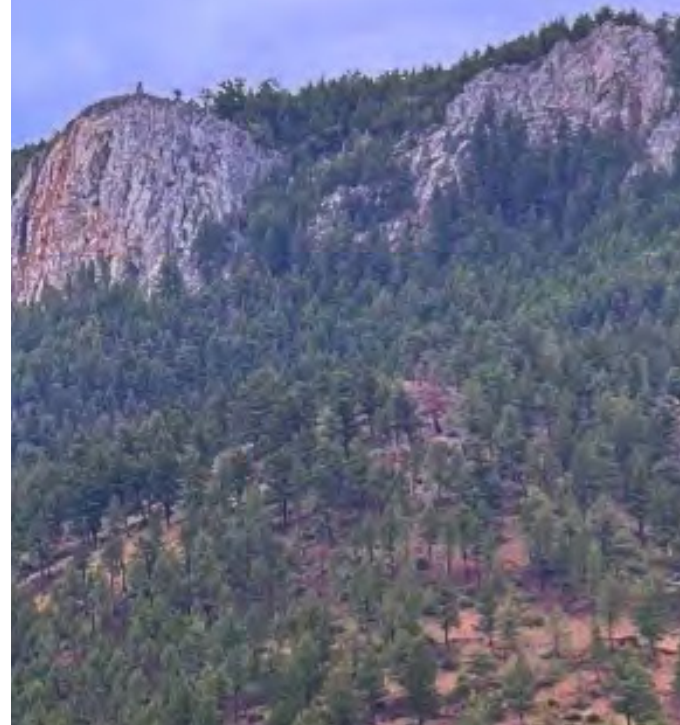
## Growing Resilience: Stewarding Helena's Forests for Generations to Come

The City of Helena Open Lands Division has a long history of stewarding the timbered foothills surrounding our community. Helena's open lands have seen many seasons – from timber and resource extraction to community efforts to restore the fire-ravaged hillsides of Mount Helena, to an era of preservation and forest regeneration on Helena's southern and western flanks.

These preservation efforts were followed by national wildland fire-suppression policies in response to the 1910 fires, which ultimately altered the forest ecosystems of Helena's South Hills. Forest fires regulate tree density and fuel accumulation by periodically thinning regrowth and removing fuels from the forest floor. Without these naturally occurring fires, Helena's wildland-urban interface became dominated by dense stands of stressed and unhealthy trees.

Local fire officials recognized the perilous forest conditions developing at the city's doorstep, and alerted Helena's civic leaders to the need for action. In 2002, Helena recruited Peter Kolb, a Montana State University forestry specialist, to develop an integrated open-space forest management plan. Upon its completion in 2004, the plan became the blueprint for the City's Open Lands Management Plan. The elements of nature proved quicker than the wheels of government. Before action on the plan could be taken, thousands of dead and dying trees appeared across Helena's southern and western skylines, announcing the arrival of the mountain pine beetle. This dramatic change was the catalyst that convinced the community that the forested hillsides were not sustainable in their present condition. With the familiar forests surrounding our community dying, the City of Helena Parks Department received approval in 2009 to implement a forest restoration strategy. The strategy sought to proactively manage forest density and associated fuel loads, while increasing forest resiliency in the face of future wildfire events, forest insects and pathogen outbreaks, and varying weather conditions. This work had to be accomplished while concurrently supporting long-term biodiversity, clean water, and the recreational needs of Helena residents.

Since 2009, Helena's Open Lands Division has worked diligently to ensure that these community treasures remain healthy and resilient. Multiple wildfire events, windstorms, forest insect infestations, and periods of drought have tested the resiliency of the City's efforts. Fortunately, the time-tested and science-based forest management practices that Helena utilizes have increased the ability of our forest ecosystem to withstand climate stress, resist forest pests, and recover from wildfires. The restoration and preservation of Helena's open lands require continued vision, vigilance, and a community committed to ensuring these forests remain a legacy for generations to come.





## Giving Great Gear a Second Life - Why Secondhand September Matters

Every fall, the City of Helena Transfer Station and the Lewis and Clark County Landfill receive massive surge in perfectly good, usable household items and clothing. As seasons change and kids head back to class, standard clean-out routines often send heavy volumes straight into the waste stream.

**Secondhand September** is all about shifting that habit. By choosing to reuse, repair, donate, or shop pre-loved items this month, we keep valuable materials circulating in our local economy and out of our landfill. Small choices across our neighborhoods add up to thousands of pounds diverted.

### Community Action & Getting Involved

**Back-to-School Swaps:** Skip the big-box lines and organize a neighborhood or dorm wardrobe swap. Kids outgrow winter coats, athletic gear, and boots long before they wear out.

**Declutter with Purpose:** Sort your fall clean-out into clear categories: Keep, Repair, Donate, or Swap. If an item is clean and functional, find it a home through direct donation or local online community boards.

**Shop Local Thrift & Vintage:** Support our community non-profit thrift stores and consignment shops for fall wardrobe updates, home goods, and school supplies.

**Fix-It First:** Before tossing a desk lamp, backpack with a broken zipper, or wooden chair, check out local repair resources or online tutorials to restore it.

## Resource Guide

| Destination/<br>Resource:                | Best For:                                          | Landfill Diversion<br>Impact                                               |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local Thrift Stores & Consignment        | Clothing, books, houseware, seasonal décor         | Keeps textiles and ceramics out of heavy waste streams                     |
| Community Freecycle & Buy Nothing Groups | Back-to-school furniture, dorm supplies, toys      | Direct neighbor-to-neighbor reuse with zero packaging                      |
| Local Building Supplies Outlets          | Leftover home improvement gear, hardware, fixtures | Diversion of heavy, non-decomposable goods                                 |
| Textile Drop-Boxes & Clean Rag Programs  | Worn-out clothing, towels, unwearable fabrics      | Diverts worn textiles from landfill to industrial rag/insulation recycling |



## Fall Latex Paint Exchange: Sept. 23 – Oct. 7

### *Pass on the Paint!*

Do you have leftover paint from a summer project or want to score free supplies for your next DIY? Our Fall Latex Paint Exchange is back! Join your neighbors in saving money, decluttering, and keeping usable materials out of the landfill.

### How It Works

Have extra paint? Transfer Station permit holders can drop off usable latex paint to give it a second life. Need paint? Any resident can drop by and take home available inventory for free!

### Event Snapshot

**Where:** The Transfer Station | **When:** September 23 – October 7 | **Hours:** Daily, 8:00 AM – 4:15 PM

### Acceptance Guidelines

**Accepted:** Good, usable latex paint only.

**Not Accepted:** Oil-based paints, stains, solvents, rusted cans, or frozen/clumped paint.

**Availability:** First-come, first-served! Stock depends entirely on community donations.

### What About Unusable Paint?

Safely prepare unusable paint for regular disposal with three simple steps:

1. **Solidify:** Let it air-dry completely, or stir in kitty litter, sawdust, or dirt until hard.
2. **Bag:** Double bag the hardened paint securely.
3. **Dispose:** Toss it in your regular trash or drop it off at the Transfer Station.





## Now Accepting Used Cooking Oil!

The City of Helena Transfer Station is excited to announce that used cooking oil is now being accepted for recycling! Residential users can recycle up to five gallons of cooking oil per customer, per day, at the designated area in the Transfer Station.

### Instructions for Recycling:

**Cooking Oil Only:** Make sure oil is free of food residue by running it through a strainer or cheesecloth before dropping it off. Keep oil free of water and other contaminants.

**Disposable Container:** When dropping off oil, be sure to leave it in a disposable container, as you will not get the container back.

**Drop Off:** Leave container in the designated used cooking oil space, next to automotive batteries at the Transfer Station Recycling Area.

Once the used cooking oil has been dropped off, staff pours the oil into a collection tank which is then picked up and recycled into animal feed through Full Circle Biofuels.



## Helena Water Usage: June - July 2026

|                 | June  | July  |
|-----------------|-------|-------|
| Ten Mile        | 162.1 | 193.4 |
| Eureka          | 16.8  | 17.21 |
| Missouri River  | 60.4  | 97.5  |
| Monthly Total   | 239.3 | 308.1 |
| Peak Day Demand | 7.5   | 12.1  |
| Average Day     | 8.0   | 9.9   |

Comparison in millions of gallons. Differences between treatment plant outputs are typically due to maintenance or the need to utilize additional water sources as natural water flow fluctuates throughout the year.

### Want to see more from us?

Go to [www.helenamt.gov/Sustainability](http://www.helenamt.gov/Sustainability) to sign up for our monthly newsletter.

Follow the City of Helena on Facebook and Instagram!

Join City of Helena staff at the Farmers Market most Saturday mornings to answer your questions, share information about city services, and connect with the community. You can find our booth at the corner of Fuller and Neill Avenue.

## Transfer Station Hours

**CLOSED SEPTEMBER 7 FOR  
LABOR DAY**

Open daily, 8 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

Vehicles must be unloaded and  
out of the facility by 4:30 p.m.

