# Sustainability and Recycling

Mt. Helena and Mt. Ascension City Parks: A Jewel of Community Sustainability & Resilience

Helena's open lands hold precious scenic, cultural and recreational values. The City of Helena currently owns and manages over 1,950 acres of undeveloped parkland. Whether you use the trails around Helena to get rowdy on your mountain bike, challenge yourself with a hike or trail run, enjoy a leisurely walk with friends and family, or take a few minutes to yourself with a nice view, the hills that surround the City and Helena's trail system are a significant part of the glue that bonds us as a community. Acquiring that land and maintaining a healthy forest is a story of forethought, community partnerships, and hard work, combined with implementing the most current science and land management techniques–all of which continue today.

Community sustainability focuses on developing, maintaining, and nurturing a community's resources to ensure well-being for current and future generations, striking a balance between environmental protection, economic prosperity, and social equity.
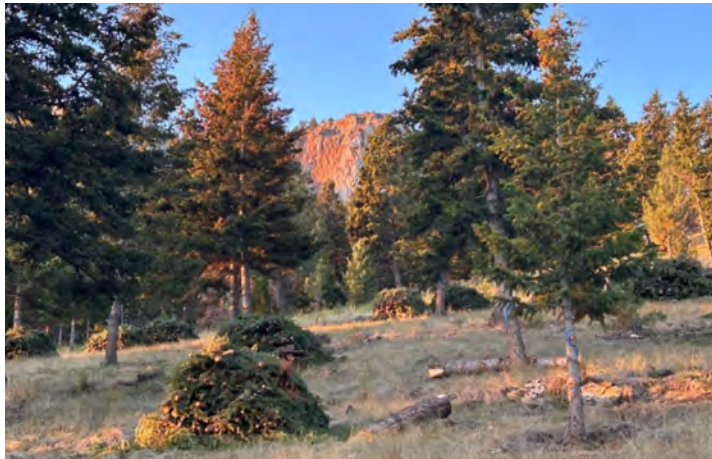
Actively managing Helena's open lands to support healthy forests makes the City more resilient to wildfire and flooding, prevents infestations of forest insects and disease, provides a healthy and free recreational outlet for all, and opens opportunities for local businesses to cater to both local and visiting recreationists.

Beginning August 4, the City of Helena initiated an extensive two-month-long fuel reduction project in the City's natural parks. Hand crews have been thinning forested areas in the western portion of Mount Helena City Park and the north face of Mount Ascension Natural Park.

Trees designated with a blue flag affixed to their trunk will be pruned to a height of 6-8 feet. Crews will reduce tree crown densities by felling trees inside thinning units delineated by pink flags and not designated with a blue flag.

Thinning and pruning opens the forest and prevents a grass fire from igniting ladder fuels (bushes, shrubs, low branches) that can lead to fires in the crowns of the trees, thus preventing a catastrophic wildfire event.

Felled trees are segmented and assembled into slash piles to burn when conditions allow. Citizen volunteer groups will rake and seed the burned areas to ensure re-vegetation and minimize weed growth. Some felled logs will remain in place to support wildlife habitat and micro-climate establishment, thereby enhancing vegetative diversity. The thinning contract requires remaining felled logs to have lengthwise saw cuts to dry out the cambial layer that beetles like to feed on, further preventing future beetle and other insect infestations.

The goal of these thinning activities is to have a result that mimics the more open structure of what this forest was historically, where low intensity wildfires occurred with a higher frequency.

These photos compare an area where fuel reduction treatments have been implemented and where they have not.

Helena's Green Future: A Look at the City's Latest Sustainability Projects

As summer winds down, the City of Helena is looking ahead to a more sustainable and energy-efficient future. Here are a few exciting projects the city is working on to make that happen.

Solar Power at Bill Roberts Golf Course
The Bill Roberts Golf Course is now home to a new solar array! These panels were installed to offset over 80% of the electrical usage at Muni's Sports Grille. The project also includes a solar-powered light at the entrance, which will improve visibility for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, especially during the darker winter months. A ribbon-cutting ceremony for this project is coming soon.

Boosting the Residential Energy Efficiency Program
The Residential Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Loan Program just received a $96,000 boost. These additional funds will give more residents the chance to get a zero-interest loan of up to $12,000 to install renewable energy systems in their homes. For more information on this program, visit www.helenamt.gov/sustainability/

Making Glass Recycling More Efficient
Recycling glass in the city is about to get a lot more efficient. The City of Helena is purchasing a new glass crusher, which will allow glass to be processed locally instead of being shipped all the way to Salt Lake City. The crushed glass will be used by the Ashgrove Cement Plant. For every ton of crushed glass provided, the factory won't have to mine two tons of silica!

These are just a few of the projects underway. To learn more about the City's sustainability efforts, visit www.helenamt.gov/sustainability/ and click the City Sustainability Projects tab.

The Latex Paint Exchange is Back!

Are you looking to get rid of some latex paint, or are you in need of some for your next project? You're in luck! The fall Latex Paint Exchange is happening from September 17 to October 1 at the Transfer Station.

This is a great chance for residents with a Transfer Station permit to drop off any usable latex paint they no longer need. This paint will then be available for other residents to pick up for free. It's a win-win: you can declutter your garage, and your neighbors can save some money and reduce waste!

Please remember, only usable latex paint will be accepted. We cannot take oil-based paints, stains, solvents, or other liquids. The paint available for pickup will depend entirely on what is dropped off.

For paint that is no longer usable, you can dispose of it by letting it dry out completely or by solidifying it with kitty litter, sawdust, dirt, etc. Once solid, double-bag it and either take it to the Transfer Station or put it in your regular garbage.

Helena Recycling: July 2024 vs. 2025

All numbers are in tons	July 2024	July 2025
Aluminum/Tin/Glass/Plastics	32.3	15.5
Paper	3.7	5.8
E-Waste	2.2	0
Scrap Metal	16.3	56.6
Cardboard	56.9	86.2
Auto Batteries	2.3	2.8
Lithium Batteries	0	0
Oil/Antifreeze	0	14
Grass/Leaves/Wood Chips/Bio-Solids/X-mas Trees/Food	87.9	30.9

Helena Water Usage: June-August Comparison

City of Helena water usage comparison in millions of gallons, June-August 2025. 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.

	Ten Mile	Eureka	Missouri River	Monthly Total	Peak Day Demand	Average Day
June	170.7	26.7	79.5	276.9	9.6	9.2
July	128.1	20	176.1	324.2	11.8	10.5
August	126.5	19.6	157.2	303.3	11.7	9.8

Transfer Station Hours
Open daily, 8 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.
Vehicles must be unloaded and out of the facility by 4:30 p.m.