

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release through August 31, 2016

City to begin native forest restoration on Broadway Island

Broadway Island, a six-acre undeveloped park in the Clark Fork River, is getting a makeover this fall as Parks and Recreation crews remove harmful invasive trees and replace them with young native trees and hundreds of saplings to restore the island's natural riparian habitat and improve public recreation access.

The project is designed to help improve water quality, reduce erosion, attract birds and other wildlife and enhance recreational opportunities along the river. The island rehab is part of a multi-year native forest restoration project on all City-owned parcels along the Clark Fork.

According to Parks and Recreation Conservation Lands Manager Morgan Valliant, Broadway Island has been overrun with non-native tree species like Siberian elm, golden willow and Norway maple. Valliant says these species are especially good at displacing native trees and have a destabilizing effect on the river's entire ecosystem.

"Non-native invasives degrade habitat, increase erosion, provide few resources to native animals, and greatly reduce native plant and animal diversity. We're working to restore the island's natural ecosystem and allow it to thrive. The project will transition the forest from one dominated by a handful of non-native trees back to a diverse native black cottonwood forest," Valliant said.

City crews will remove the majority of the invasive trees this month during Phase 1 of the project. Replacement trees will be planted this fall and next spring, and will include native species like ponderosa pine, black cottonwood, Douglas fir, black hawthorn and Rocky Mountain juniper. Plantings will also include a wide variety of native shrubs like chokecherry, serviceberry, golden currant, snowberry

and woods rose. The Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) is funding the purchase of all native plant materials for the project.

Phase 2 of the project, which includes removal of any remaining non-native trees, will occur later when the new plantings are thriving, Valliant said. "To reduce impacts on wildlife and the public, the native trees and shrubs planted in Phase 1 should be well-established before we remove the remaining invasive species trees in Phase 2."

The island, located near the 1100 block of West Broadway, was purchased by the City through the MRA in 2011 and designated as City open space in 2013. Parks and Recreation partnered with MRA and an environmental consulting firm to develop a management plan for the island to preserve it as a public recreation area.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has issued a Montana Stream Protection permit for the project, based on the City's plan to minimize impacts on the river.

Since 2008, Parks and Recreation's Conservation Lands Management program has planted thousands of native tree and shrub saplings and removed hundreds of invasive trees and shrubs all along the City's river corridor in an effort to restore the native riparian forests. Multiple areas around the city, including the Clark Fork Natural area, Kim Williams trail, Greenough Park and Takima Park provide examples where phased removals of non-native trees, followed by successive replanting of native trees and shrubs have successfully restored native forests.

For more information about these projects, visit www.missoulaparks.org.

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Media note: Parks and Recreation crews will begin tree removals at the site on Wednesday, August 17. Call Morgan Valliant at 552-6263 for more information.