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## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

For immediate release through March 29, 2020

### **Mount Jumbo South Zone Closure Extended to March 30**

Parks and Recreation, in consultation with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, has extended the Mount Jumbo winter wildlife closure to protect wintering elk. The south zone, which includes all points south of the Saddle Road, will re-open to public use on Monday, March 30, weather permitting. The area traditionally opens March 15.

Law enforcement can cite those who violate the winter closure for trespassing, resulting in fines and penalties. Residents are asked to help protect wildlife by calling 911 to report closure violations.

About 80-90 elk have been frequenting Jumbo's South Zone this winter. Conservation Lands Manager Morgan Valliant says the City has extended the closure to protect wildlife six times since 2013. The extension gives the herd a few extra weeks to recover from the harsh winter, and replenish their depleted energy reserves without human and dog disturbance.

Jumbo's elk come out of winter in the poorest physical condition they will be in all year, according to FWP Wildlife Biologist Liz Bradley. "The spring green-up provides a flush of much-needed nutrition for elk and other ungulates after months of eating lower quality food," Bradley says.

"However, even with the milder winter, we're still not seeing significant green-up of vegetation yet. Green-up starts at the lowest elevations and moves higher as the snow melts and temperatures increase. Elk follow the green-up and move up higher as more habitat becomes available. During March, even in mild weather years, elk are still often on their winter range and areas of early green-up. People are always eager to get back on Mount Jumbo when the weather warms up in the spring, but we try to find an appropriate balance between protecting the elk's needs with those of recreationists," she added.

The City conducts an inter-agency review with Montana FWP when considering changes to the regular closure dates, taking into account weather conditions, the rate of spring vegetation growth, and the movements of wildlife on the mountain. The adopted management plans for Mount Jumbo and all City conservation lands mandate the annual wildlife protection closures.

Mount Jumbo's North Zone (all points north of the Saddle Road) will remain closed until May 1 or later. The Saddle Road bisects Mount Jumbo's conservation lands and can be reached at the north end of Lincoln Hills Drive.

The "L" trail and the US West easement road will remain open. Hikers must stay on the designated trails only; off-trail travel is prohibited. Dogs must be leashed on the "L" trail during the winter closure. For closure maps and more information, visit [missoulaparks.org](http://missoulaparks.org) or phone 721-PARK.

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