

Minutes from Upper Rattlesnake Leadership Team (URLT) Ice Cream Social and General Meeting

Wednesday, August 21, 2024, 6:00 – 7:30

Pineview Park, 1010 Pineview Drive

1. URLT co-chairs Terri Roach and Andrea Stierle welcomed everyone to the ice cream social and general meeting.
2. Shannon Therriault, *Director of Environmental Health for Missoula County*, spoke about the Bear Smart program. She described a bear hazard assessment that took place recently, where it was discovered that 49% of the issues with bears are related to garbage. As a result, bear-resistant garbage containers are now mandatory in Rattlesnake Creek and Grant Creek, which have the most bear activity in Missoula. This is Phase One of a plan which will eventually be implemented throughout Missoula. She noted that it's important to use the bear-resistant containers correctly and asked the audience to let her know if neighbors might need help with that.
3. Chris Servheen, *a professional wildlife biologist*, followed up and reminded us that we live in bear habitat, that the bears were here first. He added that although garbage is the main issue, 16% of the problem is caused by birdfeeders. He offered suggestions: put a hummingbird feeder 10 feet up; if you do have birdfeeders, put electric fences around your home; if you have apple trees, bring the fruit into your home; if you don't want those apples, get rid of the tree. 120 bears have been seen in Missoula over the past couple of years; if they are moved 30 miles away, they come right back, and sometimes need to be euthanized. He stated they are mostly black bears, but there are also a few grizzly bears. He gave a shout-out to Missoula, which is the largest U.S. city to adopt Bear Smart.
4. Tess Sneeringer, *Recreation Program Supervisor at City of Missoula's Parks & Recreation*, spoke about bike safety. She reminded bikers that they are supposed to stop for hikers, that everybody yields to horses, and that most trails in Missoula are multi-use. She also said that mud season can cause problems and if you are leaving a rut on the trail, don't go there. Also – warn people “on your left” or “on your right” if you are coming up behind them, and she added that if you are riding your bike on a road, then you must follow the same rules as a car does. If you are on a sidewalk, then you must follow pedestrian rules.
5. Tim Jacobs, *Chair of the Board for CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)* first asked for a show of hands as to who was prepared for the Missoula windstorm on July 24th. Not surprisingly, nobody raised their hands! However, he spoke about the importance of having a volunteer emergency team in place and stated the team is always looking for new volunteers. Jacobs encouraged everyone to go to Missoula Cert.org to find out more, sign up, and check out the training manual. The group also has in-person meetings every second Wednesday.

6. Nick Holloway, *Deputy DES Coordinator with Missoula County for the Office of Emergency Management (OEM)*, spoke about emergency preparedness and getting ready to evacuate. He noted that OEM has been very busy this summer: first with the Horse Gulch Fire in Helena, which had an evacuation warning followed by an evacuation order. Second was the Butler Creek Fire, which involved a very difficult night-time evacuation. The third emergency was the July 24 windstorm, with a lot of sheltering in place, followed by power outages, in some cases for 8 days. OEM's main focus here is on people dependent on power for medical devices. He encouraged everyone to have a plan in place ahead of time for evacuation and spoke of the 6 Ps: people & pets, papers, prescriptions, pictures, personal computer and plastic (credit cards). He spoke finally about the importance of signing up for SMART911, our emergency alert system.
7. Jeani Alonso-Adams, *Transportation Committee Representative for the URLT*, reported that the county has received a grant to work on the Lolo Street bridge and the city and county are currently working on the design. There will likely be raised sidewalks and bike lanes on the north and south sides of the bridge. Also lower Lincoln Hills Drive is on the City's radar for improvements; it needs safety enhancements, especially for people walking and biking along the street. The Syringa Bike Park Proposed Safety Improvements were sent to the City in October, 2023. She reported also on PROST ((Parks, Open Space and Trails), that their master planning process is in place, and encouraged everyone to submit comments at the Engage Missoula website. The next Transportation Committee meeting will take place on September 10 at 4:00 in the Blackfoot room of the library.
8. The minutes of the July 30 Upper Rattlesnake Leadership Team meeting were approved.
9. The next meeting of the Upper Rattlesnake Leadership Team will take place on September 17 at 4:00 at Messiah Church.