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# PRESS RELEASE

For immediate through April 7, 2014

## Mount Jumbo South Zone Closure Extended to April 7

To protect wintering elk, most of Mount Jumbo's south zone will remain closed through Sunday, April 6. However, the "L" trail and the US West easement road will re-open to the public on Tuesday, April 1. Hikers must stay on the designated trails only—off-trail travel is prohibited. Dogs must be leashed on the "L" trail and US West road during the winter closure. Mount Jumbo's North Zone remains closed until May 1.

With heavy snowpack in the higher and mid-elevations, the elk on Mount Jumbo have extended their winter stay in the South Zone, according to wildlife biologist Vickie Edwards of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP.) Edwards conducted an aerial survey on March 25 and observed 61 elk on top of Mount Jumbo, with a total of 97 elk observed in the North and South Zones.

"These numbers are the highest FWP has observed on the mountain since 2011 when the previous high count was 91. The bump in numbers is not surprising however, because the heavy snowpack concentrates elk only in accessible portions of their winter ranges. Unfortunately this year, spring green-up is running later than usual and the snowpack has remained relatively constant, limiting the "groceries" available for elk to consume," Edwards says. The Jumbo elk need the habitat and undisturbed security of the South Zone to conserve and replenish their energy supply during the extended winter season, she added.

The winter closure helps Mount Jumbo's elk herd conserve their critical energy reserves at a time when they need it most. Elk view people and their pets as predators, and will run from them, using up the energy they need to survive and reproduce. The winter closure also helps keep the "wild" in wildlife. As elk become more habituated to people, they more likely they are to lose the characteristics that make them part of the natural environment, according to Montana FWP.

(more)

Edwards says March and April are critical times for elk because they are in an energy deficit after burning excessive calories throughout the winter. Also, pregnant cow elk are in their last trimester of pregnancy, with their fetuses rapidly gaining weight and developing. Many research projects have shown that calf survivability is closely related to birth weights: higher birth weights indicated a greater chance of survival. During the spring, cow elk are trying to recoup that energy loss and provide nutrition for growing fetuses by consuming erupting green vegetation.

Violations of the Mount Jumbo winter closure are punishable by fine. Please call 911 to report closure violations. Vehicle license plates or other identifying characteristics will help law enforcement issue citations to those who violate the closure.

The Mount Jumbo winter closure is mandated by the Mount Jumbo Management Plan and the City Conservation Lands Management plan, both of which were adopted by the City Council after extensive public processes. The City conducts an inter-agency review with Montana FWP and others when considering adaptations to the regular closure dates. The South Zone closure may be extended again based on weather conditions and movements of the elk herd. For more information, visit [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org) or phone 721-PARK.

Media Note:

Map Attached.

Photos of Jumbo Elk at <https://app.box.com/s/xk30ne4in5bk1p76ftc4>

Please credit "courtesy of Montana FWP." Thanks.

(end)



## 2014 CLOSURE DATES

South Zone closure  
extended through 4/6.

North Zone closed.  
Projected opening date  
5/1/14.