

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT

April 14, 2010

9:05–10:00 am

140 West Pine Street

Members Present: Marilyn Marler (chair), Pam Walzer, Dave Strohmaier, Bob Jaffe, Dick Haines, Renee Mitchell, Ed Childers, Jon Wilkins, Stacy Rye, Lyn Hellegaard, and Roy Houseman

Members Absent:

Others Present: Ben Carson, Morgan Valliant

I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

A. Approve minutes.

Minutes of March 24, 2010 were approved as submitted.

II. FINAL CONSIDERATION AGENDA ITEMS

III. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS –

IV. Resolution accepting a \$125,000 DNRC grant to manage Mountain Pine Beetle and authorize the Mayor to sign all documents related to the Montana DNRC grant to utilize \$125,000 for the Mountain Pine Beetle Project ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Morgan Valliant) (Referred to committee: 04/12/2010)(**REMOVE FROM AGENDA**)

MOTION: The Committee recommends Council adopt a [resolution](#) accepting a \$125,000 DNRC grant to manage Mountain Pine Beetle and authorize the Mayor to sign all documents such as pruning, chipping, Verbenone packets, a chipper procurement, cutting, trimming, tree treatment to support efforts to minimize impacts in the Missoula Valley.

Morgan Valliant (Conservation Lands Manager) and Ben Carson (Urban Forester) provided an update on the City's efforts to minimize the impact of the Mountain Pine Beetle on Missoula's forest. See additional details on the update in the regular agenda item.

Morgan – staff inventoried trees on the valley floor to determine the extent of the pine beetle problem. This was done with help from the Montana Department of Natural Resources, who also provided information on a grant opportunity through the DNRC. It was agreed that the inventory work could count as in kind match toward the grant. There were 184 acres inventoried in various turf parks, the lower Rattlesnake and the South Hills. Staff was also able to thin 20 acres this winter.

The Parks Department was successful in securing the DNRC Grant and this referral is to have the committee recommend the Mayor sign the grant and all documents related to the proposal. This is a plan which will occur over a three year period and include the inventory of the 170 acres on conservation lands and in house thinning project of 55 acres. The Department will also partner with the Montana Conservation Corp for chainsaw training of 30 acres in the next three years.

The City Fire Department has had \$20,000 in grant funding to purchase a chipper. The DNRC grant will provide an additional \$20,000 toward the purchase of the chipper, which will be used by the Fire Department for community chipping days and structure protection. The Parks Department will use the chipper on the thinning of the infected pine trees. The grant will also help purchase Verbenone packets which will be used on large diameter pines, or legacy trees. The packets deter the pine beetle from infecting the tree.

This proposal outlines a plan to inventory (255 ac.) and selectively thin (192.5 ac.) ponderosa pine forests across City of Missoula-owned parkland and open space. Missoula Parks Department requests \$125,000 from the DNRC and will provide \$125,128 in matching funds to complete this project.

Table 1, IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS: *includes all cost for Park's labor, DNRC staff labor, volunteer labor, materials, equipment operation/maintenance, equipment purchase and cash in hand. Except for winter 2009-2010 inventories and thinning/removals, all work will be completed between March 2010 and March 2013.*

	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Labor cost/ac.</u>	<u>Equipment operation & maintenance cost</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Winter 2009-10 inventory	184	\$15	\$200	\$2,960
Winter 2009-10 Thinning/Removals	20	\$705	\$4007	\$18,107
Inventory to be complete by City of Missoula. Staff	71	\$15	\$75	\$1,140
Thinning to be completed by City of Missoula. Staff	55	\$705	\$11,621	\$50,396
Thinning volunteered by Mt. Conservation Corps	30	\$334	\$2405	\$12,425
Private Donations for Thinning & Burning on Jumbo Saddle	9	\$1333.33	\$0	\$12,000
DNRC Staff Salary for Consultations				\$3,600
Missoula. City Fire Contribution for purchase of a new chipper				\$20,000
Purchase of Verbenone packets to protect Legacy trees				\$4,500
TOTAL IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS:				\$125,128

All forest thinning described in Table 1 will be in areas which are easily accessible for vehicles and equipment. A significant portion of the thinning to be completed on Mt. Jumbo is on adverse terrain inaccessible to equipment. Eighty percent of the grant funds we are requesting for this project will be used for contracting private forestry crews to thin, pile and burn ponderosa pine on adverse terrain (Table 2).

With the recent closures of local mills that purchased and processed small diameter trees, disposal of waste from thinning projects has become a problem. The Missoula City Fire Department has secured \$20,000 for the purchase of a community chipper for the Missoula Valley. Purchase of this chipper would allow the City of Missoula to aggressively address MPB infestations and wildfire danger within the wild land urban interface. We are requesting \$20,000 in grant funds to purchase this chipper (Table 2).

The Missoula Parks Department is also requesting \$2950 in supplies and materials to cover the cost of two chainsaws with personal protective equipment (\$1450) and purchase of a limited number of Verbenone packets (\$1500).

Table 2. GRANT FUNDS: *includes all cost for contracted labor, equipment purchase and supplies. Work will be completed between March 2010 and March 2013.*

	<u>Cost/ac.</u>	<u>Acres treated</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Contracted Labor	\$1,300	78.5	\$102,050
1/2 cost of a new Chipper			\$20,000
Supplies & Materials			\$2,950
TOTAL GRANT REQUEST:			\$125,000

Discussion:

Morgan identified some of the areas inventoried including parks in the South Hills, Linda Vista and Rattlesnake. The next step of the plan will be to move to the hills surrounding Missoula. A majority of the grant will be for contracted labor, half the cost of a new chipper, supplies and materials and pheromone packets. The Grant request total is \$125,000 with matching in-kind from the Parks and Fire Department.

Contracted labor will be used to reach hard to get to areas for cutting, piling and chipping/ burning. Contractors interested should contact Morgan once the RFP is sent out this fall. Spring work this year will be done in house.

Ben Carson answered several questions regarding the life cycle of the pine beetle, the effects on pine trees and how to mitigate the effects on the urban forest as well as private trees.

The DNRC grant will help with the pine beetle issue as well as provide an opportunity for thinning in Mount Jumbo which also addresses wild fire issues.

The committee discussed the purchase of the pheromone packets. Initially the Parks Department was going to have packets available for the public to purchase, but due to regulations this will not be possible. Packets may be available at a reduced price through the local Homeowners Associations. They can be purchased at retail stores.

It was moved to recommend the adoption of the resolution to allow the Mayor to sign the DNRC grant and all contracts related to the project. The motion passed unanimously.

V. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

1. Update from Parks and Recreation Department including Mountain Pine Beetle efforts on City lands and progress to date on the Conservation Lands Management Plan process ([memo](#)).— Regular Agenda (Morgan Valliant) (Referred to committee: 04/12/2010) (**REMOVE FROM AGENDA, INFORMATIONAL ITEM**)

Update on the Mountain Pine Beetle mitigation efforts: The city of Missoula owns roughly 3600 ac. of open space properties designated and managed as natural areas. While the majority of these properties are dominated by grasslands roughly 225ac. on Mt. Jumbo and in the Rattlesnake Greenway are covered by ponderosa pine forests. Additionally, 184ac. on Missoula's valley floor and in the Missoula's south hills contain stands of ponderosa pine. On Mt. Jumbo and in the Rattlesnake greenbelt, and to a lesser extent in Missoula's south hills, almost a century of fire prevention has produced a dense understory of young pine thickets. It is the goal of the Missoula Parks and Recreation Department to proactively address MPB infestations and address forest health across all City-owned parks and open space. Part of the solution was to apply for a grant from the DNRC. The grant was received and the resolution to accept the grant referred to the Council for approval.

Update on Conservation Lands Management Plan:

Morgan: A final Draft of the conservation lands management plan (CLMP) has been developed from input from Consultants, Parks Staff, a public open house, a citizen's working group and a technical advisory group. A public open house has been scheduled for May 5th 6-8 pm at the City Council chambers.

VI. NON-AGENDA ITEMS

VII. HELD AND ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS - PER COMMITTEE CHAIR – Marilyn Marler

1. Review Conservation and Urban Wildlife Subcommittee referrals. ([memo](#)) – Regular Agenda (Marty Rehbein) (Referred to committee: 01/11/10)
2. Budget update on aquatics ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Lyn Hellegaard) (Referred to committee: 12/21/09)

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting adjourned at 9:50 am.