

## Conservation Lands Advisory Committee Meeting

November 14, 2011

4:00 – 6:00 pm

### **Attended by:**

Members: Paul Parson, Janet Sproull (chair), Kathleen Kennedy, Bert Lindler, Deborah Richie, Colleen Matt, Giles Thelen, Beverly Dupree

Non-voting Members: Vicki Edwards and Allen Byrd

Staff: Dave Shaw, Morgan Valliant

Other: Lindsey Solmonson

### **Public/Guest comments on items not on the Agenda - none**

### **Minutes – Approve notes of [September 26, 2011](#) – approved as submitted**

#### **Agenda: review and discuss the following**

Review and discuss the Farviews-Pattee Canyon master trails plan. (Dave Shaw)

This is a neighborhood plan and includes areas that fall under the CLMP jurisdiction. Dave Shaw provided a brief summary of the plan.

Morgan Valliant asked the committee members to review the master trail plan for the area based on the eight goals from the CLM plan. The neighborhood had already done some planning but prior to CLM plan or program. The Farviews Neighborhood would like to have the plan approved by the Missoula Parks and Recreation Board at their December park board meeting.

The actual plan was completed by volunteers, and James Poole did the inventory of park lands and trails. A neighborhood survey was conducted asking how satisfied residents were with the current park lands. There are many small parks in this area, not many of them known by the residents. Some have been developed by adjacent private land owners making them look like private property, when in fact they are public parks.

Morgan provided his recommendations (see below) and reviewed the document with the committee members in conjunction with a map showing the proposed trail system.

Deborah Richie and Colleen Matt attended a field trip with James Poole of the area. They both voiced concerns of not being able to identify private vs. public land and the lack of way finding type signage. Deborah and Colleen both agreed there were several park areas with native grasses or riparian values.

Morgan indicated the Parks Department will need to address the numerous encroachment issues but this will probably incur property survey costs. Signing would be a good start and identifying ways to move through the area.

A major concern by Morgan was related to safety and the trail surface plans. The CLM identifies use of a trail based on slope and the proposed trail surface plans do not correspond to the appropriate use of the trail or surface material. The committee agreed it would be good to give the recommendations made by Morgan and have the neighborhood review using the trail guidelines from the CLM plan. Morgan, along with Alan White and Dave Shaw, will do a follow up field trip of the area this week.

The committee recommended the following priority list to be included with Morgan's recommendations:

- Install signs identifying parks and way finding signage for “hidden” parks
- Need for more kids play areas
- Follow CLMP trail guidelines

- Follow up on encroachment issues – prioritize the issues
- Be sensitive of native plants
- Be sensitive of the riparian area
- ADA and safety
- Tiorist Park – explore other options

**MOTION: the committee recommended approval of the recommendations as outlined in Morgan's memo with additions discussed during this meeting. All members voted in favor of the motion.**

**Recommendations for Edits to the Farviews/Pattee Canyon Master Trail Plan by Morgan Valliant**

Missoula's Fairview/Pattee Canyon (F/PC) neighborhood has devoted much time developing a parks and trails plan to guide city officials regarding recreational enhancements to their neighborhood system of parks. This plan includes the construction of a trail system to link their neighborhood. The F/PC Master Plan provides a comprehensive catalog of current City-owned property and potential future public access easements in the F/PC neighborhood. I commend the F/PC neighborhood council on their initiative and foresight in the development of this plan.

Ten of the 12 parks featured in the F/PC master trails plan are managed under the Conservation Lands Program as public natural areas. The management goals for these parcels is outlined in the Conservation Lands Management Plan (CLMP). The following recommendations are based on the feasibility of constructing and maintaining these trails to standards set by the City of Missoula and the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as impacts on native habitat on site.

**GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1) The F/PC master plan only depicts the construction of gravel and asphalt trails. Incorporating use of natural surface trails into the plan would reduce construction and maintenance costs. Additionally, natural surface trails may be more appropriate in steep hard to access areas, as connectors where little recreational use is expected, and/or in areas with higher habitat values.

2) Highland, Hemeyegan, Northview and Kokaski parks posse's significant intact native plant communities. Such communities are very rare in the South hills. These parks are relics of what the South Hills looked like prior to development and provide islands of habitat for a variety of wildlife. Development of recreational trails in these areas should consider impacts on native flora and fauna. It may be best to specify in the master plan that the location and surface of trails in these parks is flexible and should be based on conditions on –site.

**SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

| <i>Property</i>     | <i>Current Nhd Proposal</i>                        | <i>Conservation Lands Manager Recommendation</i>  |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Woodbine park       | Gravel trail connecting Shadow Dr. to Hillview Way | Steep (>40% slope) ravine is part of S. Hills drain system. Trails, if feasible, need to meet CLM trail guidelines.   |
| High Park           | 3 Gravel trails, 1 asphalt trail                   | Proposed asphalt trail would exceed 25% slope. Trail development, including materials should be consistent with CLMP trail guidelines. Existing trail depicted on map is a natural surface trail, not gravel. |
| Northview Park      | Multiple Asphalt trails                            | Hillside is >30% slope w/ no equipment access. Natural surface single-track trail likely best option for this site. Need easements  |
| West Northview park | Asphalt trail dependant on easements               | Utility/sewer line corridor. Consider gravel or natural surface trail over buried utility lines   |
| Ninkpata park       | Develop into neighborhood park, Asphalt trail      | Park has little habitat value, concur with proposal to develop into a neighborhood park w/ increased recreational amenities. Trail looks good.  |
| Oziya Park          | Multiple Gravel trails                             | All connections onto streets, except for Northwest access, exceed 35% slope. Consider alternative trail options in this park.   |
| Tiorits Park        | Sell park  | No public access, little habitat value, concur w/ proposed sale of property   |
| Hemayagen Park      | Asphalt arterial w/ gravel connectors              | Reposition asphalt trail to avoid steep slopes on west side of park. Steep slopes off Crestline rd. and   |

|                        |                                      |   |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
|                        |                                      | Pineridge dr. may require natural surface trails. Where trails connect to Pattee canyon Dr. +/-45% slope would require stairs.  |
| Highland Park          | Asphalt arterial w/gravel connectors | Asphalt trail is along existing +/-20% slope dirt road, consider constructing gravel/natural surface trail instead. Connector to Glenwood Ln. cul-de-sac enters steep ravine recommend single-track natural surface trail. Other trails noted in plan may be redundant or not provide connectivity. Consider deleting these 2 trails from plan. |
| Takima & Kokaski Parks | 2 Gravel Trails                      | Construction of trail in Kokaski park will require consideration of best practices in trail development in riparian zone, plus construction of a small bridge. Consider replacing w/ single-track natural surface trail. Installation of trails in this area will require attaining the easement depicted on plan is granted.                   |

#### Review Goals and Policies for management of Cons. Lands (chapter 3 of CLM plan)

- Complete and maintain an up to date inventory of each land parcel prioritizing its conservation values
- Establish, implement and publicize general rules and management policies that apply to Conservation Lands.
- Maintain habitat types and vegetation types on Conservation Lands including special plants and habitat types.
- Restore native and disturbed habitat on Conservation Lands.
- Provide a diverse and appropriate range of recreational and educational activities on MCL while limiting impacts by users to the ecological and cultural resource
- Evaluate the results of management strategies on Conservation lands and adjust management for desired results accordingly
- Develop adequate funding sources, partnerships and program to realize Management Plan goals.

Discussion of top management priorities and needs for the CLM program (Morgan's wish list w/reference to Chapter 6 of CLM plan).

Morgan reviewed the following information with the committee which will be held for later discussion.

#### Conservation Lands Management Priorities - 11/14/11

*The following list was compiled by the Missoula Parks and Recreation department for the Conservation Lands Advisory Committee. The purpose of this list is to emphasize management and project priorities outlined in the Conservation Lands Management Plan. Priorities are not listed in order of importance.*

#### MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES:

- 1) *Develop a Research and Monitoring program-* Current in-house research on Conservation Lands (CL) is primarily conducted by the CL manager. Grants and partnerships w/ private businesses have helped fund individual research projects. A monitoring program for cushion plant communities on the N. Hills is contracted to the Mt. Native plant Society. Consistent long-term monitoring of activities (e.g. Efficacy of vegetation management treatments, recreation impacts and use patterns, flora and fauna surveys) on CL is an essential part of adaptive management, however, this is not happening.
- 2) *Increase Education and Outreach-* Increasing the level of public awareness concerning impacts of irresponsible recreation on CL and management activities outlined in the CLM plan is needed. Currently, the Parks Department relies on public service announcements, website

postings and temporary on-site signage to notify the public of most management activities. Programs/projects designed to increase: public acceptance of "controversial" management activities, awareness of impacts, and citizen stewardship of CL are not occurring.

- 3) *Further Development of Volunteer Program*- In the past 2 years, the Parks Dept. has created a volunteer program as part of the Outdoor Recreation Program. This program has greatly increased the number of volunteer hours on city-owned public lands. As volunteer numbers have increased, the ability for Parks staff to effectively manage and oversee volunteer projects has decreased. Projects should address goals in the CLM Plan that vary in scope, season and skill level targeted to specific demographics. Additionally, developing a training program for volunteer field leaders would expand the capacity for volunteerism.
- 4) *Development of Recreational use Policy and Criteria* - The CL plan allows for permitting public events on CL. A permit process is in place for allowing events on park land. However, no criteria/policies exist for the Park board, CLAC, or city employees to score requests for event requests on CL.

#### PROJECT PRIORITIES:

- 1) *Fire as a Management Tool* - Prescribed burning is a useful tool for the management of natural areas. Development of a project to reintroduce fire on CL is needed. Additionally, there are multiple examples where past fire-fighting activities for wildfires on CL have caused more damage to native habitat than the fire. Coordination between the City and local fire-fighting agencies to review fire-fighting procedures on CL would be beneficial.
- 2) *Reroute of Mt. Jumbo's Backbone Trails* - Mt. Jumbo's backbone trail is an old jeep trail which connects Jumbo's peak and the saddle area. Slopes on the majority of the trail exceed 30%. A popular user made single track trail shadow's the backbone trail. Another well established user-made trail, with multiple unsustainable sections, serves as a connection between the backbone tr. and the Tivoli Way trailhead. Challenges to rerouting the backbone tr. include: cost of project, ability to maintain motorized access for management activities, ability to effectively restore old trails.
- 3) *Upgrade and standardize Trailheads and Access Points* - Specific criteria were developed for primary, secondary and local access trailheads in the CL plan. Recommendations for upgrading trailheads include developing a consistent signage package, installing educational kiosks where needed, and modifying/adding other amenities as needed. An inventory of all trailheads was completed in 2008, but little has been done to develop a plan for improving trailheads as outlined in the CL plan.

Morgan announced that he will deliver the CLAC Annual Report this year to the Park Board and City Council Conservation Committee.

**Meeting Schedule: The committee agreed to scheduling meetings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month, with the next meeting scheduled for January 9, 2012.**

**Adjournment at 6:15 pm.**