

CONSERVATION LANDS MANAGEMENT PLAN (CLMP) PROCESS

Missoula Parks & Recreation

Citizen Working Group (Meeting 3)

June 3, 2009

Session Summary

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Explore aspects of a Management Plan for Missoula's Conservation Lands.
2. Within the Working Group's Charter, develop consensus recommendations to Missoula Parks & Recreation Department and the Park Board.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. Finalize the Collaborative Framework including interests, guiding principles, and important questions.
2. Draft CLMP vision and goals.
3. Take a first cut at guidelines for managing specific categories of Missoula Conservation Lands.
4. Continue the review and discussion of data and "findings".

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Spencer Bradford	Allen Byrd	Beverly Dupree
Loren Flynn	Aaron Kindle	Jake Kreilizk
Stephanie Lanes	Peter Lesica	Bert Lindler
Kathleen Kennedy	Colleen Matt	Alina Niklison
Kylie Paul	Michael Pecora	Graham Roy
Steve Shelly	Dave Spildie	John Weyhrich
Virginia Tribe (Facilitator)		

TECHNICAL ADVISORS PRESENT

Donna Gaukler	Becky Goodrich
Gibson Hartwell	Rosemary Moore

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Finalizing the Collaborative Framework

Parks and Recreation Department Assumptions

1. While the values and principles by which we manage Missoula's Conservation Lands will remain consistent throughout the years actual on the ground management should be adaptive and flexible to incorporate new ideas, scientific findings and community needs.
2. Missoula's Open Space lands are valuable public assets. Management should promote community stewardship, responsible recreation and outdoor education.
3. Not all properties in the system should be managed under the same set of conservation values and principles, though all lands and the impacts should be considered when making land management recommendations. Areas that provide critical native habitat, and/or are of high conservation value should be managed to protect those resources.
4. During the process, criteria for determining new trail construction, trail closures/rehabilitation, and appropriate types of on-trail recreation will be developed.
5. The Conservation Lands Division is relatively young and underfunded; efficiency, cost-effectiveness and long-term maintenance should be considered during all aspects of plan development.
6. Capital improvements at trailheads and to Conservation Lands that address the land values and Missoula's population growth and associated recreation demands will be addressed in the recommendations.
7. Public enjoyment of Conservation Lands is critical to promote continued support of future open space acquisitions.

Desired Results - The Conservation Lands Management Plan will provide a framework within which Parks and Recreation is able to:

- Make criteria-based decisions and set priorities based on the type/category/characteristics of parcels including decisions related to funding among competing priorities.
- Identify appropriate uses of individual parcels.
- Honor existing agreements and commitments.
- Apply management strategies that recognize the ecological importance of Missoula's Conservation Lands.
- Apply management strategies that support the recreational values of Missoula's Conservation Lands to the community.
- Provide for place-based educational opportunities.
- Apply an adaptive management approach to accommodate the unique qualities and challenges associated with individual parcels.
- Facilitate public and private funding opportunities.

Guiding Principles

As the Conservation Lands Management Plan Citizen Working Group:

- We believe that current and long-term management decisions and strategies should be based on assessment and prioritization of conservation and recreation values for each parcel.
- We believe that, as a system of natural parks and open spaces, Missoula's Conservation Lands should serve a variety of uses and purposes, but that all uses/purposes may not be served on every parcel.
- We believe that the Conservation Lands Management Plan should be designed to allow flexibility to address changes in future conditions that may demand management adaptations.
- We believe that management of individual parcels should consider, recognize, and honor the intent of the original acquisition agreements.
- We believe that existing management plans (i.e., Mount Jumbo) should influence management decisions and strategies for those parcels covered by those plans.
- We believe that user restrictions are appropriate tools for protecting conservation values and the experiences of other users. While we view incentives for good behavior as effective management tools, we recognize that they don't replace the need for establishment and enforcement of Management Plan restrictions.
- We recognize that a healthy Conservation Lands program requires adequate funding for management and enforcement.
- We believe acquisition of lands includes responsible stewardship of the acquired parcel and should be considered in decisions related to acquiring lands.
- We believe Conservation Lands offer opportunities for education and cooperation among groups.
- We believe that recreation opportunities should not preclude restoration activities or vice versa.
- We recognize that conflict may occur between users and user groups and that this Management Plan will not be able to successfully address every conflict situation.

Recommended Goals and Policies

Goal 1: Complete/maintain an up-to-date inventory of each land parcel for its conservation values.

Policies:

1.1 Identify/inventory Conservation Lands in the following "categories"/types:

- Greater than 10 acres
- Less than 10 acres

- Habitat types (e.g., riparian systems which have low representation may be managed differently than common grasslands)
- Lands providing “connectivity” – Where they are located in relation to other Missoula Conservation Lands and open lands managed by other agencies
- Use Categories (human, wildlife)
- Parcel condition (strategies will depend on vegetation condition, wildlife habitat, etc.)
- Proximity to neighborhoods
- Nearness to schools

1.2 Develop management actions/restrictions that maintain the parcel based on the management objective for that category/type of Conservation Land.

Goal 2: Establish, implement, and publicize general rules that apply to all Conservation Lands including the following:

Policies:

- 2.1 Restrict human access when wildlife is seasonally sensitive.
- 2.2 Maintain healthy plant communities to assure sustainable ecological function.
- 2.3 Maintain native plant communities and special plant communities where they exist.
- 2.4 Manage for no net increase of noxious weeds per parcel.
- 2.5 Apply trail designation (i.e., single track; 2-track; horse, etc.) based on topography; environmental factors; recreation uses; amount of usage, etc. Construct and maintain trails to prevent erosion regardless of trail designation. Immediately address the creation of “social trails” to prevent widening or unintentional change in trail designation.

Goal 2 cont.

- 2.6 Close all Conservation Lands to motorized use except for administrative purposes (i.e., mowing; fire vehicles, emergencies, etc.).
- 2.7 Plan for and manage for the scenic viewshed where pertinent.
- 2.8 Interpret (and protect where appropriate) anthropological, historical, and ecological themes on Conservation Lands.

2.9 Implement education/awareness programs for the public about user responsibility; trail usage; and land ethics.

2.10 Create a stewardship approach/plan for each category of Conservation Lands – including the possible involvement of users.

Goal 3: Maintain habitat types and vegetation types on Conservation Lands including special plants and wildlife habitat types.

Policies:

3.1 Manage forested Conservation Lands to promote old growth; protect human communities from fire (thinning and burning where appropriate); and promote healthy wildlife habitat.

3.2 Where present on a particular parcel, manage for rare plant species as a priority value.

3.3 Manage wildlife habitat as a priority value on particular parcels that have been identified as important to maintaining healthy wildlife populations.

Goal 4: Manage Conservation Lands that adjoin other lands in cooperation with those neighboring lands.

Policies:

4.1 Maintain, enhance, and encourage landscape connectivity between Conservation Lands, other Park lands, and other pertinent landscapes (i.e., open space).

4.2 Manage individual Conservation Lands parcels to honor commitments related to acquisition and management plans already established for those pieces (e.g., Mount Jumbo).

Goal 5: Restore native and disturbed habitat on Conservation Lands.

Policies:

5.1 Evaluate restoration opportunities on a cost/benefit basis and invest in restoration activities where they are likely to result in effective, measurable recovery of lands.

5.2 Involve users/user groups in restoration activities and creation of interim restrictions to help educate people about restoration and create a sense of responsibility among users.

Goal 6: Provide a diverse and appropriate range of recreational activities on Missoula's Conservation Lands.

Policies:

6.1 Identify/inventory individual Conservation Lands for their potential recreation uses; current and predicted usage levels; and possible impacts on ecological values.

6.2 Develop and implement general and where appropriate, parcel-specific management strategies and regulations, to address recreation issues including management of dogs; bike use; Para gliders; horses; organized trail runs; hunting; research; formal education activities, etc..

6.3 Conduct a public information/education campaign concerning the general and specific regulations and the reasons they exist.

Goal 7: Evaluate the results of management strategies on Conservation Lands.

Policies:

7.1 Establish criteria per category of Conservation Lands to measure the results/consequences of management strategies (i.e., not to exceed environmental standards for a particular parcel).

7.2 Implement a formal adaptive management process including how it will be applied to various Conservation Lands categories and where appropriate, specific parcels. Involve citizen volunteers where possible.

Goal 8: Develop adequate funding sources and tools to realize Management Plan goals.

Policies:

8.1 Develop an "adopt a park" program for smaller parcels (i.e., under 10 acres; located within an established neighborhood; near a school, etc.) to encourage community engagement in the property's management.

8.2 Work with neighborhoods near or adjacent to individual Conservation Lands to encourage citizen involvement in management activities; responsible use and education; funding; and ongoing advocacy for Conservation Lands.

8.3 Work with schools located near individual Conservation Lands to encourage use of those areas for educational purposes; student and staff involvement in management activities; education of the public; funding; and ongoing advocacy for Conservation Lands.

8.4 Seek corporate sponsors for particular parcels within established guidelines.

Where do we go from here?

Affirming the Calendar

- The Working Group will meet August 31 (reminder about time and place to be sent mid-August) to review the initial draft of the Management Plan that will be prepared by Ecosystem Research Group. That draft will be based on the framework provided by the Working Group.
- A public review process will take place in the fall with the Working Group meeting a final time to assess public comments and offer final recommendations.