



**HELENA OPEN LANDS MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SUMMARY
December 12, 2017**



City Members Representative

- Betsy Miller
- Karen Reese
- Eric Sivers
- Jeff Shirley
- Dan Wirak

City-County Parks Board Representative

- Dave Payne

Helena Citizens Council Representative

- Denise Roth Barber

City of Helena Staff Representatives

- Brad Langsather, Open Lands Manager
- Greta Dige, Code Enforcement

Helena Tourism Alliance Representative

- Jennifer Davis

LOCATION: City of Helena Parks and Recreation – Room 326

TIME: 5:30 Pm – 7:00 pm

Call to Order

Welcome/Introductions/Visitors: Phil Johnson, Susan Lenard, Shannon Heath, Mike Roberts, Nick Sovner, Amy Teegarden, Evan, PPLT

Minutes Approval: November 14, 2017

- Eric asked for clarification on the discussion of the Beattie Park parking lot. He continues to hear concerns about the 58 space parking lot. Brad had asked Engineering if they could create a drawing of what a parking lot might look like at Beattie Park. They used the parking lot diagram from Mt. Helena. The reason for this was because Brad needed a template for the restroom grant. Eric then added that he wants everyone present to understand that Brad provided a very schematic drawing to someone who had asked for our initial plan. The intent of that drawing was to show the circular parking lot which is similar to that lot at Mt. Helena. The correct proposal will not include 50 spaces.
- It was then noted that on page 3, the second bullet needs to read: "There is current capacity of **16** cars in **the area currently used for parking.**"
- With no other noted corrections, the November 14, 2017 minutes were approved.

HOLMAC Action Items

2018 Open Lands Work Plan

- Brad distributed handouts of the 2018 Helena Open Lands Work Plan for the committee to review. He reminded everyone that this a rough draft of the work plans. There will be opportunity for comments and suggestions from committee members and the public.
- The trails and recreation management breaks down into eight categories:
 1. Trails and Recreation Management Objectives
 2. Facilities
 3. Forest Management Objectives
 4. Property Acquisition/Exchange
 5. Weed Management Objectives

6. Fence Construction and Removal
7. Boundary Identification
8. Reclamation

TRAILS AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT

TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

- We are in negotiation with PPLT on two items. The first two items are carry-over items from last year. There is one piece of the Aftershock trail project that did not get completed this year so will be included in the plan for next year. The other item that didn't get completed last year was the construction of a trail from Gold Rush Avenue to South California Street which ties into Saddle Drive. This will be 36 inches wide of native material along with a route designated by City staff with ribbons and pin flags. This was in the 2017 plan; however, we had to get a survey of property pins completed first. We got the survey work done so this too will be a project included in the contract for next year.

TRAIL IMPROVEMENT

- Evan with PPLT provided Brad a list of trail improvement projects to review to include:
 - ENTERTAINMENT TRAIL* – this was chosen to as a project in order to work through some of the issues to include:
 - a. *Alternate Section*: Part of this area is the Old Jeep Trail which we are referring to as the Alternate Section which runs down to the archery range. The recommendation is to widen the corridor and flatten tread and build up drainage feature near bottom of alternate.
 - b. *Jeep Trail Section*: Install erosion controls (check dams and drainage features) on fall-line jeep trail section. Erosion and speed controls (grade reversals where possible, check-dams in entrenched areas) spot flattening sections and in-sloping turns, building up small berms for safety.
 - c. *Lower Section*: Realign/lengthen turns and build up berms.

MT. ASCENSION LOOP TRAIL:

- a. This is starting to get out-sloped. We are recommending widening the corridor and flattening tread.

ADOPT-A-TRAIL PROGRAM

Prickly Pear will continue to oversee this project.

- Proactively engage individuals and groups for participation.
- Produce an annual activity report for the Adopt-A-Trail program and deliver the completed report to the City of Helena.

MAPPING

We annually contribute PPLT's efforts in keeping the maps updated. We will continue this financial contribution.

- South Hills Trail map update: Provide GPS data to City including trail re-routes and/or new tails, improved trails, parking areas, etc.

MISCELLANEOUS TASKS

- We will continue to help coordinate volunteer activities (Workdays, Boy Scouts, Corporate and NGO's, Weed Pull events, etc.) that want to participate in an event that PPLT wants to host. We typically have 3 (perhaps more events).
- We will continue with data collection using trail user counts and electronic tally devices, at the

following three trailheads: Top of Mt. Ascension (2006), Diehl Drive (Rocky Road), and Lime Kiln (Prickly Pear Trail & Rocky Road-Winnie Water Tank Access Road). We will compile collected data and deliver an annual report (Trail Counter Report) that includes chronological line charts depicting monthly use organized by type (foot, bicycle), and trailhead. The delivered report shall include a narrative for each collection point that outlines methodology, assumptions and any data irregularities that may have been noted. These are all trails Brad is especially interested in regarding the collection of data.

- Jennifer asked if the city will be buying new counters. Brad is proposing we move some of the counters into different areas. He wants to look at areas we haven't yet studied. Eric agreed that it makes sense to move the counters around to different locations. **Jennifer did recommend we make a goal to purchase an additional counter each year.** This will allow us to keep a better inventory. Nate said that we are having some issues with the current counters. We are working through the bugs. We hope to add a seasonal staff person that can go around and check on the counters and their functionality. Brad said parks may be able to assist with this. **He and Nate will continue the discussion of having Mike participate in helping with the counters.**
- Safety – Safety is always a major concern for contractors and those working on the trails. The Montana Safety Culture Act (39-71-1501 to 39-71-1508 MCA) requires that employees and supervised volunteers receive appropriate employee safety orientation, job specific safety training and periodic refresher training. As a guideline, orientations should include the following items:
 - Safety and operational instruction specific to the equipment they will be utilizing
 - Where the supervised volunteer can find a copy of the Contractors safety policy
 - The safety expectations of the Contractor
 - The supervisory chain of command
 - How to report accidents or unsafe conditions
 - Emergency Plans and procedures that may apply

VOLUNTEER TRAIL CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

Mount Ascension Directional Trail Construction Project

- Montana Bicycle Guild (MBG) proposes to construct 2-3 new mountain bike trails on the southeast face of Mount Ascension between Eddy McClure West and Arrowroot Drive. These trails will be directional, with no uphill travel. Right of way conventions in this zone will require the downhill user to yield to the one above. Trail design will reflect the mountain biking preferred use, and provide a recreational experience currently lacking in the South Hills. (Please refer to the completed report at: http://www.helenamt.gov/fileadmin/user_upload/City_Parks/Open_Lands/Documents/Work_Plan/DRAFT_2018_Work_Plan.pdf).
- The Bicycle Guild is actively looking for funding to assist with this project.

HELENA PARKS DEPARTMENT

The Helena Parks Department contributions to the trail system include:

- We now have someone permanently assigned in assisting with the trail system. Part of this position includes:
 - Complete monthly inspections of entire trail system and associated wayfinding signage. When we have a sign damaged or missing, we will have a mechanism to fix the situation.
 - Construct trail signs and install/replace as needed.
 - Respond to trail issues throughout the year as needs arise. As we get graffiti, it will be dealt with right away. He will also take care of the restrooms.

- Continue to implement the social trail management recommendations provided by HOLMAC. This will include putting in carsonite signage. Brad feels this signage has been very effective.
- Amy added that Open Lands and Park Maintenance are cost-sharing this position.

FACILITIES

TRAILHEADS

- Complete Beattie Trailhead expansion project.
- Complete the installation of a trailhead entrance sign, and kiosk at the Beattie Street Trailhead parking area. Purchase a vaulted restroom facility and coordinate all installation related activities. The restroom will be similar to the one we have at Mt. Helena. There will also be a kiosk and Brad is looking at a “roofed” kiosk with an area for lost and found items.
- Surface the entrance road and parking area at the Park City (Mount Helena Ridge) Trailhead, install parking barriers, and oversee the installation of a vaulted restroom facility.
- Expand the Lower Davis Street and Limekiln parking areas. There is limited opportunity at Lower Davis Street; however Brad thinks we should be able to double our size at this trail.
- Complete the Waterline Extension Trail (across from the Barking Dog) parking area.
- Construct and install kiosks at the Mount Helena and Saddle Drive trailhead parking areas.

FOREST MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- There are several grant source agencies that Helena Open Lands will be working with in 2018 in regards for fuel reduction and health improvements and enhancements on our open lands. For a complete list of these projects please go to:
- http://www.helenamt.gov/fileadmin/user_upload/City_Parks/Open_Lands/Documents/Work_Plan/DRAFT_2018_Work_Plan.pdf).

PROPERTY ACQUISITION/EXCHANGE

- Assist in the completion of property acquisition grant applications as opportunities become available.
- Respond to public and partnership requests regarding potential purchase/sale/exchange of open lands properties.
- We will continue to work with PPLT on property acquisitions.

WEED MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- Greta reviewed the objectives of the Code Enforcement Officer and her volunteer groups.
- We will continue to schedule and participate in weed pulls on open lands.
- As always we will continue to educate the public via our webpage and facebook page.
- We will continue to administer MDA 2017-019 Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant.
- Please see the full report for more information.

FENCE CONSTRUCTION AND REMOVAL

- Brad stated the largest fence construction project will be at the top of Mt. Ascension. We may need to tie a hooks and rail fence into our control gate at the top. On the other side of the road, we will need to work with the adjacent landowner to tie into something.
- Verify open lands boundaries as budgets allow. Prioritize open lands boundary identification needs according to program of work and emerging management issues.
- Install boundary identification posts at approximate 50 foot intervals where encroachment situations are identified. We will do this as needs arise.

RECLAMATION

- We will continue where we are. We typically hire MCC (Montana Conservation Corp). If we can get native grass weed established, it helps with our weed control.
- Utilize a grass seed mixture containing one or more of the following native grasses: Slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus* ssp. *trachycaulus*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis* variety Joeseph or Nez Perce), Bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum* or *Pseudoroegenaria spicata* var Goldar)
- Monitor previously seeded areas.

Greta reminded HOLMAC members to go out to our website to make comments to the work plan. That information is available at:

<https://lcchelenamt.seamlessdocs.com/f/OpenLandsPlan2018>

Parks and Recreation Report – Brad

Beattie Street Trailhead Improvement Update

- Brad recently contracted with Chris Ries of Ries Associates to do slope profile work at option 2 which would be the upper parking area. Our goal is to get a fairly accurate figure on the amount of fill material needed to create a level profile. They will be working on this over the next week or two.

Aftershock Bridge

- The abutment should be completed by tomorrow. Brad has all stringers cut but one. It was difficult to move the excavator around in this area.
- Everyone who has gone through the area is very excited about the bridge.
- There was discussion at a previous meeting about the Jim Phillips Memorial at the Beattie Street Trailhead. Jim was attached to bridges as he worked on bridges all over the US. Brad is recommending we place his memorial plaque on the bridge at Aftershock.
- “Jim Phillips Memorial Bridge” – the committee agreed this is a good idea.

Burning Update

- We are waiting for the snow to subside. We still have to get a permit from DEQ and can't do so until March 1.

Reports from Subcommittees

- Weeds – Greta
 - Nothing to report.
- Report from PPLT
 - Nate stated PPLT has a new map which is close to being completed. They will be distributed to the community as soon as possible. We hope to have them ready for Christmas for gifts.
 - Nate is working with Brad on negotiating the contract with the city.
 - It is PPLT's goal to hold more community work days this summer. Jennifer recommended they start at 7:00 pm in order to avoid the heat.
- Cultural Resources
 - Nothing to report.
- Wildlife
 - Nothing to report.
- Forestry
 - Nothing to report.

Public Comment

- Greta was asked if we have a policy on treating areas prior to implementing the fuel reduction program. In particular, there are vehicles and equipment going on some of the old roads above Mt. Ascension and they are blanketed with knapweed. They are basically spreading the weed.
 - Greta stated the contractors are aware that they need to have their vehicles inspected before going onto the land. They also have to make sure they wash their vehicles in order to not spread the weed. Greta can't treat everything each year due to budget constraints. **Brad added we will put more focus in this area this year.**
- Brad was asked again about the draft proposal of the Beattie Park parking lot which includes a 50-spot parking lot. Brad stated he did a rough drawing for the HOLMAC meeting last week and what we are looking at is a different option which would be located further up and is a smaller profile. This is the included in the contract Brad put together to get the slope information. Neither option has been completed in a final drawing.
- Denise asked Brad if he has an idea of how many parking spots will be at this location. Brad stated he really doesn't have a number yet, but it will come down how we locate the restroom. If we look at the upper option, with the ADA accessible area and meeting other requirements, the amount of slots may change. We do know that that ADA requirements state if we have 25 parking spots, we must have 2 ADA spots and a van-accessible spot. It will be smaller than the drawing.
- Dan – before this happens, there will be a meeting with the neighborhood and an opportunity for public comments on the work plan. Brad did add that there were 20 cars in the parking lot yesterday when he went to the site.
- Nick Sovner wanted follow up to discussion he had at the last meeting. His understanding is that it is now a requirement that we make all trailheads ADA compliant. In speaking with the city ADA coordinator, Nick understands that ADA compliancy does not necessarily drive projects. If we just install the parking lot with 20 concrete spot, we should be okay.
- Brad stated once we put in a restroom or kiosk, we are required to follow ADA regulations. The current parking area is not a parking area – it is a street. It does not function enough to install the restroom and meet ADA requirements.
- Eric then added that our trail system is vast and has a lot of amenities and the facilities that support our trail system are behind where they need to be for optimal user experience. When we have visitors from out of town that use a popular trailhead and need to use the facilities, where do they go? The thought from this committee and user groups is that visitors want better facilities at our trailheads and this project is in response to that.

Next Meeting Date: January 9, 2018 at 5:30 in Room 326 in the City County Building

Future Agenda Items:

- Identification of topics for upcoming meeting.

Adjournment:

With no further business, the HOLMAC Advisory meeting adjourned at 7:12 pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Jennifer Schade

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