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## MISSOULA PARKS AND RECREATION PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

For immediate release through April 12, 2023

### Mount Jumbo South Zone to reopen to the public Thursday, April 13

Jumbo's "L" Trail and the US West Road remain open

In consultation with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) wildlife biologists earlier this spring, Parks and Recreation extended the Mount Jumbo South Zone winter wildlife closure beyond the scheduled March 15 opening date. The annual closure protects the 75 to 95 elk and other animals inhabiting Jumbo's lower elevations to feed and regain strength after a long winter. With warmer spring weather on the immediate horizon, the South Zone will reopen to the public at **6 a.m. on Thursday, April 13**.

According to FWP Wildlife Manager Liz Bradley, early spring is a critical time for elk because they are coming out of the winter in their poorest physical condition. Cold winter temperatures and extended snow cover have delayed Mt. Jumbo's normal spring green-up, leaving elk and other wildlife without adequate food at higher elevations. "For elk and deer, the spring green-up can't come soon enough—so they can start replenishing the physical reserves they lost over the winter. Most years, we see the hillsides starting to green up by mid-to-late March, but that hasn't happened yet this year," Bradley says. "The female elk and deer are doubly stressed as they try to push through these tough conditions carrying young they will deliver in late May and June."

Parks and Recreation staff regularly monitor elk presence throughout the winter with assistance from the citizen science [Elk Spotters Program](#). Starting in early March, staff regularly monitor spring vegetation status further in Mount Jumbo's North Zone. Resource managers balance elk presence, vegetation green-up, and spring weather forecasts to determine an appropriate South Zone opening date to protect overwintering elk. The April 13 reopening date will allow the snow levels and new grass growth to hit the required thresholds to provide critical nutrition and allow the remaining elk to move farther north on the mountain safely.

Jumbo's North Zone, which includes all points north of the Saddle Road, will remain closed until May 1 or later, depending on weather conditions or elk presence.

Please check the [Conservation Lands Closures webpage](#) for real-time updates on the South and North Zone reopening dates. While the South Zone closure is still in effect, visitors must stay on the "L" and US West trails and leash their pets to protect wildlife. Please call 911 to report wildlife closure violations.

The City of Missoula would like to thank residents for their cooperation in protecting Mount Jumbo's unique natural resources and elk herd by respecting the seasonal wildlife closure. City ordinances prohibit trespassing during the wildlife closure and violators may be fined up to \$500.

For more information, call (406) 721-PARK (7275.) Visit [missoulaparks.org](#) for maps and more information.