



City of Missoula NEWS ADVISORY

**April 4, 2011
For immediate release**

CLARK FORK RIVER LEVEE MAINTENANCE PROJECT TO START APRIL 4

Contractors will be removing selected vegetation on the banks of the Clark Fork River this week to maintain levees in the downtown area and west of the California Street Bridge.

The project is required by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ensure the levees remain stable in flood conditions.

“We anticipate higher than average spring runoff this year,” said Public Works director Steve King. “The City is being proactive maintaining the Clark Fork River levees, and this maintenance is required by the Corps of Engineers to sustain community flood protection.”

The Army Corp of Engineers is the federal agency in charge of flood risk management on the nation’s waterways.

The vegetation removal is scheduled to begin on Monday, April 4, and wrap up by Friday, April 22. Work occurring along the levee will be weather dependent, but crews will likely be working on some portion of the project on weekdays until it’s completed.

Crews will be clearing woody debris and selected vegetation from the levees on the north side of the Clark Fork from Russell to California streets and from Orange to Madison streets. There

may be very brief, intermittent detours on the north shore of the Ron MacDonald Riverfront Trail System, but the trail will remain open throughout the project.

The City Council approved the project in March. Some Council members raised the issue of long-term levee maintenance, as federal regulations require the removal of vegetation greater than 4 inches in diameter. Ward 2 Council Representative Pam Walzer suggested that community groups may be interested in a future re-vegetation project.

“The discussion this year is how can we better manage the vegetation on the levees,” Walzer said. “What some are now recommending is a proactive solution to evolve the levee banks to host smaller, brushier vegetation that is native to the area and self-sustaining. My sense is that the community favors this approach. Given the vested interest the community has in the riverfront, we are hoping the community, through the various nonprofits, will get excited and volunteer to assist our Public Works Department in deciding what the desired outcomes for our levees are and how to make it happen.”

Public Works officials have expressed interest in pursuing such a project at a later date.

Able Tree Service has been contracted to complete the current levee maintenance project. The project cost is approximately \$10,000 and is funded by the City general fund.

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Interview contacts:

For information about this project, call City Engineer Kevin Slovarp at 552-6345.

For information about flood plain regulations, call Office of Planning and Grants Director Mike Barton at 258-3874.