



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CITY AND COUNTY CELEBRATE FIVE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF OPEN SPACE PARTNERSHIP

Since the passage of the 2006 County Open Space bond, more than 8,000 acres of native grasslands, forested hillsides, riparian areas, and working farmland have been conserved in Missoula County through the use of this fund. Citizens are invited to a celebration of the five year anniversary of the Open Space Bond on Thursday, September 29, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at City Council Chambers, 140 W. Pine Street.

The celebration, hosted by the City Open Space Advisory Committee, the County Open Lands Citizens Advisory Committee, Mayor John Engen, and County Commissioner Jean Curtiss, will commemorate 22 exceptional open spaces conserved with Open Space bond funds since 2006. Citizens will have the opportunity to view photos and maps of the bond projects and meet with open space staff, citizen advisory board members, landowners and land trust partners. The event will include a short update on past open space projects and plans for the future. Attendees will have opportunities to share their thoughts and suggestions for the open space program.

Jackie Corday, the City's Parks and Recreation's Open Space Program manager, is looking forward to celebrating the City and County's conservation partnership. "This is a great opportunity for folks to see and learn about all of the beautiful places that have been conserved either through the City's acquisition of the land, over 450 acres since 2007, or by the County's contribution to the purchase of conservation easements on working farms and ranches and other lands," Corday said.

Nancy Heil, an open space planner with Missoula County Rural Initiatives, says partnerships with landowners and conservation groups are essential. "The open space lands protected in Missoula County exemplify the productive and positive relationships that exist between landowners,

the public and our land trust partners. The bond program has allowed landowners to protect their lands for the benefit of future generations. Land trusts have even been able to use the Open Space Bond projects as a funding match to protect an additional 14,560 acres," Heil said.

The City and County both use volunteer advisory boards to help analyze prospective parcels for acquisition and make recommendations to the City Council and the Board of County Commissioners. Board members have been pleased to find that local property owners are enthusiastic about preserving open space through acquisition or conservation easements. "As a lifetime resident of Missoula, it has been very rewarding to meet with landowners who recognize how good stewardship of their property benefits fish, wildlife and the quality of life that we have here in Missoula County. Every project that we review includes a significant donation of value by the landowners which speaks to their dedication to the land and community," says John Rimel of the County Open Lands Citizens Advisory Committee.

Adam Liljeblad, who serves on the City Open Space Advisory Committee, agrees. "We are very excited about the 5-year anniversary event as an opportunity to say thank you to the community and landowners for helping us accomplish so much in the past five years. We hope that folks join us to celebrate five years of success and the future of Open Space in Missoula."

All citizens are invited to attend; refreshments and anniversary cake will be served. For more information, phone Jackie Corday at 552-6267 or Nancy Heil 258-3432.

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