

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ABBREVIATED MINUTES
November 10th, 2010
4:00 –6:00 pm

Present:

Jed Little	Tim Aldrich
Jenny Tollefson	Gary Knudsen
Bert Lindler	Adam Liljebblad
Jeff Stevens	Beth Hahn, Park Brd Rep
Maureen Hartman	Ethel MacDonald

Absent:

Mary Manning
Bob Clark

Also Present: Jackie Corday, Open Space Program Mgr, Jim Habeck & 4 U of M EVST students

Conservation Lands Updates – Morgan Valliant

Vegetation Management

- Morgan & his crew have been spraying spurge and re-seeding on the middle face of Mt. Jumbo for 4 yrs in a row and he is seeing fairly good re-veg now of native grasses.
- A water collection system using tarps was developed – this year ~300 gallons of water was collected on Mt. Sentinel in 6 weeks that was used for spraying weeds. Morgan had installed the same system on Mt. Jumbo, but after repeated vandalism, he gave up.
- He is targeting new invaders to eradicate them before they start really spreading – examples include Yellow Flag iris and Japanese knotweed.
- Morgan said that the sheep grazing has now reached its 5th year in some places on Jumbo and the North Hills – the focus is on "old growth" infestations of spurge on steep terrain where it is most difficult to spray. The idea has been that the slow removal of weeds over time will allow for natives to come back into the areas. The greatest success has been in the North Hills on the face. Approx 1000 acres were grazed this year between Jumbo and the North Hills.
- Morgan said it will cost about \$12,000 to re-seed the 1000 acres at a rate of \$120/acre. The budget allows for about 300 acres/year.
- In 2006 the sheep began eating the tops of Dalmatian toadflax on Jumbo and by 2008 they had fully developed a taste for it so now they are grazing both spurge and toadflax. Morgan said the sheep dung was analyzed for its ability to carry viable weed seeds to other locals. The results indicated very little spurge or toadflax seed was able to sprout, but tumble mustard was common.
- Norway maple is an invasive species that takes over native cottonwoods and other native riparian vegetation. Morgan and crew have worked this year to remove Norways in Greenough, at the base and in the draws on Jumbo, the Rattlesnake Greenway, and in areas of the South Hills.
- This year the timber thinning continued on 85 acres to remove beetle killed conifers on Jumbo, South Hills, and Rattlesnake Greenway. This winter another bid request will go out for 100 more acres on Jumbo.
- Morgan obtained a grant from MT Dept of Agriculture for a seeding study in grazed and un-grazed plots on Jumbo and the North Hills. They are two years into a 6-8 year study.

Conservation Projects

- Kiosks at Cherry Street have been installed in partnership with FVLT. They were built with Norway maple and pine trees harvested from boulevard tree removals and thinning projects and feature interpretive, map and user rules information.

- The bridge that was removed several years ago in Greenough Park due to flood waters was finally able to be replaced this year using \$20,000 in ARRA stimulus funds. Gordon Construction built the bridge at a significantly reduced rate. Pine trees killed by pine beetles in Greenough Park supplied the major portion of the infrastructure of the bridge. COT installed the rock work needed at the base and also helped with the streambank rehab as did numerous volunteers.
- Approximately 3,000 native trees were planted in Greenough Park this year, many by volunteers.
- Sue Reel from the USFS obtained stimulus money to replace the bird signs for the bird loop in Greenough Park.
- A new trail was constructed that connects the trail up to the water tower on the former YAWLE property to the US West Trail on the south side of Jumbo. The 3/4 mile trail was installed with the help of 180 high school students. The new trail provides access for East Missoula residents to hike or bike all the way over to the Rattlesnake Valley.
- Parks received a \$5,000 grant from REI to help with the costs of constructing a new trail/single track dirt road on the Peschel/Rattlesnake Land Trust conservation easement property that will replace the steep trail up the eastern face of Waterworks Hill. The purpose of the project was to protect the sensitive cushion plant community that the existing trail cuts right through the middle of and was continually being widened by hikers and joggers each year as they went around hard-packed icy snow. The road needs to exist to service the radio towers on top of the hill. Again, much volunteer labor made this project possible.
- Elk "gates" were installed in the North Hills along a couple sections of fence where the herd continually knocked down the fencing as they moved back n forth in the North Hills. The gates consist of 20' sections of fencing that can be opened during the winter.

Beth asked about the areas where the sheep are pinned on Jumbo and the North Hills – are there any restoration plans? Morgan explained that they no longer move the pens around anymore – they chose sacrifice areas instead and made the pen areas much smaller and more permanent. They chose areas that were already heavily infested with weeds.

Ethel asked about an update on the Mt. Sentinel fire. Morgan said areas there were very weedy remain that way, but that areas that had a fairly good native grass community are doing great and have not experienced an increase in weeds.

Jenny asked about the possibility of using fire on conservation lands as a tool for vegetation management. Morgan said that such use is in the new CLM Plan and that the CLM Working Group and the Technical Working Groups were in support of using fire. Morgan hopes he can use it within the next few years.

Bert commended Morgan for all the research he is leading on conservation lands as it is very important to study what is working and what may be a better approach.

Jackie reminded everyone to think about issues/topics that they would like to discuss for the December meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm with the next meeting date scheduled for 4:00 – 6:00pm on Thursday, December 9th at MacKenzie River Pizza on Front St.