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## Missoula Parks and Recreation

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# Public Service Announcement

For distribution March 24, 2011 through April 2, 2011

For more information about these programs, call 721-PARK or visit us on-line at [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org)

## Mount Jumbo South Zone closure extended to April 1

### Fast Facts:

- Mount Jumbo's South Zone, from the Saddle Road south, will remain closed until April 1, 2011.
- The trail to the "L" remains open, as well as the US West road above I-90. The closure includes areas above the "L."
- The closures are to protect wintering elk.
- Please call 911 to report closure violations. Vehicle license plates or other identifying characteristics will help law enforcement issue citations to violators.
- Violations of the closure are punishable by a fine of up to \$500.
- Mount Jumbo's North Zone, north of the Saddle Road, remains closed until May 1.

Mount Jumbo's elk herd, numbered at an all-time high of around 90 head this year, is staying put on Jumbo's lower elevations, prompting wildlife managers to extend the South Zone closure for the second time this year. Depending on weather conditions and snowfall, the South Zone (south of the Saddle road to the "L"), will re-open to public use on April 1. Parks and Recreation reminds citizens that the survival of the herd is at stake, and the closure helps create a crucial buffer zone for the elk from the urban area. Although the "L" trail is open, the closure includes areas above the "L."

During harsh winter months, when food is scarce, elk must strike a balance between the reduced calories they consume and the energy they expend to stay warm and move through deep snow. Even during mild winters, the food available at Jumbo's lower elevations is crucial to the elk's survival. Human disturbance causes elk to flee, thereby expending energy at a time when they need to conserve it the most. As long as the elk remain at lower elevations and on Jumbo's saddle, they need protection from humans and dogs.

According to Montana FWP Wildlife Biologist Vickie Edwards, fluctuating temperatures also affect the elk's winter survival. "With temperatures warming during the day and then freezing at night, the snow has a solid crust that makes it

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challenging for elk to negotiate and requires them to burn a substantial amount of energy to do so – energy they cannot afford to exert because they are in an energy deficit and in the poorest physical condition they will experience all year. Pregnant females are in their last trimester, with their fetuses rapidly gaining weight and developing. Many research projects have shown that calf survivability is closely related to birth weights: the bigger, the fitter, the greater chance of survival. So, these elk really need the habitat and undisturbed security of the South Zone to conserve and replenish their energy supply after such a long winter.”

North Mount Jumbo (areas north of the Saddle Road) remains closed until May 1. In these areas, cow elk will be seeking undisturbed refuge during the last few weeks before calving.

Three areas of Mount Jumbo are open all year: the U.S. West road above I-90, the trail to the “L,” and the road linking Upper Lincoln Hills Drive with Tamarack, including about 40 acres below. Only the “L” trail is open, areas above the “L” remain closed. Dogs must be leashed on the “L” trail and U.S. West road during the winter closure. Violations of the Mount Jumbo winter closure are punishable by a fine of up to \$500. Please call 911 to report closure violations. Vehicle license plates or other identifying characteristics will help law enforcement issue citations to those who violate the closure. Parks and Recreation will post updated information at trailheads and on the department website, [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org).

The new Parks and Trails map, available for \$4 at Parks and Recreation, features detailed trail maps of all City open space and surrounding public lands. For more information, call 721-PARK or visit the Parks and Recreation website at [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org).

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