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PRESS RELEASE

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Mount Jumbo North and South Zones Close December 1

Fast Facts

- Much of Mount Jumbo closes December 1 to protect wintering elk.
- The "L" and I-90 trails remain open.
- Dogs must be leashed during the winter closure.
- Call 721-PARK or visit www.missoulaparks.org for more information.

The return of winter will bring Mount Jumbo's own special elk herd back to its traditional winter range. When winter snows deplete forage at higher elevations, about 75 elk move to Jumbo's lower slopes to feed. To help increase the elk herd's chance for winter survival, critical areas of the mountain are closed seasonally to recreational use. Mount Jumbo's North Zone, from the Saddle Road to the north, is closed from December 1 until May 1. The South Zone, from the Saddle Road south to I-90, is closed from December 1 to March 15. Maps and more information are available at www.missoulaparks.org. The Saddle Road is located at the north end of Lincoln Hills Drive.

Several trails on Mount Jumbo are open all year, including the U.S. West road above I-90 and the "L" trail, both of which are accessible at the Cherry Street trailhead. Short trail sections beginning at Hidden Trail in East Missoula and Marshall Canyon will also remain open. Dogs must be leashed on Mount Jumbo during the winter closure. The road linking Upper Lincoln Hills Drive with Tamarack Street and the 40 acres below the road are also open all year.

Winter hikers and their canine companions can enjoy the numerous trails, scenic views and varied terrain on the North Hills, Mount Sentinel, Rattlesnake Greenway; and in the Pattee Canyon, Blue Mountain and Rattlesnake Recreation Areas. The new Parks and Trails map, available at Currents Aquatics Center and local retailers, features detailed maps of open space trails. The map is priced at \$4. Hikers are

reminded to leash dogs where posted and remove their pet's waste. Call 721-PARK for more information about winter walking and hiking opportunities.

When Mount Jumbo was acquired for public ownership in 1997, an extensive public process was conducted to design a long-term management plan to preserve all of the mountain's resources. Wildlife experts, citizens, and the City Council worked together to design a plan to preserve and protect Jumbo's wildlife, vegetation and open space characteristics. During harsh winter months, when food is scarce, elk and mule deer must strike a balance between the reduced calories they consume and the energy they expend to stay warm and move through the 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.

For more information about the Mount Jumbo management plan, visit www.missoulaparks.org or phone Conservation Lands Manager Morgan Valliant at 552-6263.

Frequently asked questions about the Mount Jumbo elk herd

What's at stake if folks ignore the closure?

The loss of the Jumbo elk herd. The 75 or so elk that winter on Mt. Jumbo face serious danger. Their chances of survival dwindle if disturbed repeatedly by people and dogs.

Are people really the problem?

Yes. Elk view people as predators, and run from them. Racing through deep snow takes enormous energy at a time when elk are already stressed by the cold and effort it takes to paw through snow for food. Every time elk run, they deplete the fat reserves they need to survive the winter.

Why can't the elk just move elsewhere?

Mt. Jumbo makes up about 2/3 of the elk herd's winter range. The remaining range is too small to support the entire herd. The elk migrate from points north in the Lolo National Forest to Mt. Jumbo, their only choice for finding enough grass, shelter and solitude.

Hikers and Skiers DO have options—elk DON'T

Under the closure, hikers may climb to Mt. Jumbo's "L" or follow the trail paralleling I 90. Leash dogs and remember that elk and deer are nearby. Winter hikers and their canine companions can enjoy the numerous trails, scenic views and varied terrain on the North Hills, Mount Sentinel, Rattlesnake Greenway, and in the Rattlesnake, Pattee Canyon and Blue Mountain Recreation Areas. Visit www.missoulaparks.org for more information about winter walking and hiking opportunities.

Viewing Jumbo's Elk

Watch them from the Rattlesnake Valley or from downtown. Mornings and evenings usually are best. Look for horse sized animals moving high on the west and south facing open slopes, not far from sheltering trees.

For more information, call Missoula Parks and Recreation, 721-PARK.

****Media Note: Map Attached****

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