

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ABBREVIATED MINUTES
February 9th, 2012
4:00 – 6:00 pm

Present:	Mary Manning	Ethel MacDonald	Absent:
	Tim Aldrich	Adam Liljeblad	Gary Knudsen
	Bert Lindler	Matt Barnes	
	Jeff Stevens	Jenny Tollefson	
	Jed Little	Beth Hann, Park Brd Rep	
	Gabe Millar		

Also Present: Morgan Valliant, Conservation Lands Mgr, Jackie Corday, Open Space Program Mgr, & Jim Habeck

Conservation Lands Annual Update – Morgan Valliant

With the help of the Missoula County Weed District, in 2008 Parks completed a survey of the health of grassland plant communities on all of the North Hills, Mt. Jumbo, and Mt. Sentinel. This weed and native grass inventory helped to direct the management of these communities in 2009, 2010, & 2011. Morgan showed members a map he developed that indicates where and how weed management occurred this past year. Methods and accomplishments included the following integrated noxious weed control actions:

- Grazed weeds on 1085 acres in 109 days on Mt. Sentinel, North Hills, and Mt. Jumbo (in 2006, it took 150 days for the sheep to graze the weeds in the same areas, which thus is one good indication of a decline in weeds).
- Pulled 10.5 acres of weeds on Mt. Jumbo and in the South Hills.
- Sprayed weeds on 52 acres weeds across 571 acres on Mt. Jumbo, North Hills, Mt. Sentinel, the Rattlesnake Greenbelt and in multiple parks in the South Hills.
- Seeded 2020lbs of native grasses and wildflowers across almost 400 acres of Conservation Lands. This was the largest amount in one year thus far, but Morgan said it needs to be double that amount.
- Planted over 1200 native forbs & grasses and ~1,500 trees and shrubs on Mt. Sentinel, Mt. Jumbo, Bancroft Ponds, Greenough Park, and the North Hills.
- Morgan noted that 2011 was the first time in 7 years that his crew did NOT have to spray for Yellowflag iris at Bancroft Ponds.

In addition to noxious weed management actions, Morgan also reviewed other land management actions taken in 2011:

- Finished removal of invasive Norway maples from natural area parks in the South Hills and cleared roughly 3 acres of Norway maples in Greenough park. Removed hundreds of invasive Norway maples from the base of Mt. Jumbo, the Clark Fork Natural Area and Tower Street Conservation Area. Removed roughly 200 invasive Siberian elms from the North Hills and Mt. Jumbo collectively.
- Began a removal campaign for Invasive Golden Willows from riparian areas in the Missoula valley. Golden Willows were removed from Bancroft Ponds Park, the Clark Fork Natural Area and the Tower St. Conservation Area.
- Thinned 218.5 acres of coniferous forests on Mt. Jumbo in an effort to increase forest health by reducing fuel loads and susceptibility of the stand to attack by Mtn. pine beetle.
- Crews and volunteers removed .85 miles of fencing that was a hazard to wildlife and repaired 1.15 miles of fencing.
- Volunteers put in 2022 hours of work on conservation lands in 2011, mostly building trails.

Morgan shared some highlights of the on-going research he and interns are doing:

- They now have 3 yrs of data from sheep grazing that shows the duration of grazing has decreased over time from 6 acres/day in 2006 to 10 acres/day in 2011.
- They researched 3 questions: 1) What are the impacts of grazing on the entire plant community; 2) Do sheep disperse weeds while they graze; and 3) How to incorporate reveg into sheep grazing program.

- Research showed that a small number of seeds do remain viable and germinate in sheep droppings. The majority of seeds that germinated were sulfur cinquefoil and tumble mustard. Cheat grass also germinated.

Morgan also informed members about the successful efforts to obtain grant funds for his various programs:

- Parks was awarded an \$8,908 grant from the MT Department of Agriculture to continue a long-term research project studying the impacts of sheep grazing for noxious weed control and how to best incorporate native reseeding regimes into a sheep grazing program.
- Parks was awarded \$7,347 from the Dept. of Agriculture to control noxious weeds on Mt. Sentinel and in the South Hills as part of a cooperative grant through the Missoula County Weed District.
- Parks was awarded \$15k from the Missoula County Weed District for vegetation Management on Missoula's Conservation Lands.

Open Space Updates

Jackie updated members on several projects:

- 1) Fred Stout Property – Community Farm & Agriculture Coalition (CFAC) has been discussing the possibility of managing an incubator farm for quite some time, and this parcel seemed like a great candidate for them to consider. Their board met on Jan. 31st and Bonnie Buckingham, CFAC's ED, informed Jackie that they are interested in pursuing the incubator farm idea as well as working with the Open Space Program to preserve farmland, even if it doesn't necessarily work as an incubator site. They would like to know a ball-park figure of how much the Stout property is worth in order to know if it is within our reach, so Jackie will pursue that information.
- 2) Lemm property – FVLT received approval from their board to make an offer on the Lemm parcel. The offer has been made and it will likely take several months before the parties can agree to terms.
- 3) Edgell Property off Deer Creek Rd – Dave Edgell informed Jackie in early February that he was willing to go forward with obtaining an appraisal on the 66 acre parcel. Dave and the City will split the \$3000 fee. The appraisal should be completed by mid-March.
- 4) Federal Transportation Bills – The House and Senate T-Bills would dramatically negatively impact CTEP, Safe Routes to Schools, and Recreational Trails Program funding. Many national groups that advocate for better bike/ped funding have been working hard to support amendments to improve the Senate Bill (the House Bill is so bad that the strategy has been to defeat it). Missoula has received approximately \$300,000+ in CTEP funds/year and the County receives about \$200,000, and thus it is our most important funding source for extending the bicycle/commuter network. Accordingly, Jackie has devoted significant time to supporting efforts to improve the Senate Bill by communicating with our Senators' Transportation staff, drafting letters, and a press release.
- 5) Adopt a quadrant – Jackie informed members that many of the most significant and/or obvious Cornerstone properties have either been preserved or the owners have been contacted and are not interested. Thus, it is definitely becoming more challenging to find worthy projects. She suggested that it would be helpful to have many more "eyes on the land" to look for potential opportunities and it would give OSAC members a chance to be proactive. To make it manageable for members, she divided the Open Space Plan area into 4 quadrants – Russell Street serves as the east/west boundary and the Clark Fork River as the north/south boundary. She asked members to volunteer to look for potential open space projects in their quadrant of interest – if the land was listed, Jackie asked members to write down the listing agent and telephone number so that she could follow up on the parcel. If the land wasn't listed, then just bring a description of where it is located so that Jackie can look up the owner. Members liked the opportunity to be proactive and volunteered as follows: NW – Bert & Jed; NE – Mary, Adam, Jed, Beth & Gabe; SW – Matt; and SE – Tim, Matt, Ethel, & Gabe.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm with the next meeting date scheduled for 4:00–6:00pm on March 8th at Currents.