

**Missoula Parks and Recreation Department**  
**Policy for Permitting events on City Conservation Lands**

3/1/13

The Missoula Parks and Recreation Department (MPR) receives numerous requests from citizens to hold special events on Missoula's conservation lands system. Additionally, many smaller events (educational tours, trainings, small gatherings etc.) are held on conservation lands without MPR's knowledge, permission or input. While MPR has a system in place to permit events in developed parks (and certain conservation lands) the Parks and Recreation Board has placed a moratorium on events across the majority of City conservation lands. The following recommendations were developed to assist MPR staff and the MPR Board in developing a system for permitting events on City conservation lands that allows events but limits impacts on natural, cultural and recreational resources. These recommendations were drafted with input from the Conservation Lands Advisory Committee, the Director, Recreation Superintendent, Open Space Manager and Conservation Lands Manager of the MPR and a subcommittee of the Missoula Parks Board.

**EVENTS WHICH REQUIRE A CONSERVATION LANDS SPECIAL USE PERMIT**

**Special Event** - a planned activity of 12 or more people advertised to the public or exclusive activity targeted at a specific group.

**Commercial Event** - Any event charging a fee to participant. All commercial events, regardless of number of participants require a permit

**Off-Trail Event** – An event which includes participants traveling more than 10ft off the trail edge. All off-trail events, require a permit regardless of number of participants. No events w/more than 20 people will be allowed to travel off-trail.

**Exceptions** – events on the Kim Williams Trail, Rattlesnake Greenbelt Main Trail, the Clark Fork Natural Area, Greenough Park Trails 60" or greater in width and the Moon-Randolph Homestead do not require a conservation lands special use permit. Events in these areas are required to obtain a Use Permit from the Parks Department.

**GENERAL DEFINITIONS**

**Conservation Lands** - the system of Park Preserves and Public Natural Areas as defined by the Conservation Lands Management Plan and/or managed by the Conservation Lands Program of

the Missoula Parks and Recreation Department.

<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/index.aspx?nid=867>

**Park Preserves** - are generally greater than 100 acres. Management priority is on preserving and improving native habitats and achieving an appropriate balance between resource protection and public use. Areas are largely undeveloped except at access points where user amenities may exist. Trail systems are typically dirt trails with some Single-lane dirt roads. Examples of park preserves include Mt. Jumbo, Mt. Sentinel, the North Hills and the Tower St. Conservation Area

**Public Natural Areas** - are usually no less than 10 acres. Management emphasis is on resource protection with appropriate public access provided. Level of development is commensurate with level of public use so long as resource values are preserved. Developments may include roads, parking lots, paved and dirt trails, environmental education/interpretative areas, picnic sites and visitor support facilities. Examples of public natural areas include Greenough Park, The Clark Fork Natural Area, and Moose Can Gully.

**Primitive Road** - a road constructed of natural and/or imported materials wide enough (typically 12ft. or wider) to allow use by vehicles.

**Developed Trails** - a constructed path between 24in. and 60 in. wide that may be composed of natural or imported materials. Allows two individuals to pass side-by-side.

**Small Event** - a one-day event with 12-49 participants or a multi-day event held on the same location with a cumulative total of no more than 49 participants.

**Large Event** - A one-day event with 50 to 500 participants or a multi-day event held on the same location with a cumulative total of 50 or more participants.

**Competitive Event** - An event or activity in which two or more persons try to exceed the performance of each other or another person in a physical activity.

**Educational Event** - an event where all activities are focused on increasing the knowledge of participants.

**Missoula Parks and Recreation Sponsored Event** - a special event focused on raising awareness about management of Missoula's Conservation Lands and dedicated to generating funds for management of Missoula's Conservation Lands. These events shall be managed in accordance with resource requirements and considerations outlined in the special use permit but shall not be required to obtain a permit.

### **SPECIAL RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Events shall not be permitted on Mt. Jumbo's backbone trail due to the poor condition and technical-nature of this trail.

2. The Conservation Lands Manager or MPR Department Head, with appropriate agency or staff consultations, shall have the authority to cancel any event if conditions (eg. weather, trail conditions, fire conditions, emergency wildlife closures etc.) are such that the impacts of the event will exceed those outlined in the original permit or in cases where public safety is a concern. A rescheduling plan must be submitted as part of the original permit application.

3. An employee or representative of the Conservation Lands Program shall document site conditions before permitting an event and after the event.

4. No event shall reserve more than 1/2 of the parking spaces at any main trailhead.

5. Large events and/or competitive events shall-only be permitted on Primitive Roads or on developed trails a minimum of 60 in. in width.

6. All events are required to provide an Event Deposit of \$400.

7. For events which charge a fee to participants:

For small events which do not require MPR staff to document pre & post-conditions or to staff the event a minimum fee of \$50, or 25% of gross revenue (whichever is greater) shall be charged and go towards the management of Missoula's Conservation Lands.

For any event which requires MPR staff to document pre & post-conditions and/or to staff the event a permit fee shall be established to recoup the direct expenses of MPR. Additionally, 25% of gross revenue shall go towards management of Missoula's Conservation Lands.

Volunteer or other-in-kind services which directly meet goals of the CLM plan and the Department may be eligible for reduction in fees with Parks and Recreation Board approval.

8. All events shall "pack-out" any waste generated by the event.

9. Events with more than 20 people shall not be allowed to travel off-trail except as part of an approved land management activity.

10. All events shall include a component educating participants about responsible recreation and the importance of Missoula's Conservation Lands.

11. No events larger than 500 participants shall be permitted on Missoula's Conservation Lands.

12. The conservation lands manager may require additional conditions, if necessary, to limit impacts to natural, cultural and recreational requirements.

### **LARGE EVENT REQUIREMENTS**

1. Large Events shall not be:

- held on the North Hills Ridge trail due to the presence of sensitive plant communities
- permitted on a single track trail

2. If a large event is scheduled to last more than 2 hours, the event must supply an appropriate number of portable toilets and/or have an approved plan for providing restrooms. MPR reserves the right to require restroom services at the start of any event.

3. Every large event must submit a parking/transportation plan.

4. Every large event must submit a waste management plan. Use of park garbage cans for waste generated by a large event is not acceptable.

5. Every large event must submit a resource protection plan which outlines how the event will mitigate impacts.

6. A minimum of one MPR staff must be present on the day of every large event.

7. Maximum Number of events per Year:

Considering resource constraints no more than 4 large events will be permitted per year. No more than two large events shall be permitted annually on any one trail segment. (Areas excluded from this requirement include: the Kim Williams Trail, Rattlesnake Greenbelt Main Trail, any Public Natural Area with a developed trail system of 60" or greater and the Moon-Randolph Homestead where a Park Use (not Conservation Lands) Permit is required.)

8. Seasonal deadlines for submitting Large Event permit requests:

A. Applications for permits for large events on areas limited to no more than 4 events per year as described in recommendation #7 must be submitted to MPR by November 1<sup>st</sup> with notification of award of permit by January 10th. Large Event permits will be awarded to applicants who meet all permit criteria on a first-come first-serve basis.

B. Applications for large event permits on all other Conservation Lands (see recommendation #7 above) must be submitted to MPR a minimum of 2 months prior to the event date.

### **SMALL EVENT REQUIREMENTS**

1. All small event permit requests must be submitted no later than 1 month prior to the event.

2. No more than 2 off-trail events per year shall be permitted be in the same general area.

### **PERMITTING PROCEDURES**

The Parks and Recreation Board may waive specific requirements if the event organizer is able to adequately demonstrate they can mitigate impacts to natural, recreational and cultural resources on site. If event organizer anticipates requesting a waiver of specific permit requirements a request for consideration must be submitted to the Missoula Parks and Recreation Board a minimum of 4 months prior to the event.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

*Staff and/or Board tasks necessary to implement permitting include:*

1. Develop an internal checklist for scoring permits and documenting conditions before and after an event.
2. Periodic analyses of staff resources required to permit and oversee events shall be conducted to ensure that MPR staffing levels are adequate to effectively meet the goal of this permitting procedure.
4. Develop a program and process for multi-year permits for small events and educational events which occur on an annual basis.
5. Develop a short-form permit for local schools, bona fide educational non-profits, and local governmental organizations where emphasis is on environmental education and outdoor education for students K-12. If these organizations are charging a fee for their educational programs MPR should define an appropriate permit fee based on total user days plus a base fee.
6. Pilot Implementation 2013- It is the recommendation of the MPR staff and the MPR board sub-committee that the implementations of a special event permit system on conservations lands occur in phases. In 2013, Parks staff will proceed with two pilot projects to test the feasibility of this permit process and gauge the time commitments required to oversee this process. MPR staff will work with one long-running large event (the Pengelly Double-Dip) to assure that this event can meet the policy outlined above. MPR staff will also identify a new partner interested in designing a large event following the policy outlined above. In the fall of 2013, lessons learned from overseeing the implementation of these events will be used by MRP staff to finalize a Conservation Lands Special Use Permit for adoption by the MPR Board.