

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Missoula City Parks and Recreation Board and Staff wish to thank the following citizens, elected and appointed officials and consultants for the numerous hours devoted in the development of this plan. It is through citizen efforts that Missoula remains a desirable place for all to live, work and play. Missoula's Open Space System is one of the many defining characteristics of the Missoula valley. Missoula has a legacy of excellence in developing and providing access to quality parks, recreation, trails and Conservation Lands. Responsible stewardship of our Conservation Lands is an essential component for maintaining harmony between human use and preservation of our local natural environments. We recognize and acknowledge the following citizens for their roles in developing the framework by which these valuable public assets will be managed.

**Conservation Lands Citizen Working Group (CWG)**

The Conservation Lands Citizen Working Group studied factors and made recommendations to the city and its consultant on various aspects of Conservation Lands management planning. This group, with significant input from the public, was responsible for developing the guiding principles and goals by which the Conservation Lands System will be managed. These citizens remained dedicated to the process through countless hours of night meetings, public open houses and editing.

Spencer Bradford	Allen Byrd	Beverly Dupree	Loren Flynn
Scott Hauser	Aaron Kindle	Jake Kreilick	Stephanie Lauer
Peter Lesica	Bert Lindler	Kathleen Kennedy	Colleen Matt
Wendy Ninteman	Alina Niklison	Kylie Paul	Michael Pecora
Graham Roy	Steve Shelly	Dave Spildie	John Weyhrich
Virginia Tribe (Facilitator)			

**Conservation Lands Management Plan Technical Advisory Committee (CLTAC)**

The Conservation Lands Technical Advisory Committee provided a technical sounding board for Park's staff and their consultants during plan development. This group was composed of local experts in natural and recreational resource management. Many of these members have been actively involved with the management of Missoula's Conservation Lands for years. These individuals provided sound technical and scientific input from a local perspective. This input was critical for developing a Conservation Lands Management Plan unique to Missoula.

Vickie Edwards	Amy Gannon	Jed Little	Jerry Marks
Mary Manning	Marilyn Marler	Giles Thelen	Kevin Verlanic
Ronald Wakimoto	Janet Sproull – proofing		

**City Parks and Recreation Board**

Dale Harris	Patrick King	Heidi MacDonald	John O'Connor
Norma Nickerson	Susan Ridgeway	Janet Sproull	
Tim Bechtold*	Charlie Vandam*	Kevin Verlanic*	

\*Past members.

**Missoula City Council**

Ed Childers	Dick Haines	Lyn Hellegaard	Roy Houseman
Bob Jaffe	Renee Mitchell	Marilyn Marler	Stacy Rye
Dave Strohmaier	Pam Walzer	Jason Wiener	Jon Wilkins

**Missoula Mayor**

John Engen

**Missoula Parks Department Staff (involved in CLM process)**

Donna Gaukler, Director Missoula Parks and Recreation  
Morgan Valliant, Conservation Lands Manager  
Jacquelyn Corday, Open Space Program Manager,  
Becky Goodrich, Communication Specialist  
Betsy Willett, Administrative Secretary  
Amy Gould, Administrative Assistant  
Diane Levine, Administrative Assistant

**Consultant Team**

Ecosystem Research Group  
[www.ecosystemrg.com](http://www.ecosystemrg.com)

The following were unanimously approved during the creation of this plan:

- Approval of Budget for Plan – City Council, August 2008
- Approval of Conservation Lands Citizen Working Group –Missoula Parks Board, February 19, 2009
- Approval of Conservation Lands Technical Advisory Committee –Missoula Parks Board, March 2009
- Approval of Final Plan – Missoula Parks Board
- Adoption of Final Plan – Missoula City Council and Mayor

## **SYNOPSIS OF MISSOULA'S CONSERVATION LANDS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Missoula's Conservation Lands system (also referred to as Missoula's Open Space System) has grown to include 100s of acres of open grasslands on gentle to steep hillsides, mixed coniferous forests, riparian areas ranging from half mile wide floodplains, to cattail wetlands, to narrow woody draws, and unique cushion plant communities. The great diversity of land types on the City's 3,600+ acres of Conservation Lands provides important wildlife, fish, and bird habitat and numerous recreational opportunities for citizens and visitors. These lands are the beautiful background to our downtown, the University, and many of our neighborhoods and thus provide tremendous economic benefits. Additionally, conservation lands provide important ecosystem services such as improving water quality and quantity, enhancing air quality, and serving as flood control.

Along with the growth in number of acres acquired over the past 20 years has come substantial population growth and increased recreational use of these lands. The need to comprehensively address management of all Conservation Lands together as a system was recognized as crucial for maintaining their environmental viability. This plan has been created in order to help balance the needs of citizens who love to utilize these lands for recreation, environmental education, and rejuvenation with protecting the natural resources. Management of the habitat types to promote healthy native plants and wildlife is a critical component of this plan. By far the largest threats to native habitats on Conservation Lands are non-native invasive species (weeds) and human-caused impacts. Throughout chapter four are recommendations to mitigate impacts and priorities for non-native plant management.

Given the close proximity of our Conservation Lands to the City, they offer quick and easy access for all types of recreation. A well designed system of trails, trailheads and recreational programs helps minimize negative impacts intensive recreational use can cause. Guidelines for trail and trailhead development (section 5.2.1) were created. Additional recommendations for drafting a policy for special use permits, enforcing rules and mitigating damage were also developed. The importance of using Conservation Lands for educational activities and to promote volunteerism is addressed. Through classes, field trips and research, stewardship grows within our community. Volunteerism has been and will continue to be a major component of this plan.

### **Development of Management Goals**

The framework for much of this plan was developed by a Citizens Working Group with input from two public open houses and a public opinion survey. The following goals, and their related policies (see Chapter 3), provide recommendations on how Conservation Lands should be managed.

- Complete and maintain an up to date inventory of each land parcel prioritizing its conservation values.

- Establish, implement and publicize general rules and management policies that apply to Conservation Lands.
- Maintain habitat types and vegetation types on Conservation Lands including special plants and habitat types.
- Restore native and disturbed habitat on Conservation Lands.
- Provide a diverse and appropriate range of recreational and educational activities on Conservation Lands while limiting impacts by users to the ecological and cultural resource.
- Evaluate the results of management strategies on Conservation lands and adjust management for desired results accordingly
- Develop adequate funding sources, partnerships and program to realize Management Plan goals.

These goals provide the framework for managing and preserving this incredible natural resource for present and future generations. Chapter six includes specific strategies to implement these goals.



**To sit in the shade on a fine day and look upon the verdant green hills is the most perfect refreshment. - Jane Austin**