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## MISSOULA PARKS AND RECREATION PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release August 31, 2022

### **Sheep return to City open space, some areas temporarily closed to dogs**

The City of Missoula’s wooliest employees are back this summer to help with noxious weed control on City Open Space. Limited areas on the North Hills and Mount Jumbo will be temporarily closed to dogs starting June 20 as about 800 sheep graze on invasive species like dalmatian toadflax, leafy spurge, and spotted knapweed. Hiking without pets is permitted during dog closures; visit trailheads and [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org) for closure maps and more information.

Targeted grazing is a low-cost, effective way to control weeds and helps reduce reliance on chemical herbicides on City open space, says Conservation Lands Manager Jeff Gicklhorn. Grazing areas are completely closed to dogs this year because of the size of the sheep herd and the risks to both sheep and domestic dogs.

“At over 800 head, this by far the largest grazing project the City has ever undertaken,” says Conservation Lands Manager Jeff Gicklhorn. “In the past, we’ve had maybe 100-200 sheep on open space lands. With a herd this large, the potential for injury to both sheep and domestic dogs increases exponentially. No matter how well a dog is trained, his instinct to chase could put both him and the sheep in danger. In addition, livestock guardian dogs are not friendly toward other dogs or humans. They are trained to attack predators and can severely injure or kill a domestic dog.” Gicklhorn reminds hikers to avoid the sheep and their canine protectors during the dog closures.

(more)

The initial North Hills temporary dog closure includes the Froelich (Orange and I-90), Waterworks, and Mountain View trailheads from approximately June 20 to July 10. The Waterworks trailhead remains closed for construction but should re-open by mid-July. During the temporary closure, dogs are permitted at the North Hills Sunlight Lands trailheads but must be under excellent voice recall or leashed. Later in July and into August, the herd will move to the Sunlight lands and then Mount Jumbo's southern face and Saddle area. Missoula Animal Control will help enforce the closures.

Gicklhorn encourages residents to comply with the dog closures to keep their pets and the sheep safe. "The grazing program is a cost-effective, sustainable way to control noxious weeds on conservation lands and encourage the beneficial and beautiful wildflowers and native grasses we all enjoy. By working together, residents, pet owners and land managers can save money, preserve the natural landscape, and reduce the need for chemical herbicides," he says. Residents can call 911 to report closure violations and are encouraged to note vehicle license plates of violators if possible.

The project is funded by the 2018 Conservation Lands Mill Levy. Maps and closure notices will be posted online and at trailheads. Visit [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org) for updates, or join the Parks and Recreation News Flash email list at [Notify Me • City of Missoula • CivicEngage](#).

(end)

ATTACHED: Closure signs and map of North Hills grazing area

# CAUTION

## SHEEP AT WORK AHEAD

### GRAZING WEED CONTROL PROGRAM

Did you know that grazing animals can be used to control invasive weeds? When deployed at the appropriate time of year when weeds like leafy spurge and spotted knapweed are flowering, grazing animals like sheep will eat the flowers and prevent these pesky plants from producing seed. Over time, sheep grazed in this way can help control and contain widespread infestations of weeds allowing managers to employ other control methods like re-seeding native plants and limited chemical applications to begin turning the tides against invasive plants.

### HOW TO RECREATE IN THE PRESENCE OF SHEEP

- ◆ **LEAVE YOUR DOG AT HOME** while sheep are in the area. Sheep are protected by guard dogs who will attack and kill domestic dogs
- ◆ **SLOW DOWN AND CONSIDER AN ALTERNATE ROUTE** if you encounter sheep on the trail
- ◆ **FOLLOW ANY DIRECTIONS GIVEN BY THE SHEEP HERDER**
- ◆ **BE RESPECTFUL AND ENJOY**

For the most part your recreation will not be affected by sheep. Just be aware and enjoy!



Sheep will be in this area approximately  
June 20 to July 10.

For questions about this program contact Jeff Gicklhorn, City Conservation Lands Manager @ 552-6691

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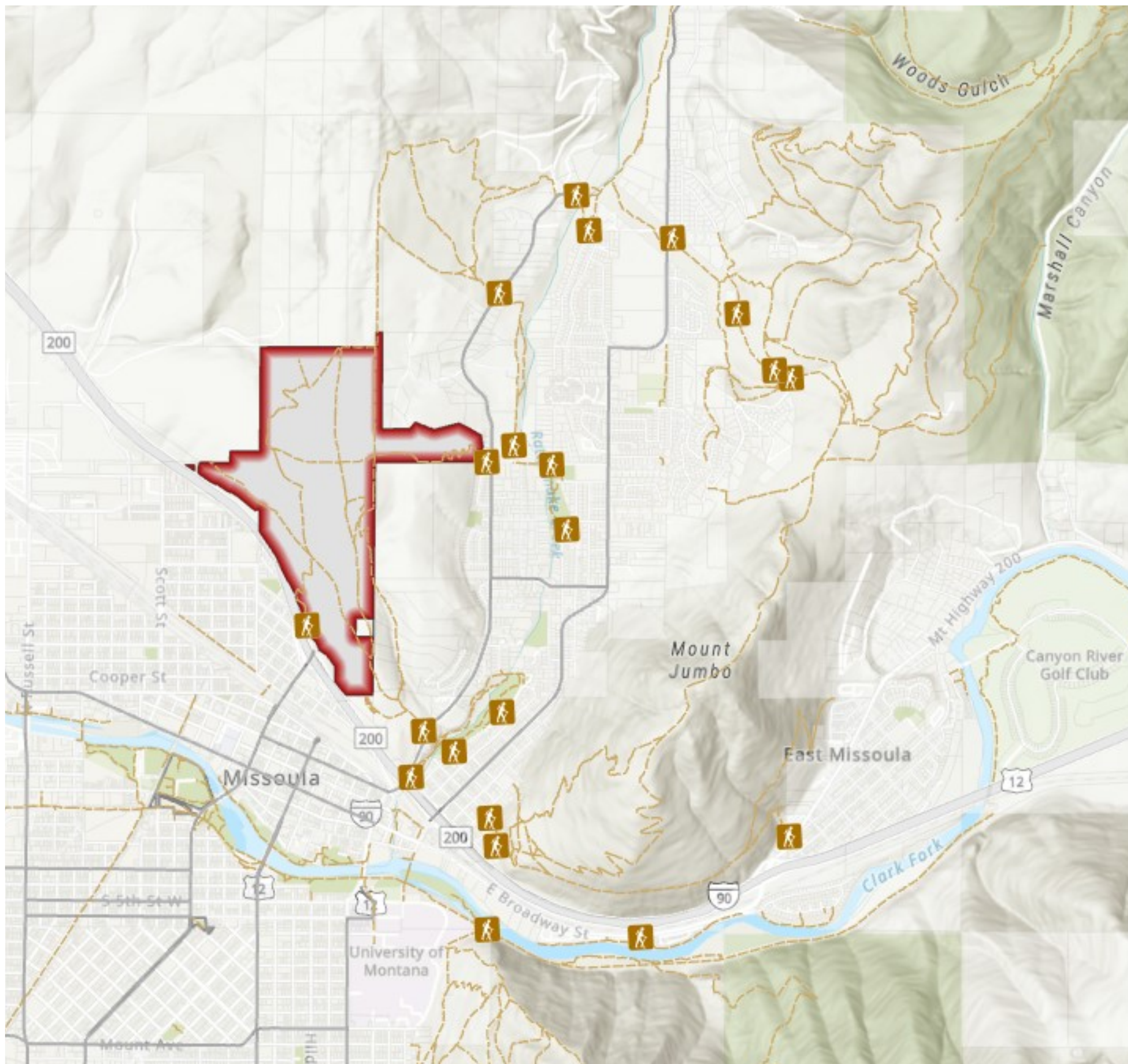


**THANK YOU!**

# ATTENTION

## DOG CLOSURE IN EFFECT

PER M.M.C. 6.07



The City Conservation Lands shown in red above are currently **CLOSED TO ALL DOGS** for the duration of time sheep and guard dogs are present.

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