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**JOIN US ON JUNE 2,
National Trails Day,
for the Grand Opening
of Tenmile Creek Park!
Details to come soon.**

A WALK ON THE MILD SIDE

Tenmile Creek Park offers three miles of wide, flat trails — accessible to all

IF YOU SEE SARAH JAEGER on a trail, chances are you'll see her dogs bounding beside her.

"Since I was a little kid, I would walk in the woods with my dogs," Sarah said. "It feeds my soul — it's trite sounding, but it's true."

The dogs have come and gone over the years. There's been Fred the Dachshund. There's been Ivy the Wheaten terrier. Now, Archie and Oona, also Wheaten terriers, accompany Sarah on her walks.

Fred became a local celebrity for raising pledges for PPLT's Don't Fence Me In trail run. For several years he earned top-dog honors as top pledge-earner; one year he raised more than \$1,500.

Ivy helped Sarah through a rough time. "I was really close to my

mother," Sarah said. "During the process of her dying, I walked out my grief with Ivy."

Oona and Archie have a different responsibility — to make sure Sarah continues her walks in the woods. A neurological disease has slowed her pace and limited the distance she can go, but Sarah still answers the dogs' pleas to expend their energy. She takes them to the flat trail system at PPLT's Tenmile Creek Park, near Fort Harrison.

Tenmile Creek Park is part of PPLT's Peaks to Creeks Initiative and is a

thriving example of community conservation, one of PPLT's core focus areas. Community conservation is an approach to conservation that strives for inclusivity and providing outdoor access to a broader segment of a community.

"I see people who would never be on the South Hills trails, and they are so grateful to have a place to go. There is such a broad array of people out there."

—Sarah Jaeger

Sarah has been on PPLT's board of directors since 2005. It shouldn't be surprising that the dog walk event of Don't Fence Me In was her idea. She's seen the work of PPLT evolve from establishing the Mount Ascension Natural Park for hikers and mountain bikers to providing outdoor access to those with limited mobility.

"My perspective was broadened when I got the neurological disease," she said. "I want wide, flat trails so I want to help make them happen."

And by broadening outdoor access to people of all abilities, PPLT is broadening the community that benefits from its work.

"The types of people I see there, they are so diverse," Sarah said. "I see people who would never be on the South Hills trails, and they are so grateful to have a place to go. I see

people visiting the V.A. from out of town, and they are so happy to have a place to walk.

I've seen a couple out there riding recumbent bikes. I've seen tiny, little kids on bikes — they can bike safely. There is such a broad array of people out there."

And, of course, she sees dogs.

"My dogs love the creek. They can run. There are regulars out there. They know the dogs, and they know the people."

"I've even seen a three-legged dog out there," Sarah said.



**Sarah Jaeger and Aven Baker
at Tenmile Creek Park**

COMING MAY 12
2018 MARKS THE 18TH
ANNIVERSARY OF DFMI

HAVE YOU REGISTERED for Don't Fence Me In yet? Don't worry; there is still time! Visit pricklypearlt.org to register.

The race this year is May 12. As usual, there are the 30k, 12k, 5k and 5k dog walk — all taking place on Helena's fabulous South Hills trail system. The runs/walk begin and end at Pioneer-Heritage Park (aka Anchor Park) located at the south end of the Downtown Helena Walking Mall, next to the Lewis & Clark County Library.

Overall male and female winners in each distance will win Salomon shoes. First place male and female finishers in each age group in each event will also be awarded a prize. The dog walk is noncompetitive.



But don't feel like you need to be a fast runner to be a winner! Fabulous prizes are also available for motivated pledge getters — set up your own pledge page on CrowdRise.com (search for "Don't Fence Me In").

The team that raises the most pledges will win a stay for six people at the North Fork Crossing Lodge on the beautiful Blackfoot River. Enjoy a gourmet dinner and breakfast!

The top individual pledge-getter gets to choose between brewing E-Trail beer for next year's race with Blackfoot River Brewing OR working with the owner of Big Dipper to create your own ice cream flavor that will be featured for a whole week!

If you raise \$500 in pledges, you'll receive a handmade Happy Trail ceramic cup. If you raise at least \$100 in pledges, you will receive a Happy Trails growler.

For more information about Don't Fence Me In, please visit pricklypearlt.org or call the PPLT office at 406-442-0490.



Eliza Wiley

2018 DON'T FENCE ME IN SCHEDULE

6:30 a.m.	30k packet pickup begins (PLEASE NOTE: THERE IS NO RACE-DAY REGISTRATION FOR THE 30k)
7:30 a.m.	30k run begins
8 – 9:30 a.m.	Packet pick-up and late registration for 12k, 5k, and 5k dog walk
10 a.m.	12k run and walk begins
10:30 a.m.	5k run and walk begins
10:30 a.m.	Open Space Fair begins
10:45 a.m.	5k dog walk begins
12 noon	Awards ceremony
12:30 p.m.	DFMI after-party at the Blackfoot, co-sponsored by CWG Architects, Blackfoot River Brewing and PPLT and featuring Don't Fence Me In's signature beer, E-Trail pale ale

See the list of generous sponsors on page 4.

PPLT WELCOMES NEW PROJECT
ASSOCIATE TRAVIS VINCENT

TRAVIS VINCENT traveled a long road to get back home to Montana. Before becoming PPLT's newest project staff member, Travis lived in Russia, Italy, California, Namibia and Washington, D.C.

Travis grew up on the shores of Flathead Lake in Bigfork, camping, hunting and hiking with his family. He continued to explore western Montana while pursuing his undergraduate degree in Missoula. Trying his hand in international affairs, Travis did research in southwest Russia and worked for a policy institute on Stanford's campus before turning back to conservation and the outdoors. He recently received his master's degree in economics and environmental affairs from Johns Hopkins University.

Travis and his energetic pointer, Giulio, are happy to have settled in Helena. They are frequently exploring the South Hills and are gearing up to play on and in the water this spring.

We dug a little deeper into Travis' motivation to work in conservation and his views on PPLT's work supporting land projects in central Montana. Here's how he responded:

Why did you return to Montana?

I had always planned on returning to Montana someday. I knew we had something special here, but after living in a handful of places around the world, I realized just how special. Living in the city, it was difficult to escape just to go on a run or swim, let alone backpack. Here, in 20 minutes, I can be really out of town in several directions. I run up a mountain behind my house every other day. There's something to be said about all the opportunities at our doorstep to camp, fish and hike in dramatic and remote landscapes. And I might be a little biased, but Montanans are a genuinely kind and fun group of people.

Why do you think open space is important?

Where do I begin?! Personally, I need open space to feel free and connected to the natural world. I need to know that there are places in the world that are still wild. In an economic sense, protecting open space is just wise financial planning. It's funny, Montana is a small state in so many ways, but when it comes to open space and the environment, we're a big deal.

We are world-renowned for our fishing, biking, camping, hiking, skiing and just lookin' around. Economics at its core is the allocation of scarce resources — our open space is a huge resource and we can use it in a renewable way or we can let it go to waste, but we can't get it back.

Why should people care about private land conservation?

We are so fortunate to have the level of public land and access in Montana that we do, but we often take private land conservation for granted. If not for concerted, thoughtful efforts by individual Montana landowners, natural waters and ecosystems cannot function, and wildlife cannot thrive. Conservation easements and other creative tools and programs that support private land conservation have allowed us to expand wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities and scenic space — all things valued by Montanans. It is such a great feeling to meet with our ranchers and



landowners, who will do whatever it takes to make sure their land remains as open forest, crop and grazing land. We need to double down on our support for the tools and funding sources that make conservation on private lands a more competitive option, so landowners can stay afloat and protect the land that benefits us all. Otherwise, the Big Sky will be a big suburb.

What's your favorite trail? (This is a question everyone gets)

I hesitate to give away one of my family's favorite backpacking spots, but the loop up to Glacier, Turquoise and Lace lakes in the Missions is pretty idyllic. You can do a little bit of everything there — get some scrambling in, catch a few cutthroat, pick hucks and even try a 30-second "swim" in the glacial water. Since middle school, my dad and I have gone on an annual backpack trip to the Missions; it's one of my favorite traditions.



MOUNTAIN LION
ALERT

BE CAREFUL OUT THERE!

At least one mountain lion has been spotted recently on Mount Helena. It's not uncommon to see mountain lions when recreating in mountain lion country, particularly in the pre-dawn and late evening hours when they're most active.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks offers the following guidelines to keep in mind while recreating in mountain lion country, such as the South Hills Trail System:

- Don't recreate alone
- Keep children close
- Carry and be prepared to use bear spray
- Keep pets under control
- Minimize recreation at dawn and dusk

If you do encounter a mountain lion:

- Do not approach it
- Do not run
- Do not crouch down
- Appear large
- Be vocal – talk calmly and regularly

If a mountain lion attacks, aggressively defend yourself however you can: rocks, sticks, jackets, pepper spray, etc. Do your best to remain facing the mountain lion.

More information:
<http://fwp.mt.gov/recreation/safety/wildlife/lion/lionBehave.html>

REPORT: HELENA RESIDENTS CONSIDER TRAIL SYSTEM VERY IMPORTANT TO QUALITY OF LIFE

ACCORDING TO A REPORT issued by the University of Montana’s Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR), more than 63,000 hikers, runners, walkers and bikers recreated in the South Hills trail system in the summer of 2017. ITRR’s report was based on survey data it collected between May and September last year.

Surveyors with ITRR intercepted 950 trail users between May and September 2017 to inquire about their trail use and any spending in the Helena area. Combining the survey information collected with both manual and electronic counts of users entering the trail system, ITRR estimated that more than 63,000 users took part in outdoor recreation.

Of these numbers, 17,438 were on mountain bikes and 45,602 were on foot. Just over a quarter of all mountain bike activity was from users outside the

local (Lewis and Clark, Jefferson and Broadwater counties) area, and one in five users on foot were nonlocal. Prickly Pear Land Trust is excited about the report’s findings.

“PPLT strives for bettering quality of life benchmarks and this real-time data provides important information to assist

“Not only do Helena’s amazing trails add to the quality of life here, but they are also an amenity for attracting and retaining a high-quality workforce.”

—Dr. Monica Berner, president of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana

in our planning and understanding of the economic and social impacts of our South Hills land acquisition and trails work,” said PPLT executive director Mary Hollow. “It was wonderful to see the high values placed on our work in building the South Hills land

estate and establishing and maintaining the trails system with the city of Helena and U.S. Forest Service over the years.”

“PPLT’s work directly supports one of Montana’s largest economic factors – the outdoor industry. Locally, just for

our trail work alone, it means \$4.3 million annually. That matters in a big way for our local partners who also support our work,” Mary added.

The survey also indicated that more than half of Helena residents surveyed rated the trail system as very important to their quality of life, and 55 percent indicate they use the trails at least occasionally. This is good news in terms of our community’s collective health and well-being.

“Countless studies show the correlation of spending more time outdoors with improved physical and

mental health,” said Dr. Monica Berner, president of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana. “Not only do Helena’s amazing trails add to the quality of life here, but they are also an amenity for attracting and retaining a high-quality workforce. Many of our employees, myself included, incorporate the trails as an integral part of our healthy lifestyle, and consider them to be one of the biggest reasons we love living and working here.”

To read the entire report, visit pricklypearlt.org/itr-releases-trail-usage-report/

A mountain biker enjoys the Ridge Trail



Eliza Wiley

BASIC ETIQUETTE MAKES THE TRAILS A HAPPY PLACE

Note: This ran as a guest editorial in the Independent Record on March 20. We wanted to share it here in case anyone missed it.

KEEP THE TRAILS HAPPY!

With spring finally here, we know folks are itching to get out on the trails. Here are a few trail etiquette reminders to consider as you head to the South Hills to hike, run and bike:

1. Get dirty. If you find yourself encountering a muddy spot or puddle on the trail, go right through the middle of it. Stepping off the trail and going around muddy and wet spots widens the trail, damages natural resources and makes the problem worse. If you are unsure if the trails are too muddy to use, check the Prickly Pear Land Trust Facebook page for most up to date details on trail conditions.

2. Always stay on the trail.

Going off trail creates “social trails” that degrade natural resources and causes unnecessary resources to be expended to reclaim these trails. Some trails in the South Hills cross private property, and the generous landowners who provide for this access appreciate when we keep our impact concentrated on the trail surface.

3. Keep an ear open. When listening to music or podcasts on the trails keep one ear free so you can hear approaching hikers, bikers and runners.

4. Yield to other trail users with a smile. In general, bikers should yield to hikers and runners. When wanting to pass someone on the trail, a friendly “On your left!” is the best way to get someone’s attention. Assuming you don’t have two earbuds in, hearing



those magic words is a nice indicator to calmly step off the trail to allow the faster moving trail user to pass. A smile and “Thank you” go a long way to keeping trail users happy when passing.

5. Be pet proactive. Leash your dog in the parking lot and have your pet (cats and parrots too!) under voice control on the trail at all times. Pick up after your pet and be sure to pack the trash out with you.

Our trail system is a source of community pride and a place where all are welcome and valued. No matter your mode or speed of recreation, everyone has a part to play in keeping our trails a happy and positive place to be.

*Evan Kulesa, Prickly Pear Land Trust
Andrea Opitz, Bike Helena
Eric Sivers, Montana Bicycle Guild
John Tietz, Helena United Cycling
Jesse Zentz, Vigilante Runners
Michael Jacobson, Helena Ultra Runners League*

NEW WEB-BASED TRAIL MAP AVAILABLE NOW ON THE PPLT WEBSITE

PPLT LAUNCHED a web-based digital map on April 19. The Montana Department of Commerce funded the project, and PPLT worked with Kennedy Jenks Consultants to create the map. Don’t worry, PPLT’s paper map and the Avenza PDF map aren’t obsolete. The new web-based map is supplemental to those.

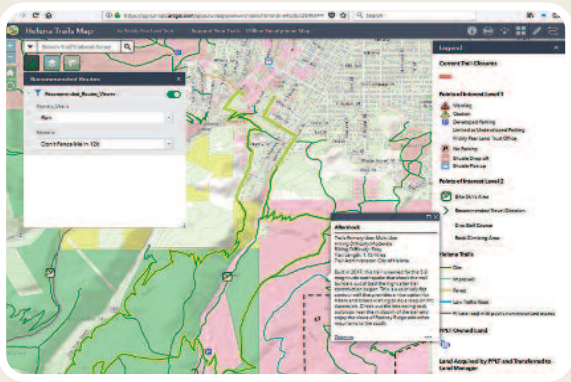
The new map offers:

- The ability to turn on and off certain layers to customize your viewing experience
- Hiking and biking difficulty layers
- Recommended routes for users new to the trail system or those who want to try out something new

- Descriptions of all trails and trailheads
- A larger area of coverage than our paper map can provide
- Other recreational points of interest such as the disc golf course, rock climbing areas, etc.
- Live updates to show trail closures and other information if there is an issue on the system (i.e. blowdowns, fire, construction, etc.)

The map is accessible through the PPLT website and through partner group sites that share the link.

PPLT would love to get feedback from users. The map is fully editable and PPLT would like to be proactive in meeting map-users’ needs.



run at your own pace

The Happy Snails slow running club meets every Tuesday at noon at the Old Shooting Range Trailhead on Davis Gulch. All are welcome! Call the PPLT office at 406-442-0490 for more information.

TRAIL MIX

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to our new members and thanks for joining us! These members joined between November 1, 2017, and March 23, 2018. We're so glad you share our vision of connecting land and people. Together we will continue our work in private land conservation, trails and community conservation!

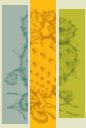
We warmly welcome:

Ron & Char Aasheim
Elizabeth Andrews
Bill Avey & Crystal Coffey-Avey
Sue Bartlett & Gene Fenderson
John & Nina Baucus
Dr. Erik & Monica Bergquist
Mary Blake & Keith Alltucker
Al & Marti Bledsoe
Broadwater Hot Springs & Fitness
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Bob and Peggy Stringer
Steve & Kim Turkiewicz
Eugene Walborn
Arthur Walsh & Susan Pfann
Jim & Shelley White
Ron Whitmoyer
Barry Wootten

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE EXCITING EVENTS

April 23: Trail Work Day
May 12: Don't Fence Me In
May 21: Trail Work Day
June 2: National Trails Day
June 2: Grand Opening of Tenmile Creek Park
June 18: Trail Work Day
July 16: Trail Work Day
Sept. 17: Trail Work Day
Sept. 29: Harvest Moon



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connecting land and people

PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST

40 W. Lawrence, Suite A
PO Box 892, Helena MT 59624
406-442-0490

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Executive Director
Andrea Silverman
Land Protection Coordinator
Lanie White
Development Manager
Claudia Davis
Administrative Services
Evan Kulesa
Trails Coordinator
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Project Manager
Travis Vincent
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SPRING 2018

A WALK ON THE MILD SIDE

DON'T FENCE ME IN COMING MAY 12

TRAILS ETIQUETTE