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Definitions: Conservation Lands, Open Space, Parks

For the purpose of developing recommendations for a comprehensive Conservation Lands Management Plan we need to consider definitions already formally adopted by the community. Please note the following documents:

Open Space Plan 2006, I. Introduction, B. Open Space definitions. Also, see IV. Future Open Space Needs, 1. Open Space types, Pages 23-25 for more detail. Go to
<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/index.aspx?nid=174>

- Master Park Plan Chapter 2, particularly pages 2-1 (parklands inventory), 2-13 & 2-31&32 (conservation lands defined) at
<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/index.aspx?nid=174>
- Mount Jumbo Management Plan (Page 6 of the Plan #1 under "Givens") at
<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentView.aspx?DID=1282>

Also, keep in mind that in some cases lands have been labeled conservation lands and placed under Morgan's direction because the lands are primarily in a natural, undeveloped state and they provide access to nearby nature in a fairly natural environment. These lands, sometimes also called "parks", do not include the amenities or improvements most of you consider when you hear the term "park". Consider that Glacier National Park is called a Park, but primarily consists of lands with conservation values.

To complicate terminology even more, consider that the Trust for Public Lands occasionally polls citizens regarding terminology for bond language to support acquisitions. Open Space or Open Lands is typically considered the broadest term, and most accepted, and may or may not consist of "natural" parks, conservation lands, views and vistas, highly developed parks, etc.

For our purposes in developing a Conservation Lands Management Plan for Missoula, the Staff considers the term Conservation Lands as defined in the plans and pages linked above...or simply lands that are predominantly in a natural state and free of significant improvements such as irrigation and playgrounds..and contain some value as conservation lands as habitat, for environmental learning, outdoor recreation, stewardship, and for connecting citizens and/or wildlife to other open spaces in the area.

Several of the small parcels, most of which are in South Hills and Farviews/Pattee Canyon, are considered Conservation Lands (see Table 2.10 in the Master Park Plan – Small Natural Areas). Most of these lands were dedicated to the City through the subdivision process. While some may no longer host a predominance of native plant species, the lands have not been developed and to the neighborhood these lands (many called Parks) are their most accessible natural areas (or conservation lands). Please view the Farviews/Pattee Canyon DRAFT master plan developed by the residents to better understand

the neighborhoods goals for their natural area parks. The Plan can be viewed at
<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentView.aspx?DID=922>

Other "natural areas" such as Bancroft Duck Ponds, are actually man-made water retention or storm water runoff areas. These conservation lands (or natural area parks) provide important nearby nature for education, children, stewardship, break from the built environment, and even habitat. Even though the area is man-made and rather heavily managed to retain water, the benefits and level of development are most closely related to efforts similar to conservation lands management. Some of these areas even perform the helpful task for improving the water quality before it reaches our rivers or aquifer.