



CITY OF HELENA OPEN LANDS DEPARTMENT
316 North Park Avenue, Room 405
Helena, Montana 59623
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**Environmental Analysis Form
City of Helena Open Lands Department**

1. Proposed Project Name:
Mt Ascension Loop Trail Relocation Project

2. Division:
Open Lands

3. Date:
12-19-2022

PART I – PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed Action:
Trail Construction

2. Department Contact:
Name: Brad Langsather, Open Lands Manager
Address: 316 North Park Avenue, Helena, MT 59623
Telephone: (406) 447-8454
Email Address: blangsather@helenamt.gov

3. Anticipated Schedule: (change as necessary):

Estimated Project Commencement Date: 04-01-2023

Estimated Completion Date: 05-31-2023

Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 0%

Summarize precisely when (what time of year) project phases will be completed:

Winter/Early Spring 2023 – Field Location

Spring/Early Summer 2023 – Construction

A property line survey has determined that a portion of the Mt Ascension Loop Trail located within Mount Ascension Natural Park is currently located on privately owned property. As a remedy for the Mt Ascension Loop Trail encroachment situation, City staff proposes to relocate the trail just south of its existing geographic position to ensure it resides fully on property owned by the City of Helena. To accomplish this task, City staff proposes to machine construct approximately 450 feet of new trail that will be around 5 feet in width.

4. Location affected by proposed action. Include a map. If your project will take place on specific trails, ensure they are clearly identified here by name as well as on your map:

The new trail construction route will be located just south of the private encroachment portion of the Mt Ascension Loop Trail which currently consists of a native surfaced trail route that traverses a steep, heavily wooded north slope on private property for an approximate distance of 450 horizontal feet. Please reference EXHIBIT B, Mt Ascension Loop Trail Relocation Project Map.

Latitude 46.569415

Longitude 112.026122

5. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

a. DEVELOPED

Residential: NA

Industrial (existing shop area): NA

b. OPEN SPACE/WOODLANDS/RECREATION

Open Space /Woodlands/Recreation: Approximately 450 feet in length x 5 feet in width.

c. WETLANDS/RIPARIAN AREA

Wetlands/Riparian Area: NA

d. FLOODPLAIN

Floodplain: NA

e. PRODUCTIVE: IRRIGATED CROPLAND

Productive Irrigated Cropland: NA

f. DRY CROPLAND

Forestry: NA

Rangeland: NA

Other:

6. Permits, Funding, and Overlapping Jurisdiction

a. PERMITS

Agency Name: NA

Permits:

Agency Name:

Permits:

Agency Name:

Permits:

b. FUNDING

Agency Name: NA

Funding Amount:

Agency Name:

Funding Amount:

Agency Name:

Funding Amount:

c. OTHER OVERLAPPING OR ADDITIONAL JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Agency Name: NA

Type of Responsibility:

Agency Name:

Type of Responsibility:

7. Narrative summary of the proposed action (include reasons why this project is necessary and the benefits of the project:

The Mt Ascension Loop Trail is a relatively popular recreational trail located within Mount Ascension Natural Park which is owned and managed by the City of Helena. The location of the original property survey monuments revealed the fact that a portion of the trail, approximately 450 feet in length is located on adjacent privately owned property. The owners of the adjacent property have formally requested that the City of Helena move the trespass portion of the Mt Ascension Loop Trail to a location where it resides entirely on City ownership. Therefore, City staff proposes to construct a new trail route approximately 450 feet in length and 5 feet in width.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

In the event that no action is taken with regards to the proposed Mt Ascension Loop trail relocation project, City staff will be legally obligated to close that portion of the Mt Ascension Loop Trail that resides on private ownership. Closure of the existing trail will undoubtedly result in the creation of a user created route that bypasses the closed segment.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

Implementation of the proposed reroute of an approximate 450 foot portion of the Mt Ascension Loop Trail will allow a popular recreational route to remain in service. Construction activities would be organized to allow for uninterrupted use by ensuring that the new route is serviceable when the old route is closed off.

Other Alternatives:

NA

- 8. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another governmental agency (note any agreements or contracts that would provide control measures of define responsibilities here):**

The City of Helena Parks Department would be fully responsible for locating and constructing the aforementioned relocation segment of the Mt Ascension Loop Trail.

PART II – ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST - Please include a statement either here or under “no action and other alternatives” to describe the impacts of those actions. The checklist typically only illuminates the Proposed Action Impacts.

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment Tables.

a. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can be Mitigated	COMMENTS PROVIDED
1. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture			✓		✓	Grass seed cut/fill slopes, out slope, establish drainage
2. Air quality or objectionable odors				✓		
3. Water quality, quantity and distribution (surface or groundwater)			✓		✓	Out slope the trail prism and install drainage features where appropriate.
4. Existing water right or reservation				✓		
5. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality			✓		✓	Grass seed cut/fill slopes following the completion of construction activities.
6. Unique, endangered, or fragile vegetative species	✓				✓	Conduct a sensitive plant survey prior to the implementation of trail construction activities.
7. Unique, endangered, or fragile wildlife or fisheries species				✓		
8. The nesting or movement of migratory bird species	✓				✓	Conduct a nest search within the impacted area prior to the onset of trail construction activities.
9. Introduction of new species into an area				✓		
10. Changes to abundance or movement of species				✓		

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment Tables.

PART III – NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

1. Summarize the impacts of the proposed action and address any cumulative impacts:

The identified impacts of implementing the Mt Ascension Loop Trail Relocation project are either nonexistent or minor in nature.

PART IV – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public Involvement: Describe how the public is/will be notified to comment on this current EA, the proposed action, and alternatives. If your project work might affect neighboring landowners, have they been contacted?

- Major trailheads posting and/or project site, email to stakeholder list maintained by the City, posting on City website, brief news release, and City social media.
- At least one on-site, or in-neighborhood meeting with stakeholders by City staff, if requested and if deemed appropriate.
- Public notice of the draft, revised draft, and final project analysis on the City’s web page and social media sites. All project analysis documents will be made available to the public on the City of Helena web page.
- A maximum of three public meetings (per public involvement process for HOL Recreation Major projects)

2. Comment Period: Have you provided a formal, 30-day public comment period for this project? If so, when was the comment period and how were comments solicited? What was the outcome of the comments?

Ongoing

3. This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impact, many of which can be mitigated. Is this a true statement for your project? YES NO