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STAGE II FIRE RESTRICTIONS TO BEGIN THURSDAY

Stage II fire restrictions will go into effect at 12:01 a.m. Thursday, July 27, on City of Missoula open space and conservation lands.

Missoula Fire Chief Jason Diehl and Mayor John Engen decided to join federal, state and county officials in moving to Stage II restrictions because of continuing dry conditions and hot weather. The current fire danger is rated as Extreme.

"If conditions continue, we may consider closures of certain areas," Diehl said.

Further restrictions may involve closures of public lands but most likely will be recreational "hoot owl" closures beginning in the afternoons.

Stage II restrictions prohibit campfires. Smoking is prohibited except within an enclosed vehicle or building or while stopped in an area that is clear of all flammable materials in a 3-foot circle.

Stage II restrictions on City open space and conservation lands also prohibit operating motorized vehicles off designated roads and trails; operating any internal combustion engine or operating acetylene or other torch with open flame or welding between 1 p.m. and 6 a.m.; or using an explosive during the same hours. These activities are already prohibited on City open space and conservation lands.

The areas affected by the restrictions include the centerpiece conservation and park lands of Mount Jumbo; Mount Sentinel, including the Cox Property; North Hills; the Kim Williams Trail; Greenough Park; and the Tower Street conservation area, as well as all other City-owned conservation lands. See the City Parks, Trails, and Open Space map online <http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/468/Available-Maps>. The printed map is also available at Parks and Recreation offices at 600 Cregg Lane.

Please remember that City parks that are not irrigated are also extremely dry.

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