

Missoula County Media Release

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Construction Underway on Archery Range at Missoula County Park

The public will soon have safe, free access to pursue the growing sport of archery as crews break ground on the Hellgate Archery Range at Missoula County's Big Sky Park.

The facility, which will sit on county land and is funded through private donations and grants, will accommodate 11 shooting bays with targets positioned at varying distances up to 80 yards. Expected to be completed in July, it will be the only public archery range in the greater Missoula area.

The project is a partnership between Missoula County Parks, Trails and Open Lands and the Hellgate Hunters and Anglers, a nonprofit that works to conserve Montana's wildlife, wild places and fair-chase hunting and fishing heritage. The two groups have collaborated to plan and design the range since commissioners approved building it at the park two years ago. HHA is funding the project with a \$50,000 grant from the Montana Shooting Range Grant Program, as well as through private donations.

"The number of archers in the Missoula area has grown significantly in the past 10 years," said HHA board member Kit Fischer. "The need for a safe and convenient place to practice, but also to introduce more folks to the sport, is essential."

In addition to funding construction, HHA also will be responsible for overseeing ongoing management and safety practices at the range. Missoula County staff worked closely with the group to ensure the high-quality facility would also meet safety standards for other park users and neighbors.

"When HHA submitted their proposal to develop the range, we were excited about the opportunity to meet an unmet recreation need for the community," said John Stegmaier with Parks, Trails and Open Lands. "At the same time, we also had to think carefully about how to build an archery range in a park that already receives a lot of use. Through a lot of discussion and collaboration, we are pleased with the final design."

For more information, members of the media can contact Stegmaier at 406-258-3458, Fischer at 406-241-3121 or HHA President Adam Shaw at 406-274-2545. Construction on the site through the end of next week will provide photo and video opportunities. Weather permitting, the contractor is planning to pave the driveway and parking lot on Tuesday, April 23. Representatives from HHA also can be available for on-site interviews that day.

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*The **Missoula County Parks, Trails and Open Lands Program** manages 91 parks and more than 40 miles of shared-use paths and trails. Its mission is to provide and maintain a sustainable system of parks and trails that protects a diversity of habitats and open space, where people of all ages may participate in activities blending passive and active outdoor recreation. The division partners with local communities, neighborhood groups and service and nonprofit organizations to help maintain the current system and promote opportunities for developing new recreation opportunities.*