



**City of Missoula, Montana
City Council Committee Agenda item**

Committee: Climate, Conservation and Parks
Item: Referral – Tipp Clark Fork River Property Open Space Project
Date: March 21, 2025
Sponsor(s): Zac Covington
Department or Function: Parks and Recreation
Prepared by: Zac Covington

Ward(s) Affected:

- Ward 1
- Ward 2
- Ward 3
- All Wards
- Ward 4
- Ward 5
- Ward 6
- N/A

Action Required:

Set a public hearing for April 21, 2025

Timeline and Recommended Motions:

Committee discussion: April 9, 2025
 Council sets public hearing: April 14, 2025
 Recommended motion: Set a public hearing for May 5, 2025 to consider approval of up to \$112,700, including due diligence and related costs, from a combination of 2006 and 2018 Open Space Bond funds for the acquisition of the Tipp Clark Fork River property of approximately 16.5 acres adjacent to the Kim Williams Trail.
 Public Hearing: May 5, 2025
 Recommended motion: Approve up to \$112,700, including due diligence and related costs, from a combination of 2006 and 2018 Open Space Bond funds for the acquisition of the Tipp Clark Fork River property of approximately 16.5 acres adjacent to the Kim Williams Trail.
 Deadline: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Background and Alternatives Explored:

The Tipp family has owned this 16.5 acre property located along the Clark Fork River for many years. Bryan Tipp, who currently owns the property, would like to donate a portion of the property’s value in order for the property to be owned by the City, used as open space in perpetuity, and to be named after his father, Roy Tipp, who passed away several years ago and was an active community member, was an attorney in Missoula, and served as Secretary for the Missoula Irrigation District for many years.

The property is located in the unincorporated County, but borders City property which includes the Kim Williams Trail corridor. Various conservation values, as documented in the 2019 Missoula Urban Area Open Space Plan, would be conserved by protecting the property as it is located along the Clark Fork River in one of the Open Space Cornerstones and is within the “riparian ribbon.” The property is in a mostly natural state, with a variety of native and non-native plant

species, and provides valuable wildlife habitat, floodplain protection, water quality and quantity benefits, views and vistas, and potential recreational opportunities for the City.

The property is currently vacant, uncultivated, and largely left undisturbed, with the exception of several intermittent camp sites located on the property over the past several years. It is largely sloped towards the river to the north, and the terrain gets gradually steeper towards the eastern side of the property. Several human-created trails exist, but either parallel the Kim Williams Trail on the south side, or lead to an encampment site. Much of the property is currently difficult to access due to thick vegetation, and the entire north edge of the property borders the Clark Fork River.

Proposed uses for the property consist mostly of river corridor and floodplain protection, natural wildlife habitat protection, and recreational access and trails. If the City owns the property, there is also a high potential of use of the property for recreation programs both for hiking and mountain biking, as well as river-related recreational uses for youth and/or adult groups. The topography and of the property would allow, for example, for the construction of beginner mountain biking and hiking trails and direct access to the river. The property could also function as a future stop along the Great American Rail Trail, of which the Kim Williams and Milwaukee Trails are already a part of.

The Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) recommended the project on February 13, 2025 by a vote of 7 to 3 (please see attached letter from OSAC).

Alternatives explored:

The main alternative is for the City to not acquire the land. This will leave the property open to other buyers and the potential for some level of recreational development on the property, or other types of development or improvements allowed by County zoning regulations.

Financial Implications:

Use of up to \$112,700 from a combination of the 2006 and 2018 open space bond funds. Annual maintenance of the property would be estimated at approximately \$3,500 to \$4,000 if managed as conservation lands.

Links to external websites: N/A