

Thank you for participating in the Mt Sentinel Hill Climb to support the UM Tri Club! The race will take you up the M Trail and beyond, to the summit of Mt Sentinel. All of the trails and adjacent grasslands and forests are part of the UM Natural Areas Program, which are managed for plant diversity, wildlife habitat, scenic values, and recreation.

In November, the grassy slopes of Mt Sentinel are dry and dormant. But under the soil, there are close to 100 species of native wildflowers waiting for spring, including arrowleaf balsamroot, lupine, bitterroot, larkspur, paintbrush and many more. There are two main threats to preservation of the native prairie plant communities: invasive plants (such as leafy spurge and spotted knapweed) and erosion from excessive/unmanaged recreation. The UM Natural Areas Program manages invasive species using a variety of methods, promotes native plants conservation via education and re-seeding, and works to improve and manage popular trails each year.

Mt Sentinel's forests are also in need of stewardship: decades of fire suppression in Montana has allowed young Douglas fir trees to crowd the Ponderosa pine forests, making the Ponderosas more vulnerable to a severe fire (should it occur) while also suppressing understory plant diversity as well as regeneration of young pines. Over crowded forests also promote pest outbreaks, and the risk of severe fires so close to a major city are a considerable public health concern. Therefore, UM is collaborating with the Montana Conservation Corps to conduct tree thinning each year.

If you would like to support UM's efforts to work with the broader Missoula community in providing stewardship and maintenance of Mt Sentinel's much-loved and much-used trails, please consider making a donation in any amount to the Friends of the M Trail. There will be an envelope available at registration and packet pick up. This account at the UM Foundation supports trail work days, contracted trail and forest thinning work, and various restoration projects in Mt. Sentinels grasslands and forests. Your donation is entirely tax deductible.

You can also support Friends of the M Trail and the UM Natural Areas Program by volunteering throughout the year.

Saturday Nov 10 2012, 10 am-2 pm, spread native plant seeds on Mt Sentinel's slopes. Contact vhingto@gmail.com for more information including where to meet.

Saturday April 20, 2013, details TBA, Annual Earth Day Work Party on the M Trail! Lunch is provided. Contact Marilyn.marler@umontana.edu for more information.