

---

[https://helenair.com/news/local/prickly-pear-land-trust-considering-purchase-of-south-hills-parcel-to-donate-to-city/article\\_62767984-4e04-5940-b2a1-d39a19ef3743.html](https://helenair.com/news/local/prickly-pear-land-trust-considering-purchase-of-south-hills-parcel-to-donate-to-city/article_62767984-4e04-5940-b2a1-d39a19ef3743.html)

ALERT

## **Prickly Pear Land Trust considering purchase of South Hills parcel to donate to city**

Nolan Lister  
Jul 8, 2020

---

SALE! Subscribe for \$1/mo.



Two women walk their dogs down the gated LeGrande Cannon Boulevard in this IR file photo from 2019.

THOM BRIDGE, Independent Record

**P**rickly Pear Land Trust is considering purchasing a sizeable parcel of land within the South Hills trail system and donate it to the City of Helena.

The approximately 54 acres, referred to as the Graham Property, is **adjacent to the LeGrande property the city acquired in 2019** and borders existing City of Helena Open Lands, national forest and state trust lands.

Parks, Recreation and Open Lands Director Kristi Ponozzo said during Wednesday's city administrative meeting the potential acquisition would provide better continuity within that trail system, emergency personnel access and further opportunities to

conduct wildfire fuel reduction work.

---

---

Prickly Pear Land Trust Executive Director Mary Hollow called the parcel "an important puzzle piece in the South Hills public land estate."

"There's some great excitement in the trail user community about this acquisition," Hollow said

A portion of the funds Prickly Pear Land Trust will use to purchase the land is coming from the U.S. Department of Defense's Army Compatible Use Buffer program, according to Hollow. The grant program allows military installations to "work with partners to encumber off-post land to protect habitat and buffer training without acquiring any new land for Army ownership," according to the program website.

"In this case, the project protects a portion of the flight path area that (Fort Harrison) use(s) for their (helicopters)," she said.

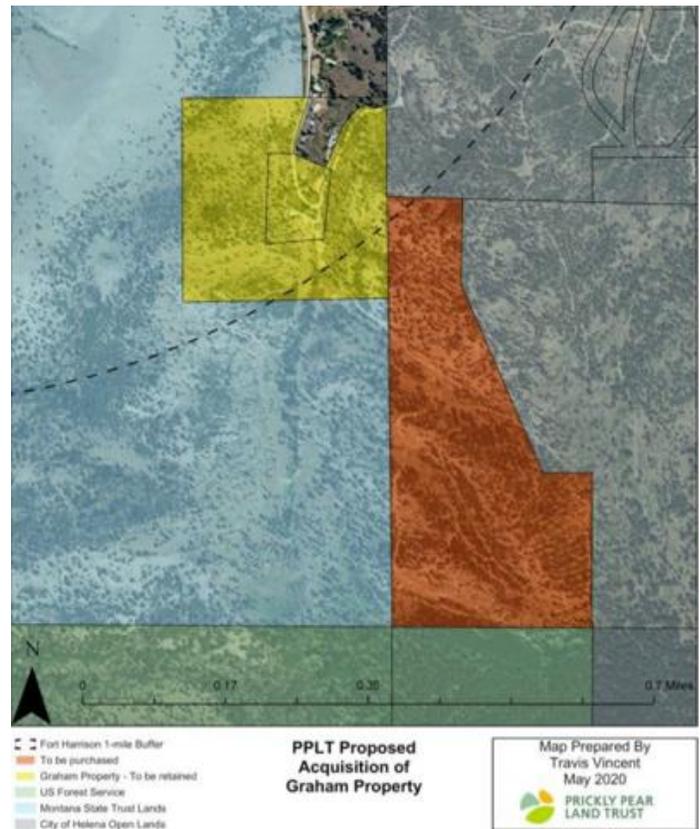
---

Hollow added that her organization has noted a sharp increase in use of the area trail network, four times the normal usage. She attributed the increased use to the ongoing health pandemic.

"Any chance we have an opportunity to add strategic public land and recreation value pieces to our public land, especially those that are adjacent to residential communities, we should jump on the opportunity," Hollow said.

Prickly Pear expects to have a formalized buy-sell agreement signed within "the next day or so" and will then work with the Department of Defense before turning the land over to the city.

Ponozzo's staff put together a three-year maintenance budget for the parcel. According to Ponozzo, the parcel will cost \$71,350 to maintain over that time.



That figure includes \$1,200 for fencing removal and \$4,500 in weed management costs that the city will pay for.

The remaining nearly \$66,000 for general forest management, such as the fuels reduction work, will be covered by a Montana Disaster and Emergency Services fire mitigation grant.

"Most of the forest management costs can be covered by the current grant funding that we have for fuels reduction in that area," Ponozzo said during the meeting.

Hollow thanked city leadership for its continued partnership in piecing together the open lands puzzle.

"I'd like to applaud this commission and the leadership of the city that together over the course of the last 22 years, we have now added upwards of 20 parcels to the South Hills that comprise today some of the best trails and public lands that we have in the state," Hollow said.

 4 comments

---

## Get local news delivered to your inbox!

Subscribe to our Daily Headlines newsletter.

\* I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and [privacy\\_policy](#).

### Nolan Lister

Local Government and Crime Reporter

Nolan Lister is a reporter at the Helena Independent Record with an emphasis on local government and crime.

---

## Related to this story