

# FLATHEAD BEACON

## Montana Boy Scouts Prepare to Rehab Forest on Melita Island

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In an effort to improve safety at its camp on Melita Island, the Montana Council of the Boy Scouts of America will be removing a number of dead and dying Douglas fir trees in the coming weeks.

According to Montana Council officials, a large number of Douglas firs have fallen victim to root rot, dwarf mistletoe and Tussock moth and bark beetle infestation. A number of dead trees fell during a recent windstorm.

Melita Island, located near Big Arm, is 64 acres, and Peter Jones, facility director for the Montana Council, said about one-third of the island will be thinned. Jones said the Montana Council would also be planting trees to replace the ones taken down. The new trees will range from seedlings to more mature trees that are a few feet tall. The scouts are working closely with the Center for Native Plants in Whitefish on the project.

Other trees on the island, including old-growth Ponderosa pine, will be protected.

“The Montana Council has created a task team of qualified natural resource professionals to guide the process,” said John Manz, vice president of administration for the council and alum of the University of Montana’s College of Forestry. “This is a long-term project to ensure the island remains a destination scout camp, continuing to attract scouts from across the United States.”

Every summer, more than 1,000 youth and staff come to Melita Island where the Boy Scouts have been hosting camps for decades.

“This was a hard decision for us to make,” said Jory Dellinger, deputy scout executive. “We know, however, that we will be providing a safe space for our youth.”

Officials said weather permitting, tree removal will occur during the coming weeks. Slash piles will also be burned during the course of the project.

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