

**DATE:** February 7, 2018

**TO:** Ravalli County Commissioners, 215 S. 4<sup>th</sup> St., Hamilton, MT 59840

**FROM:** Bitterrooters for Planning, P.O. Box 505, Corvallis, MT 59828

James Rokosch, Executive Director Ph. 406-777-2511

**RE:** Public comment on reconsideration of commissioners' 9/15/17 letter to Senator Steve Daines regarding the release of Wilderness Study Areas and Recommended Wilderness Areas within the local jurisdictional boundary of Ravalli County from a national Wilderness Area designation.

Bitterrooters for Planning (BFP), with approximately 500 members, is a local 501(c3) non-profit public benefit corporation of citizens dedicated to planning for the wise use of natural land and water resources consistent with our constitutional responsibilities to maintain and improve a clean and healthful environment for present and future generations. As a local non-profit organization, BFP gives STRONG LOCAL SUPPORT to Wilderness Area designation for most, if not all, of the lands within the WSAs and RWAs within Ravalli County, and we support a robust, transparent, and inclusive public process that recognizes these national lands belong to all American citizens and considers each area for its broadest public benefits. BFP opposes SB 2206 being introduced today in the U.S. Senate, without such a public process, and without consideration of the public input being presented today. Frankly, both Senator Daines and this commission should issue public apologies for how the solicitation, drafting, and public notice of the September 15, 2017 letter was orchestrated, as it flies in the face of Montanan's constitutional right to the opportunity for meaningful public participation at all levels of government for all actions by government at all levels.

Please give due weight and consideration to the following information, including the information contained in the referenced documents and website links provided, as most of the facts and data provided herein does not support contentions made in your 9/15/17 letter, especially that these lands "...in the opinion of the Commissioners, do not possess significant wilderness characteristics.", and "The overwhelming majority of Ravalli County residents....support a reduction of public lands managed as Wilderness Area...." The information provided for your consideration below focuses on: 1) direct & indirect economic values of wilderness to confront the fallacy such lands are "Lands of No Use"; 2) the value of and need for high quality water in our headwaters to get 'delivered' to our valleys for agriculture, fisheries/wildlife, tourism/outdoor recreation, and fully-mitigated development; 3) our constitutional stewardship responsibilities to future generations of all peoples, especially to

those of the indigenous tribal nations, and 4) the intrinsic values of wilderness beyond, but still linked to, monetary considerations.

### Economic Considerations

### Water and Wildlife Considerations

### Stewardship Responsibilities

### Intrinsic Values

Bitterrooters for Planning asks the commission to reconsider the content of your September 15, 2017 letter, consider the public input given at this February 7, 2018 meeting, and provide for a more inclusive public process with additional time for the public to provide additional substantive and meaningful information before you take further action on supporting SB 2206.