

10/11

## Regarding the County 'Natural Resource Policy'

There seems to be a lot of misconception about the draft Natural Resource Policy currently under review by the County Commission. I have been asked as a candidate for the Commission what my opinion is of this process, and I'd like to state my views for the public record.

We all live here for the same reasons: The quality of life, our good schools, communities, neighbors, clean mountain streams from which to fill your canteen, and room enough to get lost if you're not careful. I grew up hunting, fishing and riding the back country with my dad and uncle and was intoxicated by love of this place at a very young age.

I believe the single most important asset in the Bitterroot is our natural infrastructure. It's been said, "you can't eat the scenery," but now we realize we can. Our forests provide a *huge* economic resource in tourism and recreation. I am a proponent of using our forest resources through sustainable timber harvesting. And although the market for traditional wood products has bottomed out, we can be creative and leverage biomass for heating, fuels, etc. Concentrating on areas in the urban/forest interface.

I do not support the Commissioners' draft Natural Resource Policy for the following reasons:

First, the role of elected officials is to work openly and consider public input. The bulk of the current document was crafted without transparency by a self-appointed group. A publicly-appointed draft committee should have been formed that included a *balanced* cross-section of the population as well as experts in forestry and economics. This policy has continued to be developed without real meaningful citizen input.

Second, I'm under the impression the current commission feels that by adopting this County policy, the USDA will be *forced* to implement it. This is untrue.

It is written in our U.S. Constitution that legal jurisdiction over Federal land rests solely with the Federal government. Even according to the American Stewards of Liberty (an anti-government organization to which our Commissioners pay dues) web site: "Coordination is a process for reconciliation of conflicts between federal and local policies. It does NOT provide local government with any type of supremacy."

The County has *always* had a seat at the table to work with federal and state agencies as per the Federal Land Policy Management Act and the National Forest Management Act.

Third, I'm concerned about the countless hours (which equal taxpayer dollars) spent on what amounts to a legally toothless policy. I believe those salaried hours could have been better spent directly at the table with the USDA or dealing with other pressing County business.

The current Commission touts smaller government, but from comments lately, appear to be proponents of dousing every wildfire in the West. The cost of this endeavor would be billions in tax dollars and risking lives of firefighters. Also Commissioners are working to hold the USDA liable for any fire they don't put out. Ostensibly by using 'controlled burn' EPA regulations. And while this year's fire season and smoke was a travesty, it's ridiculous to believe every fire in the West can be extinguished, or prevented by massive logging efforts.

There is a "Pledge" being circulated by the self-appointed 'Natural Resource Recovery Committee' pressuring political candidates to uphold the Commissioners' draft policy. *A draft that is neither complete nor yet a legally adopted policy.* I wouldn't sign a 'draft' mortgage! And I *won't* be pressured into signing this group's pledge.

A much more balanced and economically relevant draft policy is available for consideration (see <https://sites.google.com/site/bitterrootvalleyresourcepolicy>). And if compelled to pledge my allegiance to a policy *foundation*, this is my choice for a starting point.

The Commissioners' resource policy/coordination effort underscores the reasons I am running for office. It's another example of unnecessary waste of taxpayer money caused by the Commissions poor decisions and disregard of regulations. Ravalli County is hardly equipped to handle the management of our national forests. The Commissioners have already proven from the hundreds of thousands of dollars in lawsuits and settlements paid out that they cannot effectively even handle their business at hand.

We have hard-working, intelligent USDA employees willing to listen and coordinate with us within the laws. The County can already request "joint lead agency" or "cooperating agency" status on specific plans to assist the Forest Service in decision making. And I pledge to work with careful consideration and public input on the issues that effect all of us in Ravalli County.

Dave Smith  
Candidate for Ravalli County Commissioner  
District 2

## Glenda Wiles

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**From:** Marci Mansfield [marci@montana.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 11, 2012 11:48 AM  
**To:** Ravalli County Commissioners; John Ormiston; nancyjoy@cybernet1.com; bnrrc13@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Upcoming 'debate' on the County Resource Policy  
**Attachments:** Letter to Resource Grp.doc

Dear Julie,

Since Dave cannot be in attendance at your group's October 16th 'debate' on the County draft Resource Policy, he asked that I send you the attached letter and statement to share his viewpoints with you. He also asked I cc the Commissioners and candidates as well.

Would you kindly reply to confirm receipt? Thanks!

Regards,  
-Marci Smith



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October 15, 2012

Dear Julie and the Natural Resource Recovery Committee,

I appreciate the invitation to your October 16<sup>th</sup> 'debate', but my schedule is bursting at the seams. Between business, campaigning, family commitments and our upcoming yearly hunting trip it's difficult to get to every event.

I'm glad there is finally a name for the 'committee' that penned the draft policy currently on the Commissioners' desks. However, I'd like to see the Commissioners' meeting minutes where your group— or specific individuals—were appointed to the task of drafting a County policy on the Commissioners' behalf.

I'm curious about how this decision was made, and I *know* the citizens of the County are interested in learning more about the people involved in drafting this 'public' policy. According to the Bitterroot Star's Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> article it appears that [your] committee is simply an offshoot of the Republican Central Committee. I don't consider this a balanced representation of Ravalli County residents. I consider this nepotism.

What follows is a statement which contains the opinions I would have shared with you had I been able to attend.

In the interest of transparency, I've also forwarded this to the Ravalli Republic, the Missoulian, the Bitterroot Star and the Independent. I want to be sure my views are clear so there is no room for misinterpretation.

Regards,

Dave Smith  
Candidate for Ravalli County Commission  
District 2