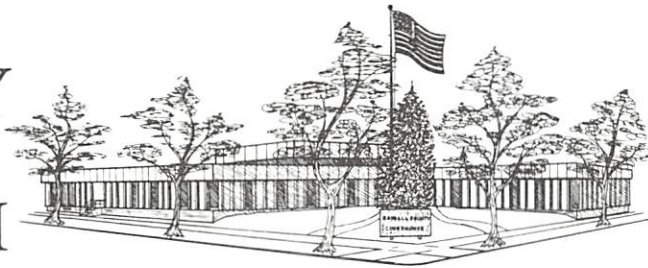


COUNTY OF RAVALLI



January 28, 2020

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Resource Development Division
P.O. Box 201621
Helena, Montana 59620

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express support for the Water Management Planning grant proposal being submitted to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation by the Bitterroot Conservation District. This project will help ensure that water diverted from the Bitterroot River will be distributed in accordance with all applicable water law and needs of the county's farmers and ranchers. This requires that all water diverted into irrigation canals be accurately controlled and measured. We understand that the program will consist of investigation of existing canals and design of improvements needed to ensure compliance with existing laws and facilitate effective management of this most important resource.

The Bitterroot River is one of the most important resources in the Bitterroot Valley. It provides abundant opportunity for recreational use, provides important wildlife habitat, and supports much of the county's agricultural production. It is very important to the economy of the Bitterroot Valley. This resource must be managed in a manner that ensures the river continues to support the economy and natural environment in our valley far into the future. It is also important that we can effectively respond to variability in our water supply which many expect to be more severe in the future. These issues can only be addressed through wise management of this resource.

Some canals that supply water to our farms and ranches are known to lack reliable, accurate means to control and measure the flow of water being diverted from the river. Accurate control and measurement are central to any water management program. This is the main reason I support the proposed study. I strongly support the concept of partnership between irrigators, canal owners and managers, and the Conservation District included in the proposal. I am confident this approach will ensure that the project will be effectively managed and of significant benefit both to irrigators and to water managers well into the future.

Sincerely,

Chris Hoffman, Chairman
Ravalli County Board of County Commissioners