

## Chris Taggart

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**From:** Jenny West <gowestoutfitters@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 27, 2020 3:17 PM  
**To:** Ravalli County Commissioners Office  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Ben White Fishing Access Site

Dear Commissioners,

Please consider the proposal to acquire the 97 acres of private land along the West Fork for the Ben White Memorial Fishing Access Site. The FAS acquisition will protect 100 acres of critical habitat for riparian areas, pocket wetlands, and will connect to the Bitterroot National Forest. This project will secure locals and visitor's ability to access the West Fork of the Bitterroot River for recreational uses such as fishing, camping, picnicking and bird watching. This site will be a managed public recreation access point, and will no longer be in limbo. This partnership between FWP and the Bitterroot Land Trust will permanently protect this incredible riparian habitat for generations to come. I have used this access site for fishing since the 90's, and it would be a shame to see it go away. This site is also very important for the commercial fishing community. According to the Upper Bitterroot West Fork 2019 Monitoring Report, WW White Memorial FAS use has more than doubled in commercial use days from 2016 to 2019. WW White is a FAS site that doesn't require a Forest Service Use permit, and it takes the pressure off of the Forest Service FAS sites up river. It is a vital put and take out for commercial and recreation floaters and it disperses boater and wading traffic. State wide and locally, Montana has seen and increase in outdoor recreation. This project supports the recreation economy and our way of life. Fishing alone is a \$379 million per year industry in our state, and this project parallels the importance of recreation and access in our community.

Thank you,

Jenny West

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