

Minority Report on the Lazy BF Ranch Open Lands Project

After reviewing the Lazy BF Ranch open lands program project Bill Menager voted against the project for the following reasons:

1. With the Iron Cap Subdivision adjoining the project to the north, an unnamed subdivision to the east and numerous ranchettes to the south and west, my opinion is that subdividing this property would not be out of character with the land use in the area and could be viewed as an infill subdivision.

2. This is a 355 acre parcel being considered for a Conservation Easement. The property has a mix of topography—creek bed, 60 acres of hilltop and sagebrush, steep hills, making it unique but it has the following issues for agricultural consideration:

- The majority of the property is not irrigated
 - Only 25 acres irrigated from a well which is the only reliable water source for irrigation on the property
 - There is a possibility of 25 more acres being added to the well irrigation based on their current water rights. However, because of the soil type, that still remains a “possibility” not a surety
 - The balance of the land is irrigated by a high water right from Middle Burnt Fork Creek that is available during part of the irrigation season
- The approximately 100 acres of bottom land irrigated, the soils are thin and rocky with numerous old stream channels and gravel bars that even if irrigated there will have low productivity
- At least a third is steep hillside, with the top 60 acre flat to dry to support anything other than poor dryland pasture

Therefore this project has little agricultural value making spending money for this project to preserve agricultural ground a waste of money. It would be better to subdivide this ground us the money to save some agricultural ground that is productive.

3. It was stated by some on the Open Lands Board that this property offers a good mix of habitat for deer and elk. This is correct. There is year round water from Middle Burnt Fork Creek, bedding in the sage and hill top areas, food on the bottomland and the steep hills to provide a safe area so they can flee predators. All these make this property an almost perfect spot for wildlife.

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Ravalli County Commissioners

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However, as ideal as this is, it is relatively small parcel of land compared to the range of these animals. It is further complicated by the surrounding subdivisions.

The animals are finding the succulent and nutritious meals in the yards and gardens in the existing subdivisions which makes this an attractive nuisance for the subdivision homeowner.

Subdividing the property would reduce, not solve the game problems on the surrounding properties.

4. Approximately 300 acres of this project cannot be developed or is marginal for development due to steep slopes and the presence of Middle Burnt Fork Creek with its associated floodplain.

Or, the development potential can't be determined because of potential high water evidenced by numerous abandoned stream channels that show signs of wetlands in the channels indicating the potential of high ground water on the entire bottom land.

This leaves about 60 hilltop acres next to the Iron Cap Subdivision available for development. With the hilltop acres next to an existing subdivision, with no water and poor soils, I don't feel that \$150,000 from Ravalli County for the Conservation Easement on the remaining acres is worth the cost to save from development.

5. Lastly, not having ground water monitoring data, soil profiles and productivity analysis, rainfall data for the dryland areas, current property value, title search results and the final conservation easement agreement to review makes examining all of these projects very difficult to assess and in this case impossible to approve.

For the above reasons, I recommend that the Ravalli County Commissioners do not approve the Lazy BF Ranch Open Lands Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Menager", with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Menager