

Date: June 28, 2022

To: Ravalli County Commissioners
Administrative Building
215 S 4th
Hamilton, MT 59840

We are writing to express our support for placing an Open Lands Bond on the November 2022 ballot. The program that was passed in 2006 has been successful in following the intent of that bond by managing growth, preserving open lands, protecting water quality of streams and the Bitterroot River, maintaining wildlife habitat, and protecting drinking waters sources.

There is no question our valley is under ever increasing growth pressure. More and more land has been sold and split. More and more homes are being built. In the last few years, we have witnessed a changing landscape in our valley. The Open Lands program is a tool to help us retain the character of Ravalli County. It has provided a vehicle to conserve 10,367 acres. Working farms and ranches have accounted for over 9,000 of those acres. These easements are helping keep family farms in family ownership. And those farms continue to stay on the county tax rolls.

In addition, two parks and one fishing access site have been conserved and invite public access. Steve Powell Park, Skalkaho Bend Park and CB White Fishing Access provide citizens access to quality riverfront property with trails and recreational opportunities.

It is also worth noting that every \$1 of Ravalli County Open Lands money has been leveraged by \$3 from other sources. This program demonstrates a great return on investment.

We respectfully ask you to place a bond on the November 2022 ballot giving voters the chance to continue this preservation effort.

Jim & Sharon Schroeder
484 Pine Hollow Road
Stevensville, MT 59870

As a matter of full disclosure please note that we have placed an easement on most of our farm in 2012. And Sharon has served on the Open Lands Board since 2013.