

## Glenda Wiles

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**From:** David Mihalic <davemihalic@bresnan.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 1, 2014 10:21 AM  
**To:** dan@rpa-hln.com; Glenda Wiles  
**Subject:** Ravalli County Airport

Sir,

I would like my comments entered into the official record for your study of the proposed improvements to Ravalli County Airport in Hamilton, Montana.

I am a long-time resident of Missoula, previously living in the Flathead, and learned to fly in Gardiner, Montana in 1981. I continue to own an airplane and fly to Hamilton periodically. I have found the airport to be a wonderful asset for that community and one of my destinations for simply a fun place to fly. Nonetheless, I have purposely taken part in "Young Eagles" flights at the Hamilton airport during the city/counties annual airport days celebration, flying at no cost youngsters who are residents of Hamilton and the Bitterroot. I have also purchased gas at the airport many times, had many a meal at the airport cafe, and flown into the airport with family and others to go downtown to BJ's or one of the other restaurants. We enjoy Hamilton and the airport.

Noting the proposals in the environmental assessment I can see only positive impacts. While there will be some costs and short-term impacts to surrounding property needed for expansion and safety needs, the overall proposal is akin to widening a highway to add shoulders, or to reduce tight curves to have traffic be able to travel more safely - these are the equivalents in the proposals at the Ravalli County Airport. Minor relocation and adding length to runways is ultimately positive to surrounding homes and schools and allows for additional buffer as other development may occur, understanding full well the airport has a long history - and benefit - to the community, the residents, and the county.

The numbers of direct users are probably more than the general aviation community in Missoula. But the numbers of indirect beneficiaries extend across the whole Bitterroot valley. There are others who will no doubt suggest that the airport be frozen in time or even removed. This is thinking that does not consider facts, benefits or the relatively-minor costs associated with having greater protection and services for local residents. As an example, the fires that took place in 2002 and other years were reminders that air assets are essential to insure forest protection. The proposals will allow smaller fire-fighting aircraft and helicopters to safely operate at reduced costs from having to respond from far-away places like Missoula, which only add time and cost to fire management efforts.

This airport is a wonderful asset. I support the proposals and urge you to consider these comments in your deliberations.

Respectfully submitted,

David Mihalic, Pilot and Aircraft Owner

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