



August 19, 2014

Dear Ravalli County Commissioners,

The Ravalli County Weed Board would like to thank the commissioners for their hard work and dedication to the workings of the budget. The weed board can sympathize with how challenging it can be to maintain operations and achieve objectives under difficult budget constraints. For the last three years, the county weed district has been operating under significant budget constraints and it has affected the district's ability to achieve all of their objectives. It is for this reason that the county weed board has composed this letter of support for reinstatement of a requested full time seasonal employee for the weed district.

One of many of the county weed district's responsibility is for the treatment of every county roadside (ie: Title 7, Chapter 22, part 21 of the Montana county Weed Control Act). Not a small task when you consider this equates to more than 1100 roadside miles and 324 roadside miles of state roadways. In addition, 23 of the 32 state listed noxious weeds, along with 5 county listed noxious weeds, are being battled with in Ravalli County and most of these species require a different treatment for successful control. Timing is critical as weeds can only be treated chemically during the active growing season. We are only accomplishing treatment on about 25% to 33 % of our county roads each year with our current staffing situation. This is an unacceptable level of treatment to achieve successful weed control.

As you know, the county weed district is currently running on only 2 full time employees and one 18 hour employee that is funded by the county. The other county weed district employees are funded solely on grants that the weed district obtains and those employees are for special purposes specified by the grants. The county weed district has been committed to putting in the extra effort to pursue grants to bring addition funds into our county; however, we are still struggling with our limited staff. With the reduction of the county weed department employees about 3 years ago, our roadsides have suffered and the evidence is in the amount of Hoary Alyssum and Kochia that are invading faster than our small crew can keep up with. Ravalli County, and Montana for that matter, is still largely agriculture and the invasion of these noxious weeds are threatening our area by making land unfit for agriculture, forestry, livestock, and wildlife.

Ravalli County has historically been a leader in our state with an exceptional weed program. It would be a shame to allow our noxious weed control program to degrade and decline. The county weed board understands the budget challenges the commissioners face; however, we cannot afford to ignore noxious weeds by allowing weeds to go to seed, propagate, and spread which ultimately threatens the productivity of land for landowners in our county, bordering counties and our state. The weed board respectfully requests the commissioner's assistance in approving the funding for at least one more fulltime seasonal weed district employee.

Please call any one of the Weed Board members or our coordinator if you have any questions at all. We appreciate your consideration and assistance in the matter.

Sincerely,

The Ravalli County Weed Board

Lance Brown – chair	_____	Date _____
Stacy Pease – vice	_____	Date _____
Julie Schram – MAL	_____	Date _____
Tim Tackes – MAL	_____	Date _____
Gil Gale – BNF-Ex-officio	_____	Date _____