

## Glenda Wiles

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**From:** Matt Gordon <mwginmt@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 5, 2015 4:15 PM  
**To:** Glenda Wiles  
**Subject:** Re: Floodplain Regulationss

Dear Ravalli County Commissioners,

I am writing today to express my absolute opposition to the proposed changes to the current Ravalli County Floodplain Regulations. As a Ravalli County citizen, property owner, taxpayer, voter and Bitterroot River user and advocate, I am pleading for you to exercise common sense and sound natural resource conservation. Please DO NOT diminish the current regulations that keep new construction and fill out of the entire floodplain.

The Bitterroot River and it's related floodplain is a very dynamic system. Each year the river changes courses, what is flood fringe this year might very well be the river's main channel next year. This meandering nature is also why the Bitterroot River corridor is such productive fish and wildlife habitat. Just like the fish and wildlife that depend upon it, the Bitterroot River needs to be able to migrate. From the cottonwoods that shade the river, keeping the water cold and suitable for the native trout, to the western tanagers that migrate thousands of miles every year to feast upon the salmon flies that hatch from the clean, cold cobbles of the river's riffles, all these things and so many more depend upon the river's ability to flood, meander, create new channels and do it again the next year.

I think Commissioner Schallenberger might have some firsthand knowledge of the Bitterroot's meandering nature given his experience as the former manager of the River Ranch. In the last 5 years the main channel behind the ranch has migrated from the east, in what was known as the Skalkaho" channel, to a center channel that is now abandoned, to the current "Fetch Inn" channel. Anyone who used to swim behind Kiwanis Park in what is now a dry riverbed has witnessed this as well.

I've been floating the Bitterroot River, both recreationally and as a fly fishing guide, since the late 1980's and have seen first hand the negative effects of residential encroachment, followed by the inevitable related rip rapping and other bank stabilization efforts have had on the river and adjacent riparian areas. The only thing predicable about the Bitterroot River is that as soon as someone foolhardily builds a home too close to it, a 310 permit and rip rap will follow. I would argue that the current regulations don't go far enough to protect the river from this type of development. If it did, we wouldn't see new stabilization projects ever single year. Regrettably, we do.... While these stabilization projects sometimes do protect the home or development that they are designed to, they also accelerate the water flow which increases bank deterioration at the next bend downstream, thus leading to another request for further rip rapping. When will it end? When the river is turned into a canal.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my comments and hope that you will leave the existing Ravalli County Floodplain Regulations wholly intact. The Bitterroot River is an irreplaceable resource that provides the lifeblood of this valley and it's inhabitants, current and future, human and non-human.

Sincerely,

Matt Gordon  
Hamilton, MT