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Ravalli County Commissioners

Michael R. Rahl
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Ravalli County Commissioners;

I have been following your proceedings concerning the proposed revisions to the floodplain regulations in Ravalli County. It is my understanding that you are considering allowing property owners to build in the floodway fringe. At this time I would like to present to you why this is not a logical proposal and furthermore as elected Republican officials you should be ashamed of even presenting such a proposal.

I wish I could say that I was a 3rd or 4th generation "Bitterrooter" but I cannot. I grew up in Colorado and did not come to the Bitterroot until 1989. Growing up in Colorado I got to personally witness houses, vehicles, and pollution floating down swollen rivers where regulations were not in place that allowed people to build in the flood plain. One of the main reasons I moved was for the rivers and the Bitterroot River in particular. Fly fishing is one of my passions and the Bitterroot Valley is a great place to pursue that passion. I have spent many days on the river and one of the things that makes the Bitterroot such a great river to fish is that it is constantly changing. Year to year you are really not fishing the same river because it changes so much. There are many runs that I used to fish 15 years ago that are now head high in willows with young cottonwoods mixed in, that have not seen the river in that 15 years. I can guarantee that they will see the river again.

The river moving all of the time is a great reason to not enact this proposal but there is another reason you should consider as elected officials. Every one of you is an elected Republican official. Is the Republican mantra not "SMALLER Government"? It appears that you are using the guise of the federal government and the regulations from FEMA to enact this proposal. Do you want to take your marching orders from the federal government or do you want to keep intact a regulation that was born from local government? Is the Republican mantra not "LOWER taxes"? Who is going to pay the lawsuits when Ravalli County is sued by a landowner who has lost everything because you allowed them to build in floodplain? The tax payers will suffer for your ignorance. You will say that you are fighting for the "Property Rights" of those in the Bitterroot. It appears to me that no property rights have been infringed upon since this regulation was enacted. Can the government come take property away from these individuals? Can citizens do what they wish on the property in question? Can the government tell property owners how they will use the land they own? The answer to all of these is NO! The only thing we are telling property owners is they cannot build in a place where there is a very high chance that their homes and businesses will be destroyed.

I apologize if this letter comes across as harsh and not completely professional. I have actually never written a letter to anyone in our government. This is something that I am passionate about and I hope you will consider keeping the flood plain regulation intact as it stands today. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely;



Mike Rahl

