

## Chris Taggart

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**From:** Greg Chilcott  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 13, 2015 9:18 AM  
**To:** Chris Taggart; Terry Nelson; Brian Wilkinson  
**Subject:** FW: Concerned Citizen

Please include in the public comment file for the Floodplain Regulation revision (note that the email was not received until well after the public hearing was adjourned).

**From:** Robert Prince [mailto:robertwaprince@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2015 10:26 PM  
**To:** Greg Chilcott  
**Subject:** Concerned Citizen

Dear Commissioner Chilcott,

My name is Robert Prince, I am a resident of Stevensville, a Hamilton School Teacher, a husband, soon to be father, homeowner, and fishing guide.

I was saddened to learn that recently the commission voted 5-0 to strike down the current floodplain regulations that prohibit residential construction on the flood fringe areas along the Bitterroot River.

I am sure that you have already heard from likely hundreds of people by now of how building along the flood fringe could negatively impact the health of the river, the economy of the valley, and place private property and homes in danger. I am sure that by now you are aware of the numbers and facts:

- River related tourism including as fly-fishing, rafting, outfitting and lodging contributes over \$20 million dollars a year to our local economy.
- Hundreds of dedicated fly shop owners, shuttle drivers, guides, restauranteurs, and lodging owners rely on a healthy river to feed their families and pay the bills.
- The Bitterroot River is a dynamic and constantly changing system due to the geological nature of the valley.
- Many homeowners, some of them very wealthy (who pay considerable property tax to the county) live here because of the river and it's quality of fishing. I am one of those who moved to Montana and chose to stay here because of the exceptional fishing.
- If houses are built in the flood fringe it will likely result in increases in dangerous stream bank armoring (such as rip rap). Stream bank armoring such as rip rap or old cars limit natural sediment dynamics. Stream bank armoring increases the velocity of water which in turn decreases the number of pools, safe havens for fish. Higher stream velocities make it more energetically costly for fish to move in the stream, more energy for movement means less energy for growth (i.e. length and girth) and reproduction. This will ultimately result in a decline of the river as a viable recreation fishery.

I don't want to take up your time with these arguments that have been so eloquently stated by my friends, and peers. I would like to make a plea that you consider the long-term health of the valley and it's people before you decide to set this change in policy in stone.

I urge you to step into one of our many local fly shops, talk with the owners, outfitters and guides, lodging owners, shuttle drivers, restaurateurs and get to know exactly who we are. We are parents, active members of the community, friends and neighbors. We want to work with you to better our valley and our communities.

I would also like to invite all of you to take a trip with me or another guide or outfitter down the Bitterroot. I would love to offer to you a free day of fly fishing or simply a trip down the river. Let me have a chance to share with all of you my perspective of the river. I truly love and care about the Bitterroot River, and in this, I am not alone.

I beg you, please leave the regulations as they are. For the sake of my children, so that they may know the joy, peace, and glory of a wild trout stream. I know this all sounds wacko but I mean every word of it.

I hope that you have taken a few minutes to read and consider this. I also hope that you will take into consideration all of testimony you have heard, all of the science that backs up our claims. I hope that you will speak with a hydrologist to better understand the fluvial morphology (how the river changes over time) of the river system I hope that you will discuss these matters and find a solution that will benefit all the people of the valley, not simply a few select landowners. A reasonable compromise has been offered: keep our current restrictions on building in the floodplain and then systematically review areas that should be reclassified to allow new construction. I respectfully urge you to consider this option and follow through on it.

The issue to allow or not allow building in the flood fringe goes beyond politics and ideology. It's a community issue, a family issue. We the citizens of this county elected you with the belief that we could trust you to make decisions that are in the best interest of the people. This is one of those cases where the people are speaking and public support is in overwhelming support of leaving the regulations as they currently stand. I challenge you to listen to push political affiliations aside and listen to the multitudes of comments in opposition to changing the current regulations. I also challenge you all to think about the legacy you wish to leave for future generations in this valley and what kind of place this will be for your children and grandchildren. Will this be a valley where farming, ranching, and outdoor recreation are valued and support the livelihoods of hundreds of people? Will the Bitterroot still continue to be a beautiful and healthy wild trout stream? You can make that choice today. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

Robert Prince

Stevensville