FIVE VALLEYS AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 8425
MISSOULA, MT 59807

July 11, 2013

Carol Fox, Restoration Program Chief
Natural Resource Damage Program
P.O. Box 201425
Helena, MT 59620-1425

RE: NRDP Funding for the Confluence Project at Rock Creek

Dear Ms. Fox:

We are writing to support the funding of $400,000 for the Confluence Project located where Rock Creek joins the Clark Fork River east of Missoula. This project will protect significant wildlife values and offer an excellent opportunity for conservation education.

The riparian habitat found along the substantial stretch of creek and river bottom supports a mixture of vegetation including old growth cottonwood, river birch and a variety of shrubs that are important to many species of birds. A variety of ecological niches exist where the riparian zone meets the adjoining conifer forest and grassland. Both resident and migrant birds will utilize the varied habitats in this area. Neotropical migrant songbirds that can be expected to breed here include Calliope Hummingbird, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, McGillivray's Warbler, American Redstart, Swainson's Thrush, Gray Catbird, Lazuli Bunting, Spotted Towhee, and Bullock's Oriole.

Another significant wildlife value protected by this project is the connectivity between other adjoining protected lands, at both high and low elevations, and the mouth of Rock Creek.

One of the major goals of the Audubon Society is to provide environmental education for people of all ages. We believe that the Confluence Project will provide a wonderful opportunity for outdoor learning to occur, which includes observing nature and participating in restoration activities.

We urge you to support the Confluence Project as it is proposed. It will be a significant investment having public benefits. Thank you for considering this.

Sincerely,

Pat Little, President