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

June 19, 2012

We are writing to support acquisition of the Deer Creek Addition to the Marshall Creek Wildlife Management Area. The wildlife values of this area as described in the Draft Environmental Assessment are certainly significant. Additionally, we would like to stress the importance of the riparian habitat to birds. In Montana approximately 55% of the breeding bird species rely on wetland and riparian habitats and approximately 80% of Montana's bird species utilize these habitats at some point in their life. Yet less than 4% of the State is occupied by wetland and riparian habitats. Because the Deer Creek unit is richly endowed with riparian habitat supporting broadleaf shrubs, cottonwood and aspen vegetation, it is particularly important to native bird species especially migratory neotropic songbirds.

One bird species not mentioned in your CFWCS Tier I list is the Williamson's Sapsucker, a National Audubon Watchlist Species. It would be expected to occur in the Deer Creek Addition and certainly in the Marshall Creek Wildlife Management Area. This species should be recognized as a species of conservation concern that would benefit from the Deer Creek Addition.

Acquiring the Deer Creek property will be a significant conservation achievement that will become increasingly important for wildlife and recreational activities in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Jim Brown
Chair, Habitat Protection and Restoration