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

June 15, 2017

Missoula City Council
435 Ryman
Missoula, MT 59802

Dear Council Members:

We are writing to support use of open space bond funding to help procure permanent protection for the Western Montana Retriever Club trial and training grounds. The several types of wetlands found there are especially significant as bird habitat. They attract and are used by a variety of water birds. The small ponds, large pond and old river channel that supports a sedge community, bull rushes and other aquatic vegetation is used by several species of waterfowl, Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Spotted Sandpiper and Sora Rail. Several species of songbirds also utilize these wetlands. In addition to birds the ponds support considerable other animal life including insects, amphibians and fish.

The shrub and tree community along the Bitterroot River is another type of habitat that is utilized by a variety of songbirds such as Yellow Warbler, Warbling Vireo, Song Sparrow and flycathers. A third type of important habitat is the old growth cottonwoods located in the northeast portion of the property. These trees provide significant cavity nesting opportunities for woodpeckers such as Downy, Hairy, Lewis's and Northern Flicker. Other species that may take advantage of these trees include Western Wood Pewee, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Western Bluebird and possibly Hooded Merganser. The cottonwoods contain considerable cavities indicating a history of bird use.

Past observations on the area have shown that even with the dog training activity that occurs there birds and other wildlife continue to utilize the area. Considering this and the uncertainty of future possible ownerships we believe the property merits protection through a conservation easement.

Sincerely,

Rose Leach
President