January 27, 2020

We are writing to support acquisition of the C. Ben White Memorial Fishing Access Site. The wildlife values of this area are certainly significant. The combination of river bottom riparian habitat and upland old growth ponderosa pine attracts a high diversity of birds. The mixed ponderosa pine-cottonwood riparian zone with shrub understory is particularly important to native bird species especially migrant songbirds, which are in serious decline across North America according to a recent report in the journal Science. It is important to note that 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. This river bottom property, which lies at the transition of forested landscape to agricultural lands, also offers significant connectivity for wildlife moving between these large scale habitats.

We believe that this property managed as a fishing access would provide ample wildlife viewing opportunities for all citizens including handicapped persons without diminishing the wildlife values. The significant wildlife values and viewing opportunities certainly merits protection and management to maintain and enhance the wildlife values. We urge you to support this excellent conservation acquisition that will become increasingly important for wildlife protection and recreational activities in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Rose Leach
Chapter President