



Lake County Commissioners

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EXHIBIT #2
DATE 1/26/2009
HB 14
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LAKE COUNTY

106 4th Ave. E.

Polson, Mt. 59860

November 13, 2008

Montana House of Representatives
State Capitol
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

For nearly ten years, the Lake County Commissioners have supported the on-going land conservation efforts in the Swan Valley. These local efforts by our constituents have been focused on the maintenance of our forest resources and the avoidance of dispersed rural subdivision and development in the Valley. The County has actively participated in the Swan Lands Coordinating Committee and has developed land use policies that further resource conservation and address the significant costs of providing local services to residential development in this area of our county.

We have been informed of the MT Legacy Project and our staff has participated in an analysis of the financial implications of the project. We believe that it is a complementary extension of the conservation work accomplished thus far in the Swan Valley. In particular, Lake County strongly supports the Montana Working Forests proposal for State acquisition of certain lands in the northern part of the Valley.

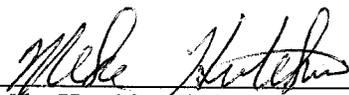
The Swan River State Forest is a productive forest managed by the MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). However, the checkerboard ownership pattern of these State lands with Plum Creek lands adversely affects efficient land management for the variety of resource values present. Additionally, the conversion of private forestlands to subdivision and development would not only further hinder forest management on public lands, but would degrade habitat resources and connectivity, disrupt the outdoor recreation opportunities currently enjoyed by the public, and significantly increase the costs of providing services to the area (especially sheriff and fire protection services).

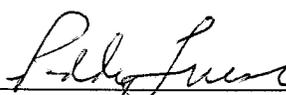
This Montana Working Forests proposal represents a singular opportunity to address the problems associated with the historic checkerboard ownership pattern. We believe it recognizes the significant resource values in the Swan Valley and will further logical land use within the area of the Swan River State Forest. Through this acquisition and consolidation of State ownership, the Montana Working Forests proposal will help maintain the important resource, conservation, social and economic values of the Valley.

By avoiding the fragmentation of our forest landscape from excessive rural development, the forest will continue to provide elements integral to our quality of life, including wildlife habitat, wood products, recreational access, water quality protection, and forest health.

The Lake County Commissioners support the Montana Working Forests proposal and encourages positive action by the Legislature to secure this opportunity on behalf of the citizenry.

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