

AMOUNT #14
DATE 3/14/2013
SB #147

March 12, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

Please vote "No" on SB 147. As written, SB 147 dismantles the purpose of considering impacts to agriculture in subdivision review. Promoting agriculture is a constitutional responsibility in Montana.

I live and work on the 4,000 acre rural ranch my great grandparents started in 1906. (I'm sorry to drop the "I'm an x generation Montanan" line, but feel it's important to illustrate how long we've been on one piece of ground, through many legislative sessions, administrations, economies, and weather patterns.) A few years ago an egregious subdivision of 119 lots on 200 acres was proposed. About twenty acres of our neighbor's land was between us and the proposed subdivision and the tributary that feeds the source of our irrigation ditch bordered the proposed site. Yes, we were concerned about wildlife conflicts because the site is in a wildlife corridor and the stream is whirling disease free cutthroat habitat, but we were also concerned about how 119 dogs and cats would effect our livestock (and wildlife). There has been sporadic but marked development in our area over the last 15 years and 4 years ago we noticed significant decline in springs that we use to water stock. Springs that have been steady for over 107 years, through many periods of drought. We're not hydrologists but we know something has happened.

If SB 147 were to pass my family would not have had a voice in that subdivision proposal because we are not adjacent operations. Yet, we would be impacted.

There is a way to protect our agricultural and entrepreneurial heritage in Montana but SB 147 is not that way.

Respectfully,



Juanita Vero
8470 Sunset Hill Road
Greenough, MT 59823

Submitted by Annie Heuscher

Dear House Local Government Committee:

I am writing to ask you to vote NO on SB 147. As a fourth generation Montanan, I value the role that agriculture plays in our communities, our economies, and our heritage. As a member of the Missoula Organization of Realtors and the Montana Association of Realtors, I value the role that agriculture plays in our real estate transactions.

The growing communities of Montana, from Missoula to Kalispell to Billings, are growing because people are drawn to our beautiful mountains, rolling prairies, and our verdant, fertile croplands. Our agricultural lands and the vitality and economic opportunity they represent are what bring growth and development to our state. It is critical to our continued growth that we utilize every method we have to conserve those economic opportunities.

Contrary to the arguments that will likely be presented by the bill's proponents, the methods made possible by the current language are good for real estate and development. The current language allow cities and counties to mitigate impacts on agriculture. One way of mitigating the loss of farmland, for example, is by requiring that some prime farmland is set aside in the subdivision process. Those set-asides would be hugely useful in real estate sales. So often, when people move to Montana, they want to live in a home where they can see agriculture right outside their door, where they can be confident that they will always be able to enjoy agriculture as a part of their lives. When the view out their back door is subdivided, suddenly their main reason for purchasing the property is gone. Creating subdivisions that include permanently conserved agricultural opportunities would be a great boon to real estate sales now and into the future.

The current language encourages cities and counties to consider the broad array of impacts that subdivisions have on agriculture. By considering those impacts, we can ensure that we maintain economic opportunity in farming and ranching. By maintaining agricultural opportunity, we can ensure that people will continue to flock to Montana for the values that we demonstrate. The conservation of agriculture is critical to our continued growth. Please vote NO on SB 147.

Liz Dye
Broker/e-PRO/ABR
Portico Real Estate
445 West Alder
Missoula, MT 59802
406-531-4508

Submitted by Annie Heuscher

Buffalo and Tibetan Yak
Free Range
Grass Fed
Drug Free



Jim Watson & Carol Bibler
191 Foy's Canyon Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
406-257-7021

Re: SB 147

I am a multi-generation professional in agriculture and am writing in opposition to SB 147. SB 147 attempts to take a local issue of self determination and replace it with a one-size-fits-all mandate from Helena. All politics is local and no one knows local issues and needs better than local governments, especially when it comes to land use planning. SB 147 is an arrogant and intrusive power grab that will limit local government's options for the benefit of developers at the expense of agriculture. Helena resents it when Washington intrudes on state business, well we locals resent it when Helena intrudes on our business.

Agriculture is Montana's number one industry and should not be unfairly impinged upon. SB 147 flies in the face of Montana's philosophy of independence and makes mockery of our right to farm laws. "If you aren't at the table you are probably on the menu". Agriculture should not be excluded from or have a muted voice at the local land use planning table. Farmers and ranchers, by the very nature of their jobs, are professional land use planners. Their voices are a necessary and important part of our messy democracy. SB 147 is an attempt to stifle the voice of agriculture. Don't do it.

Jim Watson

Members of the House Local Government Committee thank you for the opportunity to listen to my comments about Senate Bill 147. Due to family medical needs, I am unable to be here to share my thoughts with you concerning SB 147.

I am asking you to oppose SB 147. As a member of a family who has owned a farm in the Bitterroot Valley for over 65 years I understand the importance of farmland in providing food for Montanans as well as food for our nation and our foreign trading partners. However, I see SB 147 as a genuine threat to our best crop producing areas in Montana.

SB 147 takes away the ability to protect land that will feed us for generations to come. We cannot think of this valuable resource in terms of today or tomorrow, but what we need for thirty years, fifty years, or hundreds of years to come. Home grown food has and will be one of the most important national security issues facing this nation. We cannot depend on foreign nations to feed America. If we put houses on our prime soil where are we going to produce the food for our future needs. Our prime agricultural land is not unlimited.

The issue of setting land aside during subdivision review is most contentious in areas along water sources which make the surrounding land highly productive. This is where the agriculture set aside is most controversial. We do need to have land for people to live and work. There is no argument about that fact. However, we do need to allow for consideration of setting aside some of our best land for future use.

Again, I am asking you to table or kill SB 147. Current law allows us for feed our future. SB 147 jeopardizes that fact.

Respectfully,
Willis Curdy
11280 Kenaf Ranch Rd
Missoula, 59804

Submitted by Annie
Heuscher

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11280 Kuna Ranch Rd
Missoula, 59804

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Annie Henscher