

## **Honorable Members of the Water Policy Interim Committee**

My name is Walt Hill and I presently serve as President of the Seeley Lake Water District. I am here to make a plea to correct what appears to me to be a minor, but critical inequity in HB 831. As I read the Bill, five closed basins are noted, each giving some exceptions to permit applications for designated uses. In four of the closed basins, the use of surface water by or for a municipality is an allowable exception, a municipality being defined as an incorporated city or town. However, in the Upper Clark Fork closed basin, no such exception is granted, although an exception is granted for stock use. Although I have tried to determine the reasons that the municipality exception was left out of this basin, the only response that I have been given was that it was not there initially. An initial version of a DNRC bill in this legislative session did include this exception in the Upper Clark Fork Basin.

The Seeley Lake Water District presently has a permit allowing 350 acre feet of water per year to be pumped from Seeley Lake, which has an annual flow-through of about 208,000 acre feet. We are rapidly approaching the 350 acre feet limit as the community grows. Wells of needed flow are non-existent in the valley. We are presently under the necessity of upgrading our water system to meet the fire-suppression standards, among others. Yet we are faced with a critical water shortage in the not-too-distant future, if we are unable to secure additional water rights.

It is our plea to you to propose amending the statute to allow the Upper Clark Fork Basin to have a municipality exception, as do the other closed basins. Seeley Lake, as yet, is not incorporated, but this prospect is being seriously discussed at present. Being incorporated, rather than drinking dust, would certainly provide additional incentive to incorporate.