



Main Office

www.montanatu.org

P.O. Box 7186

Missoula, MT 59807

(406) 543-0054

15 October 2014

Randy Arnold
Regional Supervisor
Montana FWP
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, Mt 59804

Re: FVLT Fish Creek Acquisition

Dear Randy:

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the EA for the proposed FWP acquisition of 158 acres along Fish Creek from Five Valleys Land Trust. Montana Trout Unlimited represents 3,900 conservation-minded anglers, including around 500 in the Missoula area, many who recreate in the Fish Creek drainage. Because of its important recreational fishery values, conservation and restoration of lands in the Fish Creek watershed is a primary priority of Trout Unlimited members in Western Montana.

The proposed acquisition fits squarely within the conservation priorities of Montana TU. We strongly support the proposed acquisition. FWP has done a good job detailing the fishery and wildlife values of the watershed and creek, and this acquisition complements the agency's previous acquisition for the WMA as well as habitat restoration that has occurred in the drainage, some of it in cooperation with TU.

Acquiring another .5 miles of Fish Creek and its associated riparian community for conservation purposes will benefit native fish species, while also providing for needed floodplain function, which has been compromised along some reaches of Fish Creek. Because FWP will be paying property taxes on the property, the acquisition will not adversely affect Mineral County's tax base. Importantly, because Fish Creek is unzoned, this acquisition will prevent the potential for streamside development from private interests, thereby helping preserve fish and wildlife values on the site.

If the acquisition is finalized, we recommend that FWP not provide any formal development on the site. The Forks FAS is only .3 miles upstream, and that should be more than adequate in providing hardened development (improved

parking, outhouses, etc.) to accommodate public access along this reach of Fish Creek.

Thanks again for the opportunity to lend our support for acquisition of this key Fish Creek parcel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Farling". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Bruce Farling
Executive Director