



Via Email

August 8, 2019

Morgan Valliant, Conservation Lands Manager
City of Missoula
mvalliant@ci.missoula.mt.us

RE Bluebird – North Hills Trailhead – Letter of Support

Dear Mr. Valliant:

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) supports the proposed North Hills land acquisition and trailhead near RMEF's headquarters on Grant Creek. The mission of the RMEF is to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat and our hunting heritage. RMEF has more than 234,000 members, nearly 14,000 of which reside in Montana. The Elk Country Visitor's Center and RMEF office is located near this proposed trailhead. The Visitor Center conducts free kids events throughout the year and sees more than 41,000 visitors annually.

RMEF has worked alongside Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT) and other conservation groups to complete land protection and public access projects around Missoula County. Potentially most notable is the success of protecting Mount Jumbo when the City took ownership in 1997. Thanks to that effort Mount Jumbo continues to sustain an elk herd. Missoula's north hills are home to the North Hills – Evaro elk herd, a herd which Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks manages for a population of 300.

Under the proposal by Five Valleys Land Trust, the City of Missoula would purchase and maintain 124 acres of land that connects recreational users from what is known as the Snowbowl Parking Lot on Grant Creek Road to property protected by a Five Valleys Conservation Easement in the north hills. RMEF supports City ownership of this property. If the project moves forward, RMEF encourages the City to work with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to protect wintering elk herds from human disturbance. RMEF has had issues with unauthorized use of our parking area and hopes the City of Missoula will keep this in mind as the City develops the new trailhead and parking facilities. As such, RMEF encourages the City of Missoula to be respectful of neighboring landowners.

We appreciate your consideration in partnering with Five Valleys Land Trust to improve the trail network in Missoula's north hills. Should you have any questions or need further information, please don't hesitate to contact me at (406) 523-4563 or jdoherty@rmef.org.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Doherty
Director of Lands