

**RESOLUTION NUMBER 2024-105**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS TO EXPEND UP TO \$994,550 OF 2018 OPEN SPACE BOND PROCEEDS TOWARD THE PURCHASE OF A CONSERVATION EASEMENT ON APPROXIMATELY 2,330 ACRES FOR THE CASE RANCH COMPANY-POTOMAC OPEN SPACE PROJECT.**

**WHEREAS**, the State of Montana authorizes local government to issue, sell, and administer general obligation bonds for the purposes of acquiring open space consistent with the provisions of Title 76, Section 6, Section 101 through 110, M.C.A.; and

**WHEREAS**, the Missoula County Commissioners passed Resolution Number 2018-111 placing a measure on the November 6, 2018 ballot providing the electorate in Missoula County with an opportunity to vote on a \$15,000,000 bond issue for the purpose of conserving, enjoying, and enhancing open-space lands in Missoula County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Missoula County electorate passed the Open Space Bond measure on November 6, 2018; and

**WHEREAS**, the Missoula County Commissioners adopted an Interlocal Agreement Between the City of Missoula and the County of Missoula Related to Open Space Bond Acquisition and Use of 2018 Open Space Bond Proceeds dated May 20, 2020, outlining the process for applying for and approving bond expenditures; and

**WHEREAS**, the Missoula County Commissioners created the Missoula County Open Lands Citizen Advisory Committee (OLC) to review and recommend action on the expenditures of the Open Space Bond funds; and

**WHEREAS**, the Missoula County Commissioners passed Resolution Number 2007-040 establishing criteria for use by the Missoula County Open Land Citizen Advisory Committee; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed conservation easement is consistent with County climate adaptation objectives, as it eliminates the threat of subdivision and high-density residential development in a high wildfire risk area and mitigates wildfire risk related to both structures and first responders; and

**WHEREAS**, on May 9, 2024, a quorum of the Missoula County Open Lands Citizen Advisory Committee unanimously voted to recommended approval of up to \$994,550 from the County's portion of the 2018 Open Space Bond Funds toward the purchase of a conservation easement to be held by Five Valleys Land Trust on approximately 2,330 acres; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of County Commissioners held a public hearing on November 7, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, the notice of the public hearing was provided in the *Missoulian* on October 26<sup>th</sup> and November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, the property provides habitat for a wide variety of species and offers important connections for wildlife movement on both local and regional scales, and is adjacent to other protected private lands and public lands; and

**WHEREAS**, Union Creek, a tributary of the Blackfoot River, runs through the property and conservation of the property will protect the stream and the habitat it supports and allow for improved water quality quantity, and protection of aquatic habitat; and

**WHEREAS**, much of the property is visible from two public roads and the conservation easement would protect the open space aesthetic values of the property; and

**WHEREAS**, nearly 55% of the property is comprised of agricultural soils classified as soils of either local or statewide importance and the property is managed for agricultural uses including timber, cropland, and grazing which would all be allowed to continue under the terms of the conservation easement while also protecting the wildlife habitat and riparian areas; and

**WHEREAS**, the project will secure perpetual hunting access that will be managed through Montana, Fish, Wildlife, and Parks' Block Management Program, which the property has been voluntarily enrolled in for over two decades; and

**WHEREAS**, the project meets the following purposes of the Open Space Bond, as listed in the Interlocal Agreement: conserving agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat, and rivers, lakes, and streams, protecting scenic views, and providing public access to water and land; and

