

October 13, 2006

Members of the Seeley Lake Community Council:

We, the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th generation descendents of Albert and Francis Troutwine are writing to express our opinion that the proposed zoning of the family ranch, located on the upper Blanchard meadows, conflicts with the family's historical use and future intent. Albert and Francis bought the ranch 87 years ago. Their sons, Earl and Marvin Troutwine, and their families have worked and sacrificed to keep the ranch in the family. We would like the ranch land to remain in the family for future generations *and* to be usable by those generations.

We were surprised to learn on October 9th, 2006 of a draft land use proposal to zone the ranch land to be one dwelling/80 acres. We were told that the draft would be submitted, as is, even though the owners of the Troutwine ranch had not participated in the decision making process and disagreed with the recommendations.

Considering that the 600+ acre Troutwine ranch is one of the largest privately owned properties (excluding Plum Creek) in the Clearwater Valley drainage, one would think that Marvin and Earl Troutwine would have been notified of this process and their opinions taken into account before the draft was finalized. Upon learning of the land use discussions taking place, several members of the family attended the meeting – only to discover that decisions had *already* taken place.

Based on our current knowledge of this process and the Resource Protection document distributed at the SLCC, we are requesting that the owners of the Troutwine ranch have additional input before the draft plan is forwarded to the County because:

- ◆ The land is *already* developed. It has been farmed since the 1800's. Albert and Christine Jameson began their ranch in the 1890's. They sold it to Albert and Francis Troutwine in 1919. For over 100 years, it has been a working cattle ranch. It is not a pristine, "untouched by man" piece of land. There are a few roads, some fences, 2 homes, a cabin, a barn, several storage buildings, a shop, a small saw mill, and the tell tale remains of a family who has worked hard and struggled to make do with what was available.
- ◆ The family has shown respect for the land and will continue to do so. The meadow has been kept free from buildings, roads and fences. Irrigation has been done for decades by Albert, Earl, and Kevin by horseback and with a shovel. Horses were used for haying until the 1980's. There are no power or telephone lines leading to the ranch. There are no concrete driveways, sidewalks, patios. Blanchard Creek has not been dammed or disturbed. Wild hay continues to grow in the upper meadow, which has never been tilled. The Troutwine family has made minimal impact on the landscape while attempting to maintain financial viability.

For over 40 years, *Marvin Troutwine* has supported the ranch's viability by giving his brother full access and use of his 120 acres. He also has long had the intent to pass the land onto his 3 children in 40 acre parcels. This intent was written into his will years

ago, and is supported by the US Public Land Survey System of 1/16-section (approx. 40 acres) designations. He recently purchased an easement from the current adjacent land owner, Plum Creek Timber Company, so that each of his children would have access to their land *without* driving through the meadow, and *without* the building of extensive roads. The planned division of land and access via the Plum Creek road protects the meadow. It also allows for a small building site for each property with easy access to the Plum Creek road. To build 3 dwellings in a cluster would likely require extensive bulldozing and/or building in the meadow.

Marvin has shown a respect for the land by not building any roads or buildings on his land. In 2004, he arranged for thinning the lodge pole pine because it was infected with beetles. Using Montana Best Management Practices, he saved what lodge pole pines were possible, as well as all larch and spruce. Noxious weed control was performed. Initial regeneration planting of ponderosa pines was done in Spring 2005.

And his descendents will continue to protect the land - because of our commitment to protecting nature and because of our love for this particular piece of nature. We are a family of hikers, fishermen, campers, gardeners, bicyclists, environmentalists, specifically, an employee of the University of Montana College of Forestry and Conservation, an environmental engineer, teachers, a social worker, members of the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy . . .

. . . And we want to be able to build a cabin on our piece of land in the future.

We urge you to work towards a land use plan which facilitates our family goals and retain the right of individuals in the family to continue using the Troutwine ranch located on the upper Blanchard meadows as agricultural land.

Thank you,

Marvin and Olga Troutwine
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Their decedents:

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Judy Troutwine
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CC: Pat O'Herrin

Addendum:

We further understand that the Resource Protection Category 4 is itself more stringent than some other land use categories recommended by the Missoula County Open Lands Working Group as possibilities for rural forest and agricultural areas.

(<ftp://www.co.missoula.mt.us/opg2/Documents/Long%20Range%20County/Regional%20Plan.PDF>, Land Use Categories, page 4).

Further recommendations by the group (<http://fvlt.org/pdf/County%20Report.pdf>) includes a list of conservation tools (Section 3, pages 17-20. Among the principles therein are the following:

- Comprise a mix of farm and ranch land, forestland, and riparian areas
- Facilitate a healthy community economy
- Support local food networks
- Encourage people's ties to the land and sense of place; sustain rural character
- Keep people working and recreating
- Support the historic, environmental, and productive contributions of farms and ranches.
- Encourage landowners to consider all their options.
- Promote fair distribution of conservation across regions.

One aspect of the above recommendations is apparently to allow for future small diversified farming operations. These still tend to be labor intense and small farms are, in some niche markets, as viable as larger ranch-only situations. As climate, populations, technology, and market conditions change, small tree farms and diversified farms may become more economically feasible and contribute to quality of life as well.