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April 24, 2025

Kalispell City Planning Department and City Council  
201 1st Avenue East Kalispell, MT 59901

Re: City of Kalispell Growth Policy Plan-It 2035

Dear Kalispell City Planning Department and City Councilors,

On behalf of our 400+ members of the Flathead Audubon Society, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on Kalispell's proposed Growth Policy Plan-It 2035. We have reviewed the growth policy focusing primarily on the importance of Kalispell Planning Area's "The Natural Environment" described in Chapter 5. Natural resources and environmental areas are so important that they should be the first Chapter of the plan. The information should also be expanded to reflect the importance and inherent values of the "Natural Environment". Biodiversity has declined by over 70 percent since the 1970's [https://www.worldwildlife.org/press-releases/catastrophic-73-decline-in-the-average-size-of-global-wildlife-populations-in-just-50-years-reveals-a-system-in-peril#:~:text=Washington%2C%20DC%20\(October%209%2C,WWF\)%20Living%20Planet%20Report%202024](https://www.worldwildlife.org/press-releases/catastrophic-73-decline-in-the-average-size-of-global-wildlife-populations-in-just-50-years-reveals-a-system-in-peril#:~:text=Washington%2C%20DC%20(October%209%2C,WWF)%20Living%20Planet%20Report%202024). Wise actions can help reverse this trend, but poor choices will contribute to this frightening decline. Our local natural environment provides a wealth of important values, functions, and the roles in our community; therefore, the Natural Environment information should be considered with an equal footing in the planning process.

We offer updates to various Chapters and subsections to better integrate these natural environmental values and importance into the rest of the planning document. It is important that readers and users of this Growth Policy have a clear understanding of **how valuable these natural resources and environmental areas are to our community** and that the City plans would like to maintain these resources while also planning for future growth. The residents of Kalispell already know how important these natural environmental values are; this is why we all live here. But, the Growth Policy fails to integrate these values into the planning process.

Please reference and share with developers and landowners the most recent educational materials about "Living in the Flathead" ([Living in Flathead](#)) developed by local individuals and entities who work in the Flathead. The information was compiled and published by the Flathead Lakers. These articles and handouts include topics such as "Living with Fire" and "Living with Wildlife".

Please reference and incorporate **Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) Recommendations for Subdivision and Development** ( [Fish And Wildlife Recommendations For Subdivision Development In Montana | Montana FWP](#)) in ongoing and future planning efforts. They were compiled by professional biologists across the state to help decision-makers understand impacts from development on fish and wildlife habitat and to provide appropriate recommendations to minimize or avoid these impacts. Specific comments by Section are attached and summarized. If you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darcy Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Darcy Thomas, President