733 Lord Byron Trail
Hamilton, Montana
59840

RECEIVED
MAR 06 2009
Ravalli County Commissioners

Ravalli County Commissioners

I have been a participant in general aviation for almost 20 years, and it is all about safety.

We bought property in Hamilton in 1996 – ~20 acres, and built a house which was completed in 1999, so this year will be ~10 years that we have spent part of our retirement years in Hamilton. Our selection of Hamilton was very much related to the access provided by the local airport at/in Ravalli County.

Having been a long term participant in general aviation, I have followed the activities of the FAA closely. This is a government agency that has long been the guardians of safety, both in the sky as well as on the ground. And with the advent of many more small private planes, there is a real need for many more small airports. It is easy to understand why the FAA with their safety orientation would prefer a future where the commercial airlines operate from large hub airports, and general aviation operate from separate regional airports — all controlled by the FAA.

It is no surprise that the FAA embarked on a program national in scope to mandate that all airports meet minimum safety standards over a reasonable time table or close down for reasons that all relate to safe operation standards.

My interest in the Ravalli County Airport is overwhelmingly oriented toward flight safety, but not exclusively. Unfortunately, Montana is victimized by forest fires, especially during the long hot summers; so to a degree I think of the airport as a very major auxiliary fire station. Forest fires are a very major threat

And the airport performs a very vital step in the containment and control of forest fires. The loss of the airport would be very detrimental to real estate sales, destination resort activities – both winter and summer, and a broad general decline in employment opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald T. Valentine

March 1, 2009