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[EXT SENDER] Protecting public lands with recreation potential

1 message

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To: Bonner County Planning <planning@bonnercountyid.gov>, allan.songstad@bonnercountyid.gov, dave.frankenbach@bonnercountyid.gov, josh.pilch@bonnercountyid.gov, Don Davis <don.davis@bonnercountyid.gov>, debby.trinen@bonnercountyid.gov, wayne.benner@bonnercountyid.gov

Dear Commissioners,

Thanks again for allowing for some real discussion about some of the goals and objectives. I appreciate that you encourage written comments, because sometimes it's hard to convey why including a goal, objective, or policy may be important in person because the intent can get lost. And we can get emotional as we struggle to convey our meaning.

I want to explain why including some language in the recreation section that addresses protecting existing or potential public access points is important. The language currently doesn't quite capture the intention - because it seems to focus on current, existing recreation areas. Some of the road ends in the county do present a potential for neighborhood access to the lake. This might also be the case for other public lands (i.e. national forest, BLM or state lands) - I'm just familiar with few of the road access points, some of which have been developed for recreation and some not. However, they are largely unknown, except perhaps by the immediate property owners who may or may not have an interest in allowing their neighbors to use that access point. There is one I know of where the neighbors maintain it, so it appears that it is NOT a public access point. There is another one that I mentioned last night, which is near the mouth of Fry Creek, where a neighbor appears to maintain it FOR the public benefit.

It was discussed in the Bonner County Trail Mix Committee (which sadly quit meeting during COVID and when the county's third parks and waterways director left the position) that it would be a good idea for the county to officially sign those areas and develop them into a water trail for non-motorized craft, so that paddlers have locations to stop and get out of their canoe or kayak or paddle board for safety, or just simply rest. Those locations could also serve as a neighborhood water access for people without waterfront property of their own.

Without a goal or objective to protect these areas, there is little direction for the county to protect these areas when a neighboring property owner, or a developer, comes in and asks for a road vacation, or other abandonment proceeding, which is a land use action and processed by the planning department.

In the case of Camp Bay, the applicant cited the cost to the county to develop the road end as a recreation site in their argument for why it was in the public interest to abandon the road. (That was in the original application. They expanded their argument to claim the waterfront wasn't actually public only after the court ordered a rehearing.)

If we think ahead 10 to 20 years and consider population and visitor pressure on existing recreation sites, it makes sense to do everything we can to protect those areas with potential to provide more access - and spread out the use as much as possible. This also keeps in mind the people who don't have the means to buy a waterfront home, or a time-share, or a boat, or the gas to drive to Green Bay even. This plan will impact the whole county and all its residents, not just the ones who own property.

Thank you,

Susan Drumheller

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