



QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Date: 16 October 2019
To: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
From: Jacob Pries, Policy Intern
Re: Whiskey Ridge Conservation Easement Proposal

On behalf of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), we would like to respectfully request that you consider the valuable impacts of increasing public access to Montana's sportsmen and women in moving forward with this proposal to purchase a 4,400-acre perpetual conservation easement. The QDMA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage. The QDMA has over 60,000 members nationwide and our membership includes hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals.

In purchasing this easement, you are presented with an extremely valuable opportunity to further conservation and the success of your state's economy. This can all be accomplished with the purchasing of this easement and the increase in public access to Montana's public lands. With this increase in access and hunting opportunities, it increases the possibility of preserving a white-tailed deer hunting tradition that is so deeply rooted in the history of Montana while increasing the viability of Montana's economy. According to the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Montana's sportsmen and women contribute \$983 million annually to the state's economy and support 16,515 jobs. Montana's sporting heritage is a staple to the state's economy. We respectfully ask that you take into consideration the weighty economic impacts that your state stands to benefit from giving access to sportsmen and women.

In purchasing this conservation easement, you will be contributing immensely to the preservation of wildlife habitat that is vital to many species, including the largely popular white-tailed deer. Whitetails are the most popular big game animal in the U.S., and whitetail hunters are the foundation of a nearly \$67 billion hunting industry. According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, approximately three of every four hunters pursue whitetails and according to the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, \$872 million was raised by hunting license fees just last year. Additionally, since 1939 state fish and wildlife agencies have received over \$62.1 billion in funds directly from sportsmen and women. Hunters are truly the original conservationists. Their vital contributions to conservation and the economy provide a substantial benefit that will come from allowing this easement to be used for public access to hunting lands. The product that could come out of this purchase is simple, and that is the next generation of public land stewards. By increasing the access opportunities for sportsmen and women, you help remedy an access problem that keeps Americans from enjoying what is rightfully theirs to enjoy. As you allow for those individuals to garner experiences on our nation's public lands, you allow for those individuals to develop an unbridled passion for them that will last a lifetime. On behalf of the QDMA, we would like to thank you for your time and consideration of our comments.

Respectfully,

Jacob Pries
Policy Intern
Quality Deer Management Association