

**Lone Eagle Subdivision North**  
**Formal Objection to Proposed Zone Change from Agricultural to RR-3**  
**Alkali Creek / Highway 3 Area – Yellowstone County, Montana**  
**To: Billings–Yellowstone County Planning Board**  
**Date: 12/10/25**

**Summary of Objection**

I am an adjacent landowner to the property proposed for rezoning from Agricultural (AG) to Rural Residential 3 (RR-3) near Alkali Creek Road and Highway 3. I respectfully submit this letter to request denial of the proposed zoning change.

The requested RR-3 zoning is inconsistent with the Yellowstone County Growth Policy, incompatible with surrounding large-lot rural development, and would impose disproportionate impacts on groundwater resources, traffic safety, emergency services, neighboring landowners and negatively promotes incremental upzoning. The rezoning is being sought solely to increase lot yield and does not serve a demonstrated public interest.

**Growth Policy Conflict – Agricultural Open Designation**

Yellowstone County GIS identifies the subject property under the Growth Policy Future Land Use Map as Agricultural Open. This designation reflects the County's adopted policy intent to:

- preserve open agricultural land;
- maintain low residential density;
- avoid infrastructure strain; and
- protect rural character.

RR-3 zoning allows residential densities fundamentally inconsistent with the Agricultural Open designation. Approving RR-3 in an area designated Agricultural Open would represent a substantial departure from the County's adopted policy framework and requires compelling justification, which has not been provided. Additionally, the lot sizes being proposed average just over 6 acres each which leaves the possibility under RR3 for them to be further subdivided in the future down to 3 acre lots which could significantly exacerbate everything outlined below.

**Density Incompatibility with Existing Development Pattern**

All existing adjacent and surrounding parcels are developed as large-lot rural properties, averaging approximately 14 acres per lot.

The proposed subdivision would create 36 residential lots, all under 10 acres, with an average lot size under 6.55 acres (based on initial plat (see below Exhibit B) which may have already been changed) and some as small as 4.5 acres. This represents a 53.2% reduction in average lot size compared to surrounding development.

If the property were developed consistently with even a conservative rural standard of 10-acre lots, it would reasonably yield approximately 23 lots, not 36. The additional 13 lots exist solely because of the requested RR-3 zoning and materially increase impacts to infrastructure, groundwater, septic loading, traffic, and emergency services.

This magnitude of density increase is not incremental and is incompatible with the established rural land-use pattern. Additionally, approving this rezoning would initiate zoning creep by

incrementally increasing residential density in an area designated for low-density agricultural use, setting a precedent for similar requests that cumulatively erode the rural character intended by the Growth Policy and overloading the environmental impact.

### **Groundwater, Septic Density, and Ground Stability**

The subdivision is located in a narrow valley with a dry creek bed, shallow alluvial soils, and observable sinkholes near the creek bottom. All proposed lots would rely on individual wells and septic systems.

A 36-lot development would significantly increase cumulative groundwater withdrawal and septic effluent in a confined aquifer system, increasing the risk of:

- well interference;
- declining water levels;
- nitrate contamination; and
- ground subsidence in an area already exhibiting sinkhole activity.

Under current DNRC interpretation, subdivision wells may be considered a combined appropriation, making approval of 36 domestic wells unlikely without a formal water-right permit and hydrogeologic analysis. Higher density directly increases regulatory, financial, and resource risk to neighboring landowners.

### **Traffic and Road Safety Impacts**

The proposed subdivision would add 36 homes, generating approximately 72 additional vehicles during peak morning traffic. Under the current zoning this would be reduced by approximately 26 vehicles. As someone who drives this road every morning and evening, this is meaningful from a safety standpoint. Alkali Creek Road has become significantly less safe since the opening of the bypass.

Alkali Creek Road is a rural roadway constructed of compacted recycled pavement, with soft shoulders, no guardrails, limited sight distance, and existing stress associated with bypass traffic. Additionally, this section of the road runs exactly west to east and sunrise, and sunset are blinding enough as is. The road network was not designed for subdivision-level traffic volumes, particularly under winter, sunrise and sunset conditions. It becomes single lane when it snows heavy.

The intersection at Alkali Creek and MT-3 is also a very dangerous intersection with continuous 80 mph traffic on MT-3 and no traffic lights / minimal traffic signs as safety mitigation for this intersection. In it's current state, severe accident probability significantly increases based on this proposal.

No traffic impact study or roadway improvement plan has been submitted. Increased density would exacerbate known safety hazards and shift maintenance and risk burdens to the County and existing residents.

### **Infrastructure Hazards and Emergency Services**

The property is traversed by both a hazardous liquids pipeline / gas transmission pipeline, each classified as federally regulated high-consequence infrastructure. Lot sizes are further reduced adjacent to these corridors to maximize yield, increasing residential exposure near known hazards. (this may have improved with newer version of the plat proposal) If zoned RR3, the

future could result in further subdivisions down to 3 acre lots intensifying the risk along this pipeline.

Fire protection is provided by the Furgo Volunteer Fire Department, approximately two miles away, with no municipal hydrants, limited water supply, and reliance on volunteer staffing. Increased residential density escalates wildfire ignition risk and evacuation demand without corresponding mitigation measures.

### **Public Interest vs. Private Gain**

The applicant's justification for the rezoning appears to be economic: increasing lot yield. Zoning changes must serve the public interest, not simply maximize private development returns. The application identifies no demonstrated housing need, infrastructure investment, or public benefit that would justify intensifying development in an Agricultural Open area.

### **Conclusion**

The requested rezoning from Agricultural (AG) to RR-3 is inconsistent with the Growth Policy's Agricultural Open designation, incompatible with surrounding rural development patterns, and increases risks related to groundwater sustainability, traffic safety, infrastructure hazards, and emergency response capacity.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Planning Board and County Commissioners deny the proposed zoning change and maintain the existing Agricultural zoning consistent with adopted policy and on-the-ground conditions.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeff Reese

Owner – 12 acre RP Lot on NW corner of proposed development.  
406-318-5248  
Attached Exhibits A - D



Exhibit A – Existing Sink Hole Next to Proposed Subdivision

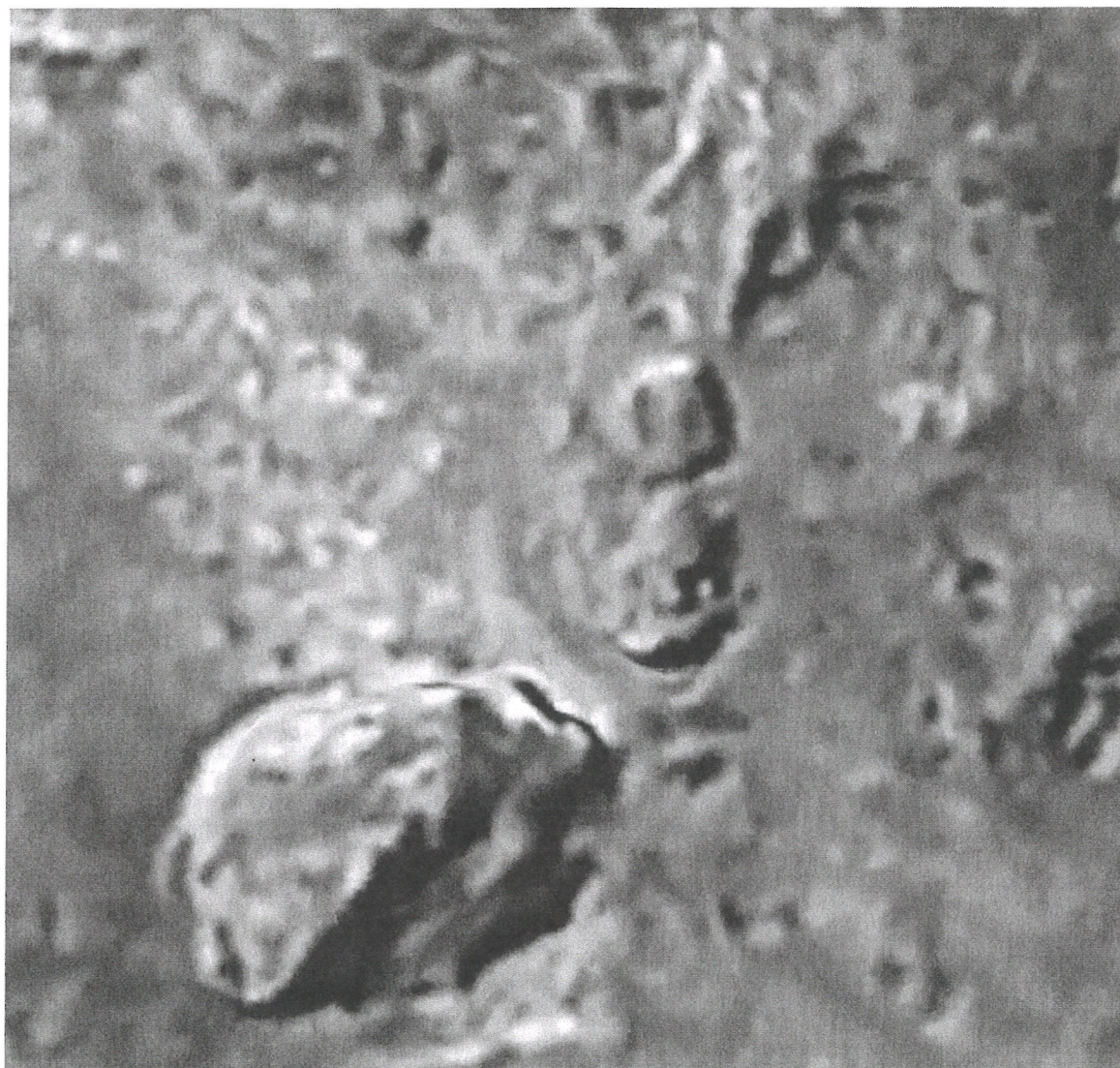




Exhibit B – Plat Proposed at Neighborhood Meeting – Meeting notes are also bias in favor of the south border line property owners. Note #3 does not reflect the actual comments made “proposed plat is too tight” failed to specify that the tightness is along the north boarder which was explicitly stated at the meeting.

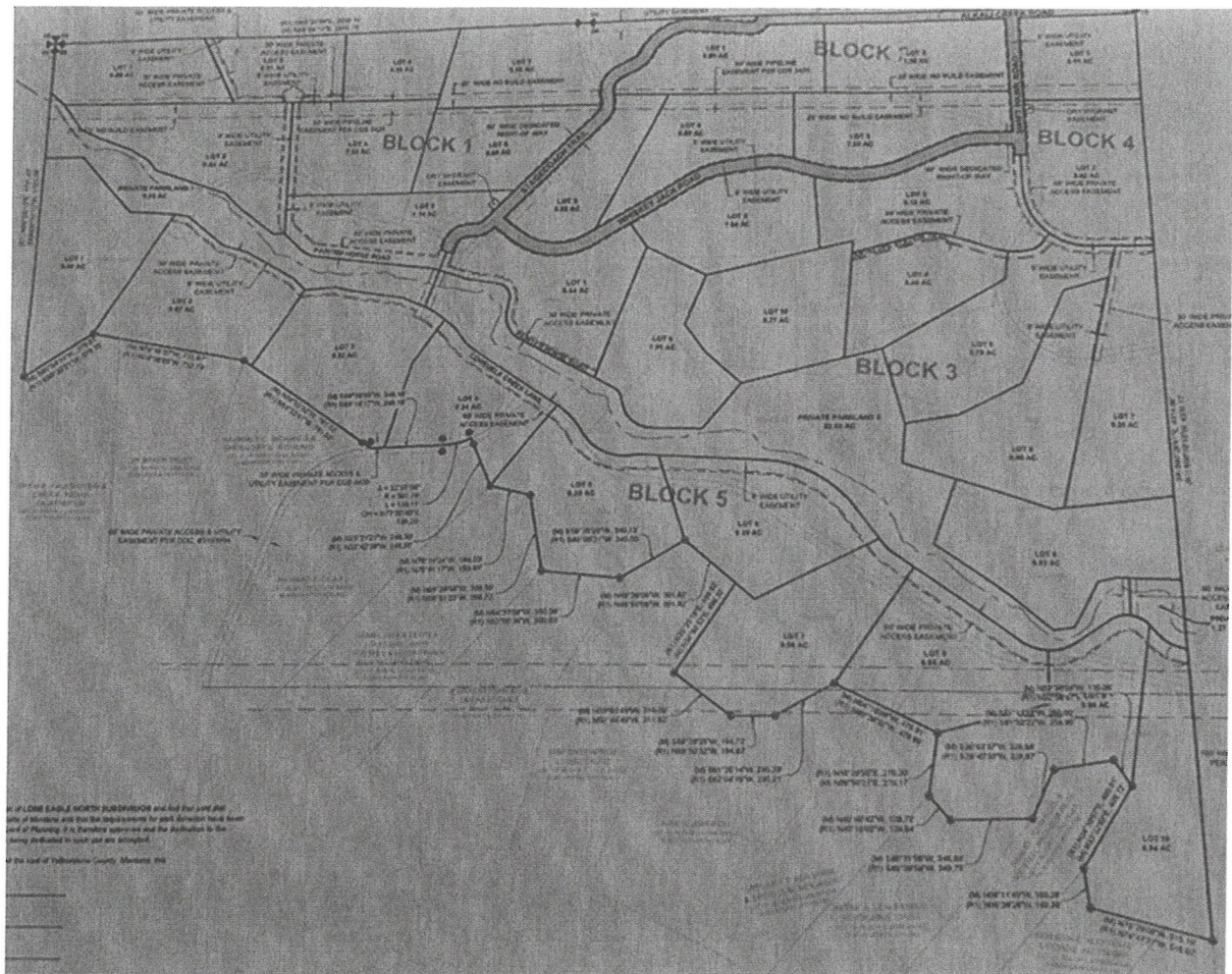


Exhibit C - The following division is more evenly and fairly distributed so as to impact adjacent property values more evenly. Also, these lost average almost 14 acres each which is consistent with those to the north and to the south.

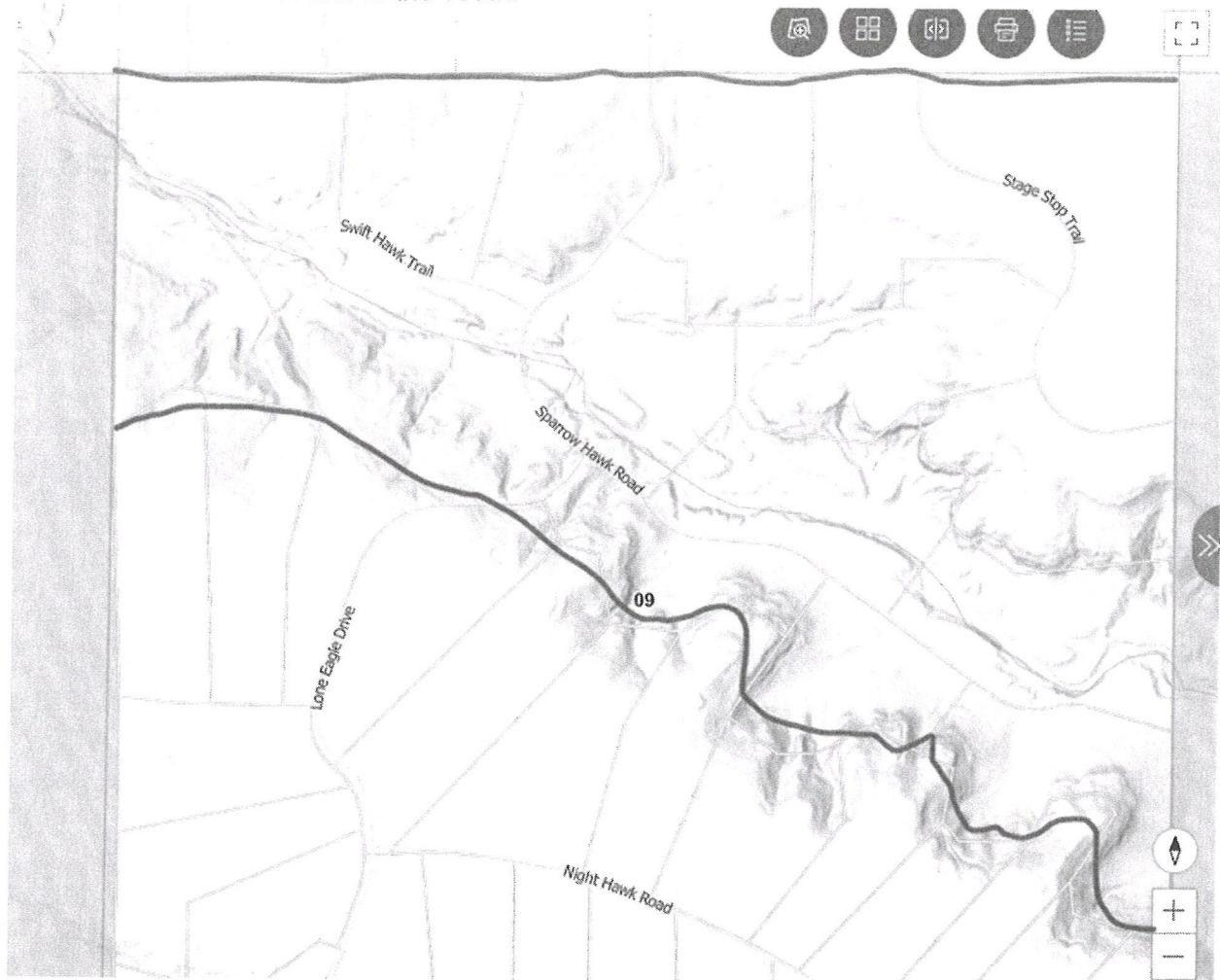




Exhibit D – Meeting Minutes are bias in favor of the south border property owners. The only comment I heard at the meeting regarding this proposal is that they do not want a road connecting to their existing subdivision, which is entirely understandable.

## **Lone Eagle North - Proposed Zone Change to RR-3**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Date: 10.8.25**

1. Is there proposed building near the oil pipeline that is crossing the property?
  - The proposed plat locates the oil pipeline along the edge of the lots, to allow the maximum distance for residences to be constructed away from the pipeline.
2. Will there be a connection to the original Lone Eagle Subdivision? Also, if the plat doesn't happen, does it have to connect to Lone Eagle?
  - The current plat does not include a connection to the original Lone Eagle and a variance from this connection is planned to be constructed. If the original plat is constructed, then yes there is a connection platted on it.
3. It was noted from neighbors living north of the property that the proposed plat is too tight.
4. HOA Discussion
  - Is it planned to be the same HOA as the original Lone Eagle?
    - Not planned to be within the same HOA. A new one is planned to be constructed, but by the same developers as original Lone Eagle so it is anticipated it will be generally the same with different landowners in each. If the property is not subdivided then it would remain in the original HOA.
  - Do the developers and the County understand the existing Lone Eagle HOA doesn't want road through?
    - Yes, that has been conveyed.
6. What type of CCR's are planned?
  - The owners are anticipating they will be the same as those within the original Lone Eagle.
7. Who is developer?
  - Same as previous Lone Eagle.