

the visiting tourists being quite taken with those park buses with RETRO stenciled on the side.

Whatever your inclination, don't hesitate to clip out the coupon and get it to Galavan by Friday. After all, you don't get to name a bus line every day.

Vote on one of the five names listed below for the Bozeman-area public transit system.

____ TRAM (Transportation Routes Around Montana)

____ SMART (Southwest Montana Accessible Regional Transportation)

____ RETRO (Real Easy to Ride On)

____ MTC (Mountains to Cities)

____ Three Rivers Transportation

Other _____

Mail to: Galavan, 807 N. Tracy, Bozeman, MT 59715 (All votes must be received by Friday, April 14)

The Chronicle editorial policy

The opinion page is intended to acquaint readers with varying viewpoints on matters of public importance. Signed columns and letters from readers reflect the opinions of the writers. Editorials represent the views of The Chronicle's editorial board. Members of the editorial board:

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COMMENTARY

Fight efforts to undermine the Endangered Species Act

In the 1920s and 1930s, when I was growing up in Manhattan, my dad had a rule about fishing: I was not allowed to throw away a single fish. They all had to be killed and eaten. Letting fish go or just tossing them in the garbage was an unforgivable waste.

Well, I didn't waste a thing. Using mostly worms and sucker meat for bait, I caught hundreds of big beautiful trout and I brought them all home. The neighbors finally got so tired of me showing up on the porch with another mess of fish that they stopped answering the door.

Eventually I wised up and stopped killing so many fish. And after I opened the Trout Shop in West Yellowstone in 1950, I learned how important those trout were to our region's economy. By the 1960s, we were urging our customers to use barbless hooks and practice catch-and-release.

Catch-and-release saved Montana's fantastic fishing. Our grandchildren will still be able to enjoy the fantastic fishing we now accept as our birthright. We've learned the hard way that it's a lot easier to protect wild things like trout while they're still abundant, rather than wait and try to restore them when they're almost gone.

That very same kind of foresight was the inspiration for the Endangered Species Act. Thanks to this far-sighted piece of legislation, bald eagles again soar across many parts of America from which they'd vanished.



BUD LILLY
Guest columnist

Restored gray whales again attract and thrill tourists on the coast of Washington and Oregon. And North America's largest bird, the California condor, is again nesting in northern California for the first time in a century.

The Endangered Species Act has rightly earned the United States the admiration of the world. Four out of five Americans favor keeping the act vital and strong.

But there are those who would weaken or destroy the effectiveness of this momentous act. A bill recently passed in the U.S. House of Representatives embodies the cynical impulse that the only thing that matters is short-term gain, and future generations be damned. Sponsored by Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Calif., the bill would replace solid, enforceable law with weak "voluntary" protection programs.

We conservationists know from past experience that voluntarism is a wonderful thing. But it's never been enough. Our society's conservation laws will always need the power to protect the best interests of the many

from the willful disregard of the few. The Endangered Species Act is our promise to future generations that we will not deprive them of the beauty and wonder we are blessed with today.

Rather than undermine the Endangered Species Act, our elected officials should reinforce our commitment to that future by fully funding the species recovery program. To do any less will not only diminish the quality of our lives, it will also betray our responsibility to our children and grandchildren.

I hope you will join me in urging Montana Sens. Max Baucus and Conrad Burns to reject any attempt to weaken the Endangered Species Act. Let's not barter off the very things that matter most about Montana. Protecting Montana's wild heritage is the best investment we can make in this state's economic future. To do anything else would just be a waste.

Manhattan native Bud Lilly is an internationally recognized pioneer of modern Western angling. He was awarded the American Museum of Fly Fishing's prestigious Heritage Award for lifetime contributions to fly fishing, and was the first president of Montana Trout Unlimited, first chairman of the International Fly-Fishing Center, and a founder of the Montana Trout Foundation. He taught science to Montana school children for 25 years.

growth, particularly if this growth emphasizes a mixed use as described above.

The only example of development rights transfer in Gallatin County occurred a few years ago at Saddle Peak Ranch (SPR) in the Middle Cottonwood Zoning District east of Springhill Road. Here, zoning allowed this "sometimes" developer to acquire 15 density units from adjoining property owners and move growth and density off the deer winter range and onto a clustered residential development, preserving about 250 additional acres of open space. Because there was zoning, and only due to zoning, was this possible. Zoning, and its calculable certainty, created a value which was measurable and treated as a development budget cost. Cost to the developer: \$20,000 per density unit. Cost to the taxpayer: \$0.

Dollars to doughnuts? Done correctly (and courageously!), a city/county collaboration on creating value at the bulging waistlines of Bozeman, Belgrade, Manhattan, etc. by implementing county zoning and a TDR program will change the face of the valley floor. Combined with a mixed use approach, it will do much to limit sprawl, decrease traffic, and increase public safety and services in a manner which will make our cities and the county more livable and enjoyable over the next decade. The alternative, and the direction we are heading now, is a Gallatin County with innumerable dead zones of commercial strips, isolated, leapfrogging subdivisions and a steady decline in such intangible things as traffic flow, air quality, dark skies and view-sheds. Doesn't that sound a bit like where you came from?

The Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) is not something new. It has been done in dozens of locations across the U.S. and has been a very successful method of encouraging controlled growth. The county planning department and a special committee (of which I was a member) spent nearly two years studying their usefulness and impact. TDRs have worked elsewhere. They will work here. Unless, of course, we are a great deal more dense than I believe.

Bill Muhlenfeld is a past member of the Chronicle editorial board, local businessman and self-described serial entrepreneur. His e-mail address is: bmuhlenfeld@dailychronicle.com

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