STAFF MEMO

Date: July 16, 2008

From: Becki Keefer

To: Beth Robrahn, Planning Director
Hailey Planning & Zoning Commission

Re: **Quigley Ranch Annexation, Open Space**

At the last Public Hearing on the Quigley Ranch Annexation, a member of the public spoke on behalf of the Citizens for Public Access, and on the importance of keeping public access whenever possible.

I wanted to take this opportunity to remind the Commission that the Hailey Parks & Lands Board, too, recognizes the value of public access to lands that may not appear particularly valuable or usable, such as the hillside parcels along the east side of Woodside and to the east of the Old Cutters subdivision.

The Woodside parcels, zoned RGB (Recreational Green Belt) and deeded to the City of Hailey, (commonly referred to as the "hillside triangles" because of their shape) extend up the face of the hillside, but do include a portion of the valley floor. These parcels were originally intended to be kept as open space for avalanche run-out areas, a buffer between the backs of homes and any potential hazards. These hillside triangles have provided the city with the means of creating the popular Toe of the Hill Trail, which typically runs 10' to 50' above the valley floor. Without dedication of these parcels to the public, the Trail would not have been possible. The new Woodside Central Park, a nine-acre park on Moonlight Drive in Woodside, would have been only three acres if the city had not received the hillside triangle parcel that extends the park back to and beyond the toe of the slope. In short, hillside parcels can greatly enhance the recreation opportunities for the citizens of Hailey, <u>if they are owned by and dedicated to the public</u>. Easements that grant public access across privately-owned property can be changed in the future; the only way to guarantee public access is for the public to own the property.

While the Quigley Ranch application includes construction of a system of trails that includes single-track trails, separated pathways, community trails and sidewalks, the trail system is concentrated mostly to the mouth of the canyon and directed away from the larger "estate home" lots above the pond and farther east out the canyon. This patchwork of ownership could create confusion in the future, and could prevent future expansion of any trail system. The Parks & Lands Board consistently recommends that hillside parcels and lands be dedicated to the city to hold on behalf of the citizens of Hailey. Private ownership of hillside parcels, such as the "Up Canyon estate parcels" would restrict public access to public lands that lie above and beyond the valley floor, such as the BLM lands to the north and south of Quigley canyon.

The applicable portion of the Parks & Lands Board's earlier comments on the Quigley application are attached:

C. Hillside Parcels, Wildlife Corridors and Green Space

Application proposal:

- Hillsides generally above the 15% slope remain undeveloped.
- Some hillsides will be part of estate lots with designated building envelopes and irrigation limited to ½ acre.
- Ownership of the hillsides is unclear, and may be a patchwork of public and private lands.

Board comments:

1. The Board recommends that hillside parcels be dedicated to the City of Hailey and deed restricted to public non-motorized recreational uses only. Where feasible, land should be dedicated to the city to create a seamless and consistent management and maintenance plan for parks, trails, hillside lands, greenways and landscaping strips.

2. Consistent with an earlier annexation into the City of Hailey, the hillside parcels on the north side of Quigley Canyon (Red Devil, Hangmans Gulch, Radio Tower Hill) should be closed to <u>all</u> uses in the winter to protect wintering wildlife.

   The Board is aware that conflicts between users, their dogs, and the wildlife have escalated this winter, particularly in this area. Enforcement of winter closure remains a concern to the Board, as does the likelihood, with development of Quigley Canyon, for increased conflicts between dogs and wildlife.

   The Board suggests a strong ongoing public education campaign on seasonal closures and dog restrictions to protect wildlife, especially as Quigley Canyon gets developed.

3. Deadmans Gulch should show recreational access to seasonal trails connecting to Hangmans Gulch and the city's property at Old Cutters, recognizing that such trails would need approval from the BLM.

4. The Board recommends that the application show that the proposed wildlife corridors use best management practices based on best available science, and that the corridors be dedicated to the public and deed-restricted to protect wildlife.