

The uncontrolled development of subdivisions and residential housing fragments large tracts of animal habitat and has negative impacts on water quality and quantity. Buildings and roads both contribute to fragmentation, and the process of development can damage and destroy areas important for wildlife and fisheries. Uncontrolled development is especially a concern near wetland and riparian areas, areas that are disproportionately important to wildlife yet also highly desirable residential locations. In these areas, the development of water resources alone can be problematic for wildlife, and the placement of homes too close to water resources can be problematic for homeowners. Major visual, quantitative, or qualitative changes along waters in Montana can also affect the value of our fishing and wildlife industries. Exempt wells, or wells that can be permitted without water rights, to support the development of residential homes and subdivisions are a particular threat to our streams and wetlands. Even details about subdivision and building layout, including lighting or the type of fencing used, can determine how the development will impact wildlife and wildlife habitat. Uncontrolled subdivision development strains city, county, emergency, and residential services, like sewers. Such development also causes road congestion or pinch points for community access. In connection to rapid energy development, the rapid and uncontrolled development of labor-based communities is especially likely to cause problems regarding emergency, including law enforcement, response. This is detrimental to wildlife and people because it often requires more development to alleviate. Counter to uncontrolled development, planned land use can improve human quality of life (e.g., through greenspaces) while minimally impacting wildlife. Many of the regulations governing subdivision development in Montana are in the Subdivision and Platting Act, that we have a long history of working to build and strengthen.



### **The policy of Montana Audubon regarding Subdivisions is to:**

- Educate the public and public policy makers about the importance of land use regulations that affect subdivision development, water use, and planning
- Support allowing local governments to review subdivisions for wildlife, wildlife habitat, and similar issues under the Subdivision and Platting Act, zoning laws, and other land use regulations
- Oppose legislation that creates loopholes in land use regulations, reduces requirements for natural park dedication, tilts the review process to favor developers, and creates problems for local governments in their review of changes in land use
- Oppose the overuse of exempt wells for residential and subdivision development
- Support the ability of conservation easements to be granted in perpetuity to protect private lands against development
- Support land use regulations that provide protection for wetlands, riparian areas, streams and rivers (e.g. preventing clear cutting right up to a stream)
- Support regulation of the location of gravel pits and other development associated with subdivision development.