

Armada of Dirty Water Legislation Floating to Governor Gianforte's Desk

Businesses and Fly Fishing Lodges join Upper Missouri Waterkeeper in Sending Letter to Governor Requesting Veto to Protect Clean Water and Jobs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

CONTACT:

[Quincey Johnson](#), Upper Missouri Waterkeeper
(406) 624-9261

Bozeman, MT - Today, the Firehole Ranch and Big Hole Lodge joined nonprofit Upper Missouri Waterkeeper in sending a letter to Governor Greg Gianforte requesting a veto of dirty water legislation working its way through the Montana Legislature.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is how the old saying goes. Unfortunately, the raft of dirty water legislation working its way to Governor Gianforte's desk is a giant leap backwards when it comes to conserving the cold, clean waterways that provide drinking water for our communities, support thousands of good paying jobs, and are the backbone of Montana's \$7 billion recreation economy," **said Guy Alsentzer, Executive Director of Upper Missouri Waterkeeper.** "Governor Gianforte should make legislators come back to reality by quickly vetoing all dirty water, job killing legislation."

The letter specifically requests the Governor veto [Senate Bill 358](#), carried by Senator John Esp (R) - SD 30 and Senator Mike Cuffe (R) - SD 1, that would repeal numeric nutrient water quality standards. The letter, in part, states that:

"As a technical matter, SB 358 would remove decades of scientific evidence and rules that limit the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution most Montana waterways can accept while remaining healthy, letting many of the state's largest dischargers off the hook from doing their share to protect our world-class waterways. As a practical matter, SB 358 directly threatens Montana's economic well-being, jobs, and our outdoors heritage by eroding science-based protections that will further degrade water quality.

Montana's \$7.1 billion Outdoor Recreation Industry and the more than 71,000 jobs it supports are dependent upon clean and healthy waterways. When our rivers and lakes become impaired by unnatural nutrient pollution, the second largest sector of Montana's economy and the waterways that attract visitors from all over the world are unnecessarily put at risk. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its rippling economic impacts, the last thing Montana's economy and hard working citizens need is a blow to the lifeblood of our state - our waterways. Senate Bill 358 would only harm Montana's comeback.

Montana scientists recognized over twenty years ago that nutrients are some of the most pervasive and challenging pollutants confronting our waterways. The only state providing the headwaters to three transcontinental river systems, Montana's rivers and streams are uniquely sensitive to pollution. Likewise, we possess some of the last intact and healthy regional ecosystems (Glacier and Yellowstone) with rare flora and fauna which depend on clean, healthy waterways."

Read the full letter [here](#).

Senate Bill 358 - not to mention other dirty water bills like SB [164](#) or [165](#)- undermine Montanan's right to a clean and healthful environment by removing science-based water quality standards that protect and conserve Montana's waterways. It would also require DEQ to undertake a costly and controversial new pollution control rulemaking process lacking any foundation in science or precedent across the Nation. SB 358 is the most egregious piece of dirty water legislation by far; the law, if passed, would dramatically undermine federal, state and local efforts aimed at protecting Montana's waterways from unhealthy nutrient pollution and [noxious algal blooms](#).

If this Session's armada of dirty water legislation passes into law, Montana would also be running afoul of mandatory requirements of the federal Clean Water Act, which would likely put the State at odds with EPA, risk millions of dollars in annual federal funding for Clean Water Act programs, and potentially put local governments, the State, and taxpayers on the hook for lawsuits for failing to protect our water and human health.

[Upper Missouri Waterkeeper](#) is dedicated to protecting and improving fishable, swimmable, drinkable water throughout the 25,000 square miles of Montana's Upper Missouri River Basin.

###