



April 14, 2021

Governor Greg Gianforte
Office of the Governor
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte:

On behalf of Upper Missouri Waterkeeper, Big Hole Lodge, and Firehole Ranch, we are writing to you regarding our concerns for Senate Bill 358 and the threats it poses to our waterways and the recreational and agricultural uses, municipal water supply, and the countless jobs and businesses reliant upon clean and healthy rivers.

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.

Repealing Montana's numeric nutrient rules will dramatically undermine federal, state, and local efforts aimed at protecting our rivers from unhealthy nutrient pollution and noxious algal blooms. Throwing out a proven system of pollution control is short-term thinking that disregards the proven economic benefits that science-based pollution control rules offer our keynote waterways.

Montana's cold water fisheries are a vital part of Montana's economy, supplying clean drinking water to our communities and recreational opportunities to Montanans and visitors alike. We cannot risk losing the health of our unique headwaters, and SB 358 would do just that. It's troubling that this legislation and other dirty water bills have advanced this far in the process despite evidence that they will harm local Montana waterways, businesses, and our outdoors economy.

We respectfully request that you use the full authority vested in you as Governor to veto Senate Bill 358 as a direct threat to Montana's world-class cold water fisheries, clean drinking water supplies, jobs, and our way of life.

Sincerely,



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