



# AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

## MONTANA CHAPTER

9/8/05

Dear Mr. Vashro:

The Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (MCAFS) appreciates the opportunity to comment regarding the recent proposal to stock sterile tiger muskie in Horseshoe Lake, west of the Continental Divide.

The main concern the Chapter has is that this proposal sends a mixed message to the public regarding non-native fish introductions and the importance of native fishery stocks in western Montana. One possible problem of introducing tiger muskie west of the Continental Divide is that people will move them to other waters illegally. In Region One alone there have been 267 illegal plants into 146 waters and continue to be a problem for western Montana fisheries professionals. The message is further complicated by FWP's proposal to eradicate non-native hybrid trout from the South Fork Flathead lakes, a project aimed at getting rid of non-natives (legally introduced) that pose a threat to native and recreational stocks. We are also concerned that this proposal opens the door to public pressure for further non-native introductions, including but not limited to walleye, west of the divide

MCAFS would like to see the proposal put forward as an "experimental introduction" with a detailed implementation and monitoring plan. Data cited in the EA states there is no risk to native populations; however that data is based on papers published in 1947. We would like to see an extensive literature search to incorporate additional peer reviewed and gray literature into this proposal and characterize the risk to native fish populations. We would also like to see this project used as an experimental introduction, closely monitor it and provide additional data on the use of tiger muskies as a fisheries management tool. That monitoring would also provide FWP with the data necessary to adjust this proposal if necessary. In addition, to address the concerns with public perceptions related to illegal and legal introductions of non-native fish, we would like to see public outreach and education efforts addressed in a monitoring plan.

Thank you for your interest to manage and conserve our fisheries resources in Montana, as the decisions made now will influence these important conservation areas for future generations. We urge you to consider our recommendations to conserve native and sport fisheries in western Montana.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Kate Walker*

President, Montana Chapter AFS

