



AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY MONTANA CHAPTER



Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee
2009 Montana Legislature
Helena, Montana

February 10, 2009

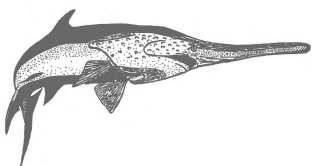
RE: Senate Bill 343 – “An Act Creating the Montana Invasive Species Act...”

Dear Senators,

On behalf of the more than 350 members of the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (MCAFS) I appreciate the opportunity to voice our **support for Senate Bill 343** whose primary purpose is to further define the prevention and management of invasive species in Montana.

The American Fisheries Society (AFS), founded in 1870, is the oldest and largest professional society representing fisheries scientists. Our mission is to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals. AFS promotes scientific research and enlightened management of resources for optimum use and enjoyment by the public. We also encourage a comprehensive education for fisheries scientists and continuing on-the-job training. The AFS publishes some of the world's leading fisheries research journals and organizes scientific meetings where new results are reported and discussed. The Montana Chapter of the AFS was formed in 1967 and is one of 53 chapters of the American Fisheries Society. Our membership is comprised of fisheries professionals affiliated with state and federal agencies, universities, tribes and private industry, all dedicated to preserving and enhancing the fisheries resources of Montana. Issues that may affect the health of our states aquatic resources, their management and conservation, and their perception and use by the public, such as Senate Bill 343 does, are very important to us.

It is abundantly clear that aquatic invasive and nuisance species have the ability to negatively affect the health, function, and recreational use of Montana's waters. We need look no further than whirling disease to see the impacts of an invasive disease on fish population health, ecosystem function, and angler use and perception. Other lesser known aquatic invasives, such as didymo, zebra mussels, New Zealand mud snails, and flowering rush, not to mention non-native fish introductions, have already or have the potential to cause significant economic and ecological harm.



We are currently (Feb 9-13th) holding our annual meeting in Kalispell and already several scientific presentations have focused on how aquatic resource managers are and will be faced with the negative consequences of expanding populations of invasive and non-native species. MCAFS supports a broad targeted effort to manage invasive species in Montana. Such an effort should include education and prevention programs, public outreach, regulatory and enforcement authority, research and control efforts, and funding for coordination and implementation of an interagency effort to manage and prevent the spread of invasive and nuisance species.

Of course SB 343 does not do all these things. But it is a step in the right direction to provide the primary agencies in Montana dealing with this issue some additional authority and direction in our battle against aquatic invasive species.

We hope you will support SB 343.

With warmest regards,



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