



January 21, 2002

Montana Board of Environmental Review
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Board Members,

The Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (MCAFS) has reviewed American Wildlands' (AW) petition to classify the Gallatin River an Outstanding Resource Water (ORW). The American Fisheries Society, organized in 1870, is the oldest professional society in North America dealing with the natural resources. The MCAFS was chartered in 1967. Among our objectives are conservation, development and wise utilization of fisheries, promotion of the educational, scientific and technological development and advancement of all branches of fisheries science and practice, and exchange and dissemination of knowledge about fish, fisheries and related subjects.

The MCAFS supports the ORW designation for the Gallatin River. The Gallatin River, and most of the Gallatin Drainage, support wild native and introduced fish that provide recreational and aesthetic values for many people, as well as the many other ecological and economic benefits detailed in the petition. Additionally, the pristine nature of most tributaries of the Gallatin River offer opportunity for restoration of westslope cutthroat trout, a Montana Species of Special Concern and a candidate for Threatened Species listing.

The petition states ORW designation is necessary to prevent *permanent* water quality degradation. Efforts to restore westslope cutthroat trout in any significant fashion currently rely on the application of piscicides (fish pesticides) to remove competing and/or hybridizing non-native fish. It is the understanding of MCAFS that, as currently interpreted, ORW designation of the mainstem Gallatin River will not affect the ability of agencies to use piscicides in tributary waters, as the application of piscicides is a *short-term, temporary* degradation. MCAFS strongly supports the ability of agencies to use piscicides in well designed and researched efforts to remove non-native fish for restoration of native aquatic fauna. We feel accomplishment of such restoration efforts in Gallatin River tributaries will only enhance ORW designation. Undoubtedly, some westslopes will leave their tributaries and enter the Gallatin River, providing an opportunity for anglers to experience portions of Montana as it was 200 years ago.

Sincerely,

Pat Clancey
President
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C: American Wildlands

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