



March 6, 2001

Missoula County Board of Commissioners
200 West Broadway
Missoula, MT 59802

Dear Commissioners:

The Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (MCAFS) is a non-profit scientific organization representing almost 200 fisheries biologists, fisheries managers, stream ecologists, students and anglers; many of whom work and recreate in the upper Clark Fork Basin. On behalf of the MCAFS, I would like to applaud your continued efforts to protect and restore river resources in Missoula County. Along these lines, we fully support your proposed resolution to:

“urge the removal and safe disposal of toxic sediments from Milltown Reservoir, the removal of Milltown Dam, the restoration of the confluence of the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers, the restoration of associated wetlands and fish and wildlife habitat, and the creation of a regional park in the Milltown and Bonner Two Rivers area”

This clean-up and restoration effort would be one of the most important natural resource conservation actions ever taken in our state and the ‘Two Rivers Restoration and Development Project’, offered by Missoula County, appears to be a well-conceived plan for accomplishing it. This plan would not only benefit fish, wildlife and the Clark Fork River system as a whole, but also a range of recreationists, residents of Missoula County and the local economy of the Milltown-Bonner area.

The impacts of Milltown Dam on the Clark Fork and Blackfoot rivers are well documented and unequivocal. The fisheries benefits of Milltown Dam removal and reservoir clean up would be tremendous. These benefits include enhancement of imperiled native fish populations, such as westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout, and many other species. Specific benefits include:

- (1) Unobstructed fish passage for thousands of migratory river fishes that are currently blocked as they attempt to move upstream or downstream at the dam;
- (2) Elimination of the reservoir environment, which currently supports a stronghold of illegally introduced northern pike and acts as a source for their further expansion;
- (3) Elimination of concentrated toxic reservoir sediments, which have chronic and acute effects on Clark Fork River fish populations and other aquatic organisms;
- (4) Eliminates the risk of catastrophic dam failure which would expose the downstream aquatic

environment to millions of cubic yards of toxic reservoir sediments;

(5) Restoration of more natural, functional river processes and aquatic habitat;

(6) Expanded recreational opportunity in the Milltown area through enhanced fish populations, increased access and elimination of a major obstruction for water recreationists.

These and other benefits of Milltown Dam and Reservoir removal far outweigh the costs for fish, wildlife and recreation, as long as a safe and effective method for removing reservoir sediments can be implemented. We are confident that engineers and reclamation experts can accomplish this task. We also recognize that opponents of dam and reservoir removal are concerned about impacts to existing wetlands and the economy of the Bonner area. The current plan proposed by Missoula County would actually expand the amount of functional wetlands and provide a range of recreation and tourism opportunities on which the local community could capitalize.

In summary, we applaud and support your proactive efforts in dealing with a solution to the situation at Milltown Dam that would benefit the fish, wildlife and recreational resources of the Clark Fork watershed.

Sincerely,

Michael Enk
President, Montana Chapter AFS
PO Box 1408
Great Falls, MT 59403

cc: Governor Judy Martz
Jan Sensibaugh, MDEQ
Keith Large, MDEQ
Jeff Hagener, MFWP
Russ Forba, USEPA
Mark Wilson, USFWS
Kate Walker, USFWS

[Back to Chapter Correspondence Page](#)

[Back to MCAFS Home Page](#)