



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Fisheries Division
P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701.

March 13, 2017

Dear Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks,

The Flathead Audubon Society is a local chapter with deep concern for our environment. We have reviewed the proposed amendment, transfer and amendment, adoption, and repeal of rules relating to management of aquatic invasive species and submit the following comments.

The recent detection of aquatic invasive mussels in Tiber Reservoir and Canyon Ferry, just a short drive from the Flathead, is a dire threat to the high-quality waters of Montana and requires rapid, significant, even drastic measures to contain the infestations. While the proposed rule changes are an improvement over the existing set, they do not go far enough to provide adequate protection.

Inspection stations must be open longer and have more of them. At confirmed infected waters, launch sites must be gated if decontamination is not available or inspectors are not on site. Infected water bodies must be closed until a functional containment plan is implemented.

Enforcement is critical to the success of controlling aquatic invasive species. Enforcement personnel must be available to track down boaters who bypass stations or try to launch without inspection. Allowing local governments the authority to adopt and enforce AIS ordinances would increase the enforcement ability. Fines must be increased and enforced for boaters who do not comply.

A fee-based program would help fund the additional costs, as is done in Idaho. Launching a boat in our state waters is a privilege and a small fee for a sticker would help defray costs.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Kay Mitchell
President
Flathead Audubon Society