



Protecting Montana's wildlife,
land, waters and hunting & fishing
heritage for future generations.

August 11th, 2021

Governor Greg Gianforte
Office of the Governor
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte,

Montana's unparalleled cold-water fisheries are cherished by people around the world, including many local business owners such as guides, outfitters and fly shop owners whose livelihoods depend on the health of our rivers and the fish in them. The economic importance of our fisheries cannot be overstated, with fishing accounting for more than \$900 million in consumer spending in Montana annually¹.

The unprecedented drought conditions we are witnessing now are a serious threat to our cold-water fisheries. There is absolutely no doubt that climate change is exacerbating these conditions including reduced snowpack and earlier runoff, warmer summers, increasing length and severity of drought conditions and longer, more intense fire seasons. Recently, a statement (attached) was released by the World Aquatic Scientific Societies detailing the immediate need to address climate change to protect aquatic resources. This statement is based on science and facts about the impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, and it applies to the conditions we are now seeing in Montana. Here are some excerpts from this statement:

"The world's aquatic resources are now under their greatest threat in human history. Human-caused climate change is accelerating the degradation of aquatic ecosystems and the services they provide."

"Climate change is altering abundance, predator-prey dynamics, expansion of invasive species, growth, recruitment of species, and novel species interactions, leading to declines in the number and diversity of freshwater aquatic organisms."

"Increased frequency, intensity, and length of drought are affecting the amount and quality of freshwater available for both aquatic ecosystems and humans."

"Climate change impacts on flow regimes, including both increased droughts and low-flow periods, and increased flooding impact native species with narrow ranges of flow"

¹ Outdoor Recreation and Montana's Economy, Montana Office of Outdoor Recreation, 2018

requirements and allow expansion of alien-invasive species that affect recreational and commercial harvest of fishes and clog waterways.”

“Organisms dependent on snow melt and glacial streams are declining or shifting their distribution.”

In response to record low flows, high temperatures and the earliest onset of hoot owl fishing restrictions and fishing closures we've ever witnessed, the Montana Wildlife Federation recently joined a broad coalition of business owners and conservation organizations to request that your administration move to help address the impacts of climate change on our fisheries resources by creating a cold water fisheries task force. We again urge you to take action now to protect these vital resources.

Additionally, we appreciate your recent acknowledgment of human-caused climate change in relation to forest fires. We urge you to acknowledge the impacts of climate change on Montana's aquatic resources and urge all Montanans to take immediate action to help address these impacts. We also urge you to rejoin the multi-state climate coalition from which you withdrew Montana and that your administration begin to implement the recommendations from the collaboratively developed Montana Climate Solutions Plan.

Montanans care about the climate change impacts that are harming our world-class fisheries, water quality and quantity, and our sporting opportunities. As the Governor of Montana, we are asking for your bold leadership, to ensure that our aquatic resources are protected for current and future generations.

The Montana Wildlife Federation is Montana's largest and oldest sporting conservation organization, representing hunters and anglers from across the state. For over 86 years, we have advocated for protecting our abundant fish and wildlife, as well as our outdoor heritage.

Sincerely,



Frank Szollosi, Executive Director
Montana Wildlife Federation

cc:

Hank Worsech, MTFWP Director
Dustin Temple, MTFWP Deputy Director
Eileen Ryce, MTFWP Fisheries Division Administrator