

WETA

EXHIBIT 20
DATE 4.1.05
SB 376

Western Environmental Trade Association

April 1, 2005

Representative Chris Harris
P.O. Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

Re: Senate Bill 376

Dear Representative Harris:

WETA was asked to provide a response to amendments that will be proposed regarding possible funding to conduct an EIS on the Gallatin River as specified in SB 376.

Following are points in response:

1. It would be inappropriate to re-direct this wide range of fines that now go to the general fund. These funds are always fully appropriated for other projects and it would be inappropriate to divert these funds for this specific EIS.
2. One reason that the legislature decided that fines should go to the general fund is to avoid any suggestion that fines could be used to raise money for any specific project.
3. It is inappropriate on the 69th Legislative Day to propose this significant change in public policy with only limited opportunity for public involvement.
4. I understand that the Senate Finance and Claims Committee has transferred \$150,000 from the corpus of the RIT account to help fund the EIS, but WETA still believes it would be appropriate for the petitioners to pay for the EIS. If the 21 organizations that signed the petition shared in the cost, it would not be overly burdensome on any of them.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments.

Sincerely,



Don Allen, Executive Director

Cc: House Natural Resources Committee