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Introduction:

Mining in the state of Montana is as old as the state itself. It brought economic prosperity and livelihood to the area. However that was years ago. We are now left with the consequences of our mining past. We as Montana's have a responsibility to address this problem.

X Our Bill

Our bill that we are proposing offers a way to better and more efficiently address a vast amount of superfund site area within the state of Montana. We propose that the Natural Resource Damage Program Office be removed from Helena and placed within the confines of Butte.

Background Information:

The NRDP was created to prepare and address the states lawsuit against the Atlantic Richfield Co. for damages incurred to natural resources within the Clark Fork River Basin. The Clark Fork River Basin Site includes Butte/Silver Bow Creek, Montana Pole, Anaconda Smelter and the Milltown Reservoir Sediments/Clark Fork River. What caused this large superfund site, as many of you already know, it was the events that were located and stemmed from the Anaconda Co's., acquired by Arco, mining actions.

Now what we have to ask is what is an office that is supposed to solve our local problem doing miles away from the site of contamination? Butte, Montana sits at the fore front of mining pollution within the Clark Fork River Basin, yet the office created to deal with this problem is located miles away in the capital. Is this really the best solution. Absolutely Not. The problem is local, as a result of past local activities; and needs to be locally solved with the NRDP offices being moved to the city of Butte.

specifically in Butte

X Butte is historically at the epicenter of the current pollution. The problem originated in butte with the Anaconda Companies Mining, which served to bring about the smelting plant in Anaconda, and also served to wash mineral sediments down the Clark Fork River being as Butte sits at the headwaters of the Clark Fork.

Advantages:

The advantages to our plan can be viewed on various levels.

- First and foremost it will bring a major part of the solution to the area. With the office located in Butte, there is an infinite possibility to the involvement of the communities.
 - Addressing this fact of community involvement is a key strategy to viable re-mediation technique. Take for example the instance of Leadville, Colorado. An historic mining town, scarred with pollution from the day past. This may sound familiar. The EPA came in and determined ways to reduce pollution but the local citizens did not agree. THE EPA's proposed plan did not address the fact of historical preservation, which was very important to the community, thus with public involvement the EPA was made to change their proposed plan.

This and other aspects are exactly why an office has to be located near the citizens that are affected. We recently see it in the headlines of our local newspaper that local citizens do not agree with the EPA's proposed plan in solving for Butte Priority Soils. Just another instance in which local citizens need the opportunity to address the NRDP to litigate and work with the EPA on the citizens behalf to best solve the contamination problem.

- A second Example of citizens needing an agency such as the NRDP to step in upon their behalf is the Shattuck Superfund site in Denver Colorado. THE EPA resolve to solve the Shattuck site, which was contaminated waste, was to cap it with a 6 acre monolith. This intrusion scarred the neighborhood. The citizens and even the city of Denver rallied to remove first this monolith and secondly the waste beneath. This bears closer similarity to events currently occurring in Butte in which the EPA rather than remove the waste would like to cap it and leave it sit.

- Second it will bring in local jobs. Helena has an overabundance of government jobs. It is about time that local communities receive government jobs that directly affect them. This in turn will help along our recovering economy.

Current Situation:

The Current situation for the involvement of citizens in re-mediation and superfund decisions is sad to say the least. With no access to local litigators or representation there is a wide gap between what the NRDP was created to do and what it is actually doing. NRDP reached one of its goals, it was successful in obtaining the reward for damages from ARCO, but now they are responsible for reaching their second goal. To re-mediate and clean up the affected sites. An office cannot fully address this problem without living and working with and in the area affected itself.

→ continue to work for damages

Conclusion:

A local problem, created by local circumstances, in dire need of local involvement and the opportunity for local involvement. The area of Clark Fork River Basin needs the Natural Resource Damage Program that was created to solve the pollution problems within the area to step forward and become a local problem solver. It can no longer afford to standoff in the offices of Helena. In a hard work sentiment: In order to solve a problem your going to have to get your hands dirty. The superfund site needs the office within its boundaries, the communities need someone that can protect their historical and environmental interest. We need a local office to solve a one of the largest local problems in the state of Montana.