MONTANA TROUT UNLIMITED

432 N. Last Chance Gulch

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EXHIBIT 1
DATE 2.6.07
HB 439

TO: Chairman Milburn,
And all members of the Fish Wildlife and Parks Committee.

Fish ponds are bad for Montana, they are a nursery and breeding ground for disease, they provide opportunity for expanded "bucket biology" and they are detrimental to our overall water supply in already drought ridden basins. We should not simply allow FW&P to keep an eye on and have oversight of fish ponds we should require it.

Our huge concern when it comes to ponds is disease. Montana has had enormous difficulties when it comes to diseased waters. These are the not only the noxious weeds of the rivers they are the nasty little bugs that have the ability to decimate entire populations of fish in our rivers and lakes. Because these lakes are not natural and are not required to have natural water flows and flushes they quickly can become breeding grounds for disease. Let me remind the committee a recent FW&P analysis showed anglers spend 422million dollars annually in Montana. Unfortunately, even if these pools are completely removed from any sort of contact to natural and viable fishery the danger of disease is still very real. All it takes for these invasive species is an easy ride on your fishing boots, waders or sandals. And if you want to have a 49 acre lake you can use your boat to transport the disease from your private lake to one of Montana's favorite rivers.

HB 439 Increases the potential for "bucket biology". Unfortunately, there are folks in Montana who try to increase populations of invasive fish species they happen to like to fish for. If this bill passes we create no oversight for FW&P to check on these ponds and makes sure they have what fish the say they have. Pond owners can they take the illegal fish and dump these invasive fish into whatever water body they choose. In total there have been 426 unauthorized fish introductions in 251 waters across the state. We need to make it harder for "bucket biologists" not easier.

Finally, fish ponds use a large amount of water and in our already water stressed environment we shouldn't encourage folks to further negatively impact the resource. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has looked at the consumptive use (water forever lost to the system) of these "small" ponds. The numbers ranged from 3-6 acre feet of consumption for every surface acre of pond. So, if you had a 40 acre pond (up to 50 acre ponds are allowed under HB 439) Montanans would lose, at least, 120 acre feet of water per year, water that could have otherwise flowed in a creek or irrigate a crop. How much is 120 acre feet annually? Well, it is about 40 million gallons of water. In comparison, an acre of grass hay consumes about 1.9 acre feet per year.

Please help Montana protect our rivers streams and water from disease, invasive fish species and dramatic water loss. Vote NO on HB 439.

Thank you
Montana Trout Unlimited
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