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Craig Bridge 1/15/07

Fish and Game Committee Members:

I am speaking to you today as a citizen of Montana, a lifetime fisherman, a waterfowl hunter of 23 years, and a proponent of Senate Bill 78.

There has been and continues to be increasing development adjacent to Montana rivers and streams. Along with some of these developments, especially on the Beaverhead and Ruby Rivers, has come the erection of prison-like fences strung across and parallel to waterways so individuals can "keep their livestock" penned close to their trophy summer homes. It is apparent that this spike in development in combination with an increase in the number of sportsmen has intensified conflicts between landowners and sportsmen. I believe that SB 78, if passed, will reduce the number of conflicts by clarifying legal access to landowners and sportsmen alike, and will improve the overall amount of access.

Just the other weekend, some friends and I went out to enjoy a final day of duck hunting on the Missouri River by Craig. We drove over to the east side of the brand new bridge, strapped all of the decoys and miscellaneous gear to our backs, and walked along the bridge abutment down to where MDT recently constructed a new fence (please refer to photo). The 6+ feet of fence directly adjacent to the bridge was constructed with multiple rails and without barbed-wire to allow access, but was posted "no trespassing" with blaze orange paint. I have been waterfowl hunting and fishing in that area for the last 15 years, so needless to say, I was a bit outraged.

In closing, Article IX, Section 7 of the Montana Constitution, which was approved by popular vote in 2004 states, "The opportunity to harvest wild fish and wild game animals is a heritage that shall forever be preserved to the individual citizens of the state..." SB 78 provides Montanans that opportunity, and will help preserve our heritage. Please vote for SB 78.

If you have any questions, I am available.

Sincerely,



Ed Coleman
1036 8th Ave
Helena, MT 59601
(406) 439-7303
elcelc123@yahoo.com