EXHIBIT 7
DATE 3/31/11
SB 343

Flathead Basin Commission

655 Timberwolf Parkway
Kalispell, Montana 59901
Flatheadbasincommission.org

Caryn Miske
Executive Director
406.437.2479

Ed Heger, Chair
Citizen Member
Chas Cartwright, Vice Chair
Glacier National Park
Dan Bangeman
Flathead Conservation District
Tom Bell
British Columbia Liaison
Ministry of Environment
Susan Brueggeman
Lake County Environmental Health Department
Pam Holmquist
Flathead County Commissioner
Rich Jansen
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
Jon Jourdonnais
PP&L Montana
Joe Lamson
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Don Loranger
Citizen Member
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Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Jan Metzmaker
Citizen Member
Dennis Philmon
Hungry Horse Project
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Bonneville Power Administration
Bob Sandman
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Northwest Land Office
Jim Satterfield
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
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Mickey Sogard
Citizen Member
Mike Volesky
Office of the Governor
Chip Weber
Flathead National Forest
Clint Whitney
Citizen Member

March 31, 2011

Dear Chairman Kerns and House Agriculture Committee Members:

The Flathead Basin Commission has been involved in water quality issues in the Flathead since 1983. We now face a very important issue across the State of Montana for which we need your help.

Our water quality sampling program recently provided water samples that suggested the possibility of an aquatic invasive species (AIS), possibly zebra or quagga mussels. After more thorough analysis from several experts, it appears that the samples are not invasive mussel species. However, we are mindful that the risk of infection is very real. All important water bodies in Montana face the same risk of an AIS infection.

Invasive species such a Eurasian Water Milfoil or zebra mussels or quagga mussels can significantly degrade ecosystems and dramatically impact native flora and fauna. Furthermore, they lead to costly maintenance for industries that depend on water resources such as hydropower, irrigation, recreation and others. Since the late 1980s, the invasive mussels have made their way across much of the United States. Therefore, we must proactively implement an AIS prevention program.

To reduce the risk of infestations or introductions of these unwanted invasive species we are urging legislators to:

- provide sufficient funding to support a robust, scientifically based AIS program;
- adequately fund AIS containment/management efforts into and within the State, this would include mandatory border and internal boat inspection stations;
- provide more funds for education and outreach; and
- fund the development and implementation of operational (1) rapid response plans; (2) containment plans; (3) treatment plans; and monitoring plans to avoid redundancy.

On behalf of the membership of the FBC and all Montanans, thank you for joining this effort to prevent and contain aquatic invasive species.

Sincerely,

Caryn Miske
Executive Director