

Testimony of Avista Corporation in support of HR 525 (Nolan) Creating a Trust Fund for Aquatic Invasive Species

Mr. Chair and members of the Committee: For the record my name is Brian Burky, and I am a Recreation/Land Use Specialist for the Avista Corporation and I live in Thompson Falls. Avista owns and operates the Noxon Rapids Dam and Reservoir in Noxon MT and the Cabinet Gorge Dam and Reservoir just across the border in Idaho. We are involved in the critical effort to combat and eradicate aquatic invasive species and have been for many years.

We believe HB 525 which creates a trust fund and grant account is a good first step and would provide a placeholder for funds when they become available which include but not be limited to unspent grant dollars, donations, future appropriations and surplus government funds. Should this bill pass and funds begin to flow into the trust we see at least 4 benefits that can be conferred.

Ensure Montana's Aquatic Invasive Species prevention/containment programs have access to a reliable funding over time;

Insure that local entities would have access to dollars to manage the program which would provide needed local involvement;

Take pressure off the Noxious Weed Trust Fund which is used primarily for terrestrial and currently does not have the resources to fund AIS programs;

The funding could also be used for boat check stations, monitoring and treatment which we think is critical in improving the state's ability to deal with high risk boats entering Montana, dealing with new infestations and not losing ground against existing infestations.

We urge a DO PASS on HB 525 and thank Representative Nolan for bringing this important bill.