

SB Bill 87
January 15, 2015
Presented by: Bruce Rich
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Bruce Rich, Fisheries Division Administrator for the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). I am here today on behalf of the Director in support of Senate Bill 87.

FWP is proposing in this bill to change a portion of Montana's Live Game Fish Transport Law. The relevant portion is found at 87-6-202 (3)(c) MCA, and now states that: "(3) A person may not possess, ship, or transport live fish away from the body of water in which the fish were taken except: (c) within the boundaries of the eastern Montana fishing district, as established by commission."

Transport of live game fish is prohibited except in the Eastern fishing district. FWP proposes to remove clause (c), thereby prohibiting live game fish transport anywhere in the state. This change will not affect the allowance for collection and movement of live bait, nor the allowance (by FWP permit) for movement of commercially-produced fish for stocking into licensed private ponds.

Our desire to extend the prohibition against live game fish transport to all areas of the state is motivated by several considerations:

.Standardization will help in the following ways:

- Reduce confusion and the incidence of anglers unknowingly violating the law in different parts of the state.
- Reduce opportunities and therefore the threat of transferring aquatic invasive species (AIS) to new water bodies across the state. Harmful impacts of AIS include clogging water conveyance systems, which can be extremely costly to irrigation, dam operations, and water utilities.
- Reduce opportunities and therefore the threat of unauthorized fish introductions.
- Enhance our ability to enforce this provision uniformly across the state, including at watercraft inspection stations. In addition, standardization will increase the effectiveness of concentrated enforcement activity at certain locations, thereby increasing enforcement efficiency.

We now live in a time of tremendously mobile individuals who have increasing contact with a growing number of potentially problematic organisms. Unfortunately, AIS threats are very real, and the harmful consequences of unauthorized fish introductions are already costing Montana. We strongly believe that the time to recognize our modern circumstances and to take action to decrease the potential for harm is now. For all of the reasons presented here today, we support SB 87.