Water Policy Interim Committee

65th Montana Legislature

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October 9, 2017

Exhibit 9

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Oct. 10, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

The Montana Legislature's Water Policy Interim Committee respectfully requests that the Bonneville Power Administration provide financial assistance to combat aquatic invasive species in Montana – before these species threaten the greater Columbia River basin. Due to recent threats, the committee requests immediate action.

Montana, a headwaters of the Columbia River, is threatened by aquatic invasive species. In 2016, a water sample at Tiber Reservoir tested positive for invasive mussel larvae. Quagga or zebra mussels may wreak havoc on ecosystems and hydroelectric facilities. This initial discovery led to a subsequent detection in a Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

The state of Montana has long recognized the threat of aquatic invasive species. In 2004, we developed early detection and monitoring systems. We assess the risk to waterbodies annually, prioritizing the most vulnerable sites. Our aquatic invasive species laboratory scours samples from Montana and other Western states for invasive mussel larvae.

Since the discovery at Tiber Reservoir, the state of Montana has taken more forceful actions. Inspectors and biologists conduct mandatory boat inspections around Montana, intercepting and decontaminating mussel-infested boats. Newly created councils and commissions will focus the state's efforts. Anglers, hydroelectric facilities, and electric cooperatives pay fees to fund the fight. The state of Montana continues its aggressive and so-far successful efforts in the shadow of a growing budget deficit, which will stress state government operations at all levels.

The committee fears Montana's waters may be a conduit for quagga or zebra mussels to enter the Columbia River system-- the last American refuge from these pernicious species. An infestation in the Northwest may stunt power production in the basin's 65 dams and unhinge salmon recovery and other conservation efforts.

We hope you see the wisdom of our suggestion and will back our concerns with financial assistance. And thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sen. Pat Connell

Chairman, Water Policy Interim Committee

Cc: