

Testimony before the Legislative Finance Committee on October 4, 2017

Chairman Balance and members of the Committee,

My name is Jan Metzmaker from Whitefish and I am currently the Chair of the Flathead Basin Commission. I am a volunteer who has served on the Commission for 12 years. It is truly an honor to serve with 22 other board members, a cross section of citizens, local, state, tribal, federal and provincial representatives who strive to identify the Basin's water quality and natural resource problems. We work collectively to implement the most effective solutions. In addition, we engage in outreach and education via our website and have produced a multitude of informative materials, many in partnership with other organizations.

The Flathead Basin Commission is a model of successful citizen and inter-agency cooperation in a geographically vast and ecologically diverse watershed characterized by its internationally-recognized pristine character and diversity. The Flathead Basin is also an important economic driver for the State.

Our mission is to protect the existing high quality of the Flathead Lake aquatic environment; the waters that flow into, out of, or are tributary to the Lake and; the natural resources and environment of the Flathead Basin. It is a tremendous responsibility that we all take seriously. Over time, our mission has morphed to address various threats as they arise. They include mining proposed in the headwaters of the Flathead River in British Columbia, oil trains traversing the Flathead River corridor, water quality degradation associated with development and our biggest challenge- the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species.

There is no "mission accomplished" when confronting water quality issues. Threats evolve and change. Now is NOT the time to let down our guard when faced with the ecologic devastation the spread of AIS represents. Relying purely on a perimeter defense is a dangerous gamble. The more partners, the better chance we have to intercept fouled boats. We must be more vigilant and have the resources to continue our historic responsibilities. The Flathead Basin Commission is well aware of the current budget crisis and more than willing to do our part. We only ask to be treated fairly with a 10% cut like every other department. A 90% cut is patently unfair and disrespects all the valuable work the Flathead Basin Commission has accomplished over the last 30 years. I thank you for your time and consideration. I truly hope I am not the last Chair of the Flathead Basin Commission.

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Exhibit 2