

**Musselshell Watershed Coalition**

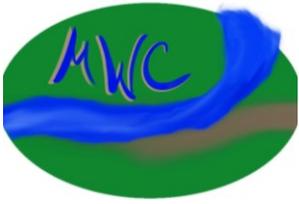
Board members: President Shirley Parrot, Vice-President Bill Bergin, Jr., Diane Ahlgren, Shane Moe, Lynn Rettig, Leon Hammond, Craig Dalgarno

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May 29, 2018

Hope Stockwell  
Research Analyst  
Montana Legislative Services Division

Subject: Funding for Montana's AIS program

Dear Ms. Stockwell;

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments to the EQC regarding future funding of the AIS program in Montana.

In the interest of protecting all of Montana's water resources from aquatic invasive species, we support the continued funding of Montana's Aquatic Invasive Species program. In order to more equitably distribute the funding burden, we support Hydropower paying a lesser fee, the fee attached to out of state fishing licenses being reduced, and a sticker or some similar way to assess a fee on boats be administered.

The recent finding of mussel-fouled watercraft at the Wibeaux station is yet another indicator that Montana must protect our Eastern border to protect our waters, and we need to emphasize these perimeter inspection stations as our first line of defense.

Sincerely,

*Laura Nowlin*

Laura Nowlin, Coordinator  
Musselshell Watershed Coalition

**From:** Tom McDonald  
**To:** [Stockwell, Hope](#)  
**Subject:** AIS funding alternatives before the EOC  
**Date:** Friday, May 25, 2018 7:09:09 AM

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Please consider the following for future funding actions:

1. For a watercraft decal or pass, base cost on average time spent to inspect that type of craft at inspection stations. A small surface area boat with no concealed areas or water holdings would have lowest fee, then increase with surface, holding tanks, gear, etc.
2. Add a base fee to all mt. boat trailer licenses, they have to be inspected at stations.
3. Create a charge for all surface water draw systems, irrigation, community drinking water, and any commercial uses such as any type of electrical power plant, facility cooling or heating, treatment facilities and bottling plants.
4. Send a bill to downstream benefactors, especially everyone in the Columbia Basin.
5. If a fee is to continue for fishing use, then create an equal fee for all of the other boat type users such as sailors, water skiers, wake boarders, etc...

Thank you for your dedicated work on this very important topic.  
Tom McDonald, 721, 6th Ave, Ronan, Mt.

Sent from my iPad

Dear Hope and EQC committee,

Thank you for accepting comments on the AIS funding. My vote would be to increase the percentage of gas tax on the fuel we are buying for our boats. We have gone from 20+thousand boats to over 65 thousand. That is a lot of fuel being used but yet we are at the same percentage as we were when we had far fewer boats.

If I am a co-op member I am being charged a fee for my power usage. If I have to buy a sticker for one or more of my boats I would be charged for the same fee I have already paid. If I own more than one boat is it fair to charge me a fee for each boat if I am paying the fee already on one.

The more stickers we have to put on our boats makes it more confusing on which ones we need to renew and how often. It also (I would presume) add to the administrative expense of printing stickers and tracking. I want to do my part as no one wants to see the Invasive Aquatic species in Montana waters. If you go to stickers you should have them on all boats, motorized and non-motorized. So the easiest solution is the gas tax.

Again thank you

Carl Seilstad

Roy Mt

cseilstad@gmail.com

**From:** [Wilson, Kate](#)  
**To:** [Jeffery Rach](#)  
**Cc:** [Stockwell, Hope](#)  
**Subject:** AIS Funding Comments  
**Date:** Friday, March 09, 2018 11:33:49 AM

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Thank you for your comments Jeffery – I am forwarding them on to the Environmental Quality Council (EQC) Legislative Services staff, as the EQC will be considering options for the future funding of the Aquatic Invasive Species Program in the coming months and are seeking feedback.

Regards,

**Kate Wilson**  
Invasive Species Specialist  
Montana Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation  
1539 11<sup>th</sup> Ave/PO Box 201601  
Helena, MT 59620-1601  
[kate.wilson@mt.gov](mailto:kate.wilson@mt.gov)  
406-444-2951

**From:** Jeffery Rach [mailto:flatheadlakecharters@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, March 9, 2018 11:30 AM  
**To:** Wilson, Kate <Kate.Wilson@mt.gov>  
**Subject:** invasive species

Kate

I have been outfitting on Fathead lake for 39 years. This invasive species fee imposed on the non resident fisherman is the most unfair fee I have ever seen and it is sickening . The non resident fisherman are the most unlikely people to introduce invasive species. They hire guides and do not bring boats in to fish. You are hurting the fishing guides in a big way. For example A family of 4 now pays and extra \$200. just for licenses.

If you are serious about controlling the invasive species, why are you not targeting all the other boats such as speed boats with ballasts tanks which do bring in invasive species ? AGAIN this is totally unfair to the non resident who would like to experience the wonderful fishing Montana has to offer.

SICKENING

Jeff Rach  
Flathead Lake Charters

**From:** vj  
**To:** [Stockwell, Hope](#)  
**Subject:** To EQC -- funding for Montana AIS program  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 14, 2018 9:56:03 PM

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Date: 3/13/2018

From: Dr. Vicki Watson, aquatic ecologist

Hope Stockwell of the Legislative Services Division and members of EQC

RE: Funding for Montana's Aquatic Invasive Species Program

Environmental Quality Council (EQC) members are well aware of the potentially devastating impacts of invasive mussels on Montana's fish and wildlife and economy (hydropower, tourism, agriculture, property values). Funding for the AIS management program must be adequate, sustainable, and drawn both from those who contribute to the risk as well as those who will be most impacted if the mussels, or other AIS, gain a foothold here.

Since the greatest risk of AIS spread comes from watercraft, most states have concluded that it is reasonable to charge a fee to watercraft to help cover the cost of the program. Many states fund about half of their AIS program with watercraft fees. The other half is funded from general funds – which recognizes the potential impact of AIS such as mussels to many sectors of the economy.

In Montana, we have noted that impacts would be particularly severe on fishing tourism and on hydropower generation, and so have chosen to have these parts of the economy directly contribute to fighting AIS. Hence fishing fees and hydroelectric fees that go to AIS management constitute a wise investment on the part of these industries. The cost to hydropower consumers of supporting the AIS program will almost certainly be less than the cost of dealing with the mussels once established. And anglers and outfitters are well aware that mussel invasion could spell the end of fishing as we know it.

The main source of funding that I think should be added to the above sources is watercraft fees. Watercraft contribute much of the risk of AIS invasions, and watercraft users would be negatively impacted by these invasions.

Providing funding from this balance of sources has the best chance of being equitable and sustainable. I hope you will recommend such a balance of funding for the AIS program. Thank you for your service.

Dr. Vicki Watson,  
retired UM aquatic ecologist (affiliation noted for identification purposes only)  
volunteer science advisor to Clark Fork Coalition

Don Lepinsky  
P.O. Box 771  
Whitehall MT, 59759

March 21, 2018

Environmental Quality Council  
Helena MT, 59601

Greetings,

My name is Don Lepinsky. I am a retired aircraft mechanic enjoying life on our public lands and waterways. I enjoy a variety of sporting activities including kayaking.

I believe that maintaining an aquatic invasive species (AIS) program is paramount to whatever type of mechanism is used to fund the program. Currently that I'm aware of, revenue is generated for this program from resident and nonresident fishing licenses, and fees received from those who generate and or purchase hydroelectricity. This seems to me to be an efficient mechanism for funding the AIS program.

It has been brought to my attention that the Montana Electrical Coop Association, (MECA) will be lobbying the state to reduce or eliminate their contributions to the AIS program. MECA's justification is that fees would be more fairly distributed if paid by a broader base of the of the state's population, and by recreationalists who enjoy our rivers, lakes and streams. I'm not buying this justification.

Like the vast majority of us, I purchase and use electricity. I have been informed that the fees paid by Northwest Energy and MECA members which is passed on to electrical customers' amounts to about 25 cents a month or \$3 a year for individual households and or electricity consumers. This cost does not seem excessive to me. Since the vast majority of us use and pay for electricity directly or indirectly, it also seems to me that the vast majority of us are already paying our fair share of the cost of the program through this revenue generating mechanism.

If the current AIS revenue generating mechanism is not broke, don't fix it or replace it with a more convoluted mechanism. However, if the council determines that Northwest Energy and MECA are being unfairly taxed, please do not recommend to the legislature a replacement mechanism that is less efficient and more complicated.

If the council recommends fees be placed on non-motorized watercraft like my 11 foot in length kayak, I would like to suggest that you recommend to the legislature to look into cooperation with neighboring states who are also combating AIS. Last summer I floated that portion of the Snake located in Wyoming with my family. I was assessed an out of state AIS fee of \$15 for the one time I floated the Snake last summer. When visiting neighboring states, I envision a scenario where Idaho, Montana and Wyoming would inspect our small non-motorized watercraft as needed and either waive the fee if we have paid our home state fee, or just assess us for that states resident fee.

In conclusion, no matter what you decide on a funding mechanism, I would like to emphasize that an ongoing AIS program is of primary importance to me with the revenue mechanism being secondary. Our pristine lakes and rivers are priceless to me. We should be doing everything we can to keep them that way.

Sincerely, Don Lepinsky