

DRAFT

Dear Senator Baucus, Senator Tester and Congressman Rehberg,

As fishing guides and outfitters in the state of Montana, we are writing to express our concerns about the impacts global climate change is having on our rivers, our fish, and our livelihoods, and to encourage you to support energy legislation that includes a strong, science-based cap on greenhouse gas emissions.

In Montana, we are fortunate to have more than 170,000 miles of rivers and streams meandering through our state. (Only Alaska, California and Texas can boast of more waterways than Montana.)¹ Many of these rivers provide habitat for various species of game fish, including native Cutthroat trout, Bull trout, and Arctic grayling. Healthy fish populations and quality habitat are critical for our small businesses and for our way of life. The persistence of this world class fishery, for which Montana is famous, is in peril.

Climate impacts on Montana streams

Today global climate change threatens the health of our streams and the quality of native fish habitat. Studies of 50 years of climate data shows that total annual snowfall has decreased—by 6.3 inches annually in Great Falls to more than 22 inches in Missoula.² At the same time, average March temperatures in Montana increased about 5.5° F.³ This is having a dramatic effect on the timing of spring snowmelt, resulting in a 30 percent drop in average spring snowpack throughout the state.⁴

As a result, we are experiencing declining average stream flows and run-off that peaks several weeks earlier in the spring. Unfortunately this does not bode well for our native fish in Montana, many of which are absolutely dependent on cold water. The reduced snowpack and earlier melt-off results in less water in the rivers during the summer as well as warmer stream temperatures that can be lethal to our native trout. In fact, in recent years, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks managers have been forced to close many streams to all angling to protect fish from added stress.

Economic impact of fishing in Montana

America's 44 million anglers play a major role in our economy, creating 1.1 million jobs and contributing \$116 billion in overall economic output.⁵ Here in Montana, nearly 350,000 people fish annually (39 percent of whom are nonresident visitors) and spend \$292 million on equipment, guiding services, lodging and other related expenditures.⁶ These anglers create 3,100 jobs in Montana, which pay \$50 million in wages and

¹ The Montana Watercourse. Montana State University. <http://www.mtwatercourse.org/waterfacts.htm>

² Dr. Steve Running. College of Forestry and Conservation, University of Montana. <http://wiki.umt.edu/odccss/images/c/cc/MontanaClimateTrends09.pdf>

³ Climate Central. <http://www.climatecentral.org>

⁴ "Low Flows, Hot Trout." Clark Fork Coalition. 2008.

⁵ "Sportfishing in America Values of Our Traditional Pastime." American Sportfishing Association, 2002

⁶ "Backcountry Bounty: Hunters, Anglers and Prosperity in the American West." Sonoran Institute, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. 2006.

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salaries.⁷ Putting the breaks on greenhouse gas pollution is critical in order to keep these Montana jobs and associated economic benefits, and to provide the stability our businesses will need to persist in an uncertain future. This holds true for fishing guides and outfitters and also for the many other small businesses—from farmers to ski areas—that stand to lose if we fail to act.

Conclusion

As Congress moves forward in consideration of clean energy and climate legislation, we urge you to support strong, science-based limits on the greenhouse gas pollution that is causing global climate change and impacting Montana's streams and native fish. Legislation should also maintain the integrity of our Clean Air Act, and provide investments in renewable energy as well as adequate funding to safeguard fish and wildlife from the worst effects of global warming.

Thank you. Sincerely,

[Name of guide/outfitter]

[Name of business]

[City], Montana

⁷ Niccolucci et al. 2002. Montana Challenge, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.