



June 14, 2024

Senator Joe Manchin, Chairman
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator John Barrasso, Ranking Member
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: MOGA support for the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act (S.3346)

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso,

Here in Montana, our rivers and streams support almost every facet of a long-standing and cherished way of life. Montana's waterways provide a living for hundreds of business owners and their employees in the guiding and outfitting industry, which is a large part of the state's \$7.1 billion outdoor recreation industry. To protect these assets is to protect our heritage, our economy and future generations' ability to continue in many cases, a long-held family business or trade.

The mission of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association is "to protect, enhance, and effectively represent the Montana Outfitting Industry in all its forms." To achieve this mission, we work to foster a vibrant professional outfitting industry, in part through promoting the conservation and sustainable, scientifically based, management of Montana's natural resources. One way we see this vision being achieved is through permanent protection of the state's most pristine, high-quality streams flowing through public lands.

This is why MOGA's board of directors unanimously endorses the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act (S.3346), which had a hearing before the Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests and Mining on June 12, 2024. If passed, this bill will create new Wild and Scenic River protections for some of southwest Montana's most important headwaters rivers and streams. Wild and Scenic designation would protect sections of rivers like the Upper Yellowstone, Gallatin and Stillwater, and others, so that current use and enjoyment will be maintained for generations to come. It does this by protecting their free-flowing nature, water quality and other values that make them unique.

In addition to advocating for sound conservation, MOGA is a very strong advocate for private property rights. In the case of the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act, we believe we can attain our goals WITHOUT threatening water rights, public access or private property rights.

Safeguarding clean water and healthy rivers is something that people of all political stripes can get behind. No matter ones leaning, Montanans have shown time and time again that clean water and healthy rivers are of shared importance. For instance, the East Rosebud Creek Wild and Scenic River Act was passed in August 2018 with the bipartisan support of former Rep. Greg Gianforte (current Governor of MT), Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), and Senator Steve Daines (R-MT). A bipartisan public lands survey commissioned by the University of Montana in April 2024 found that 83% of Montanans support the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act, and 59% strongly support it.

MOGA believes that the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act is our chance to invest in Montana's rivers and streams, thereby securing a viable livelihood for our children and grandchildren who want to carry on work in the world of guiding, outfitting, and ranching. It allows the rest of us to continue to enjoy Montana's and the country's wildest places in the same ways we always have. We urge the members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to join the MOGA Board of Directors in supporting the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act when it comes to a vote.

Sincerely,

Will Israel
Executive Director, MOGA