



June 14, 2024

Senator Joe Manchin
Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural
Resources
306 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Catherine Cortez Masto
Chair, Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands,
Forests, and Mining
516 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

Senator Mike Lee
Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on Public
Lands, Forests, and Mining
361A Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, Chair Cortez Masto, and Ranking Member Lee:

On behalf of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Coalition, and other partners across the country, we write to encourage you to support the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act (S. 3346) and the River Democracy Act (S. 4449), which would cumulatively protect 3600 miles of rivers in Montana and Oregon. These two bills preserve and enhance some of America's most special free-flowing rivers that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation (fishing, boating, hiking, camping, mountain biking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, etc.), protect fish and wildlife habitats, and safeguard clean water supplies for local communities, farmers, and ranchers. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Coalition represents more than 60 local, state, and national organizations from across the country that support Wild and Scenic River protection and stewardship.

Montana Headwaters Legacy Act (S. 3346). This bill would designate 384 miles of 20 rivers and streams in the upper Missouri and Yellowstone river systems, ensuring that some of the most prized waterways in Montana remain clean and free-flowing for generations to come. These iconic waterways, which include the Gallatin, Madison, Yellowstone, and Smith rivers, provide clean drinking water to cities and towns, irrigation for agriculture, and unmatched recreational opportunities that contribute to the state's flourishing \$7.1 billion outdoor recreation economy.

The Montana Headwaters Legacy Act was crafted by Montanans and is the product of over a decade of extensive public outreach. This legislation has been endorsed by more than 3,000 individual Montanans, 1,300 Montana businesses, several local chambers of commerce, the Fishing Outfitters Association of

Montana, Montana Outfitters and Guides Association, Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission, numerous local governments and local elected officials, Sibanye Stillwater Mining Company, and the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council, among others. A recent poll commissioned by the University of Montana found that 83% of Montanans support the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act, with 59% of Montanans strongly supporting it.

River Democracy Act (S. 4449). This legislation is the result of an extensive statewide public process that sought input from Oregonians and directly reflects their interests in protecting habitat, drinking water, and access to quality outdoor recreation. The River Democracy Act also provides for stronger wildfire resilience along rivers and adjacent communities. The bill provides for risk assessment and planning for homes and businesses near Wild and Scenic Rivers, greater inter-agency coordination in fighting wildfire including with Native American Tribes, and more federal resources to repair wildfire damage to infrastructure, drinking water quality, and watersheds.

We support the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act and River Democracy Act and thank you for holding hearings on these important bills. We urge your Committee to now schedule markup for these bills that have been introduced and heard before the Committee. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Lisa Ronald, National Coordinator, Wild and Scenic Rivers Coalition

Jack West, Special Projects Director, **Alabama Rivers Alliance**, Birmingham, AL

Sarah Kilbourne, Executive Director, **American Packrafting Association**, Missoula, MT

David Moryc, River Protection Program Director, **American Rivers**, Washington, D.C.

Kevin Colburn, National Stewardship Director, **American Whitewater**, Asheville, NC

Rachel Schmidt, Owner, **Be Outside the Box, LLC**, Whitefish, MT

Michael Painter, Coordinator, **Californians for Western Wilderness**, San Francisco, CA

André Sanchez, Community Engagement & Conservation Policy Manager, **CalWild**, Sacramento, CA

Nicole Hayler, Director, **Chattooga Conservancy**, Mountain Rest, SC

Ellen Montgomery, Public Lands Campaign Director, **Environment America**, Denver, CO

Matt Terry, Executive Director, **Ecuadorian Rivers Institute**, Basalt, CO

Aimee Petras, Executive Director, **Farmington River Watershed Association**, Simsbury, CT

Bob Jordan, President & Sheena Pate, Executive Director, **Flathead Rivers Alliance**, Whitefish, MT

Jann Dorman, Executive Director, **Friends of the River**, Sacramento, CA

Fred Akers, Operations Manager, **Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association**, Newtonville, NJ

Erin Steva, Montana Conservation Associate, **Greater Yellowstone Coalition**, Bozeman, MT

Nick Kunath, Conservation Program Manager, **Idaho Rivers United**, Boise, ID

Monti Aguirre, Lead Permanent River Protection, **International Rivers**, Oakland, CA

Francesca Governali, Government Affairs Advocate - Conservation, **League of Conservation Voters**, Washington, D.C.

Becky Edwards, Executive Director, **Mountain Mamas**, Bozeman, MT

Angela Manso, Senior Advisor, **Natural Resources Defense Council**, Washington, D.C.

Erik Fernandez, Wilderness Program Manager, **Oregon Wild**, Bend, OR

Dianna Cohen, Co-Founder & CEO, **Plastic Pollution Coalition**, Washington, D.C.

Gabriel Thoumi, CFA, FRM, Certified Ecologist, CEO, **Responsible Alpha**, Washington, D.C.

Grace Fullmer, Corporate Partnerships Manager, **River Network**, Durango, CO

Grant Werschull, Co-Executive Director, **Smith River Alliance**, Crescent City, CA

Joseph Callahan, President of Board of Directors, **Taunton River Watershed Alliance**, Dighton, MA

Jackie Nuñez, Founder, **The Last Plastic Straw**, Santa Cruz, CA

Autumn Crowe, Interim Executive Director, **West Virginia Rivers Coalition**, Charleston, WV

Joanna Zhang, Wild Rivers Advocate, **WildEarth Guardians**, Albuquerque, NM