

**Statement by Julia Page
Board Member, Northern Plains Resource Council;
September 15, 2009**

I'm Julia Page. I live in Gardiner, which is a very small town at the north entrance to Yellowstone Park. We are lucky to have the Yellowstone River running right through town and for over 25 years I ran a business that absolutely depended on a clean healthy river. We know from experience that it is crucial to protect the tiny headwater streams that feed the bigger rivers. We are very glad today to see the results of this poll that show Montanans overwhelmingly support protecting all of our waters, including headwaters areas, from industrial pollution.

In 1989, a gold mine opened on Bear Creek, which is a small tributary of the Yellowstone just above town and our local group, Bear Creek Council, worked with the mine to assure they were effectively protecting Bear Creek and all the water below it while they mined. For 5 years, we conducted surveys of macroinvertebrates (little aquatic bugs) in order to establish baseline water quality for both Bear Creek and the Yellowstone and also to see if there were any observable changes. We reviewed mine plans, made suggestions and monitored, with the mine, in order to protect our water. Bear Creek still supports a very healthy fish population and runs clear and clean into the Yellowstone.

I was also involved with the effort to keep another gold mine from polluting 3 other drainages of the Yellowstone River about 55 miles upstream of Gardiner in the mountains above Cooke City. Old mine tailings at the New World Mine site had already polluted the upper reaches of Soda Butte Creek and we opposed any new mining in the area because of the high potential for acid mine drainage and the difficulty posed for mining in that rugged terrain. Near the top of Lulu Pass in the old days, there was water trickling out of an historic mine adit that turned the rocks of Fisher Creek orange and killed all aquatic life in the upper part of the stream. Extensive high altitude reclamation has greatly reduced the pollution coming from the old mining district and snowmelt and runoff no longer carry the chemical load of historic mining. We would not have had that success without the Clean Water Act.

I've also worked with farmers and ranchers in eastern Montana whose ranches and futures are threatened by pollution from salty coal bed methane produced water being dumped into headwaters drainages. Those headwaters areas, the upper reaches of the drainages, carry the spring snowmelt that provides the most significant opportunity many ranchers have all year for clean irrigation water. They absolutely can't afford to have those areas degraded by salty discharge of industrial wastewater. It is essential that the Clean Water Act continues to protect intermittent and ephemeral streams that collect rain and snowmelt and provide essential clean water to dry land below. That is what the Clean Water Restoration Act will do. We are heartened that Montanans, both rural and urban, want to protect the rivers, lakes, and intermittent, headwaters and mountain streams of Montana. This is important now and even more so for our children and the future.