



October 2021

Dear School Administrator/Teacher:

Your help is needed to prevent the dumping of aquarium contents and pets into Montana's water. Unwanted pets are being released into natural waterways, often ponds or rivers located near urban areas. People who no longer can care for their pets will dump aquariums, not realizing the long-term negative impacts or that it is illegal to release aquarium pets into the wild. Aquarium pets such as fish, turtles, frogs, or snails can cause great harm to the aquatic ecosystem by outcompeting native species for food, eating the native species, overtaking their habitat, and spreading diseases. In addition, aquarium plants can become invasive aquatic weeds.

The ***Don't Let It Loose*** education program provides information to pet owners about rehoming unwanted pets and making responsible choices to prevent the introduction of invasive species. Many schools have classrooms pets and sharing this information with students helps encourage responsible behavior choices and allows students to learn more about aquatic invasive species (AIS). More information about the program can be found at www.dontletitloose.com.

The Invasive Species Action Network and Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks are offering teachers a ***Don't Let it Loose*** education packet to bring the message of responsible pet ownership to the classroom. The packet is provided free of charge with support from the Montana Invasive Species Council. The packet includes:

- Classroom pledge to be responsible pet owners
- ***Don't Let it Loose*** bookmarks for each student
- ***Don't Let it Loose*** removable decals to post in the classroom or on aquarium tanks
- ***Don't Let it Loose*** 8.5"x11" poster
- Full color booklet outlining invasive species of concern for the classroom
- A list of online resources for classroom learning on invasive species and pet release

Montana has worked hard to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species through the AIS monitoring and watercraft inspection programs. This project helps elevate the AIS prevention program by preventing the intentional release of aquarium pets into Montana's waters.

Even if you do not have pets in your classroom, this packet is a fun way to bring new information into the classroom.

If you are interested in receiving a free packet for your classroom, please call or email Invasive Species Action Network no later than November 15th. Packets will be provided on a first come, first serve basis.

Email to request the packet: leah@stopais.org

Phone to request the packet: 406-222-7270

Learn more about Don't Let it Loose at www.dontletitloose.com. Thank you for your participation.

