



EXHIBIT 21
DATE 2/8/05
HB 459
ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION

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Mr. Edward B. Butcher
Chair, House Agricultural Committee
Capitol Station
Helena, Montana 59620

Feb. 8, 2005

Chairman Butcher and members of the Committee,

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) would like to offer its support to HB 459, for the re-establishment of the Montana Agricultural Heritage Program. RMEF is an international wildlife conservation organization with a membership of over 150,000 members that include conservationists, landowners, hunters, and volunteers, that all support our mission which is to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife and their habitat. The organization's top priority has never changed, offsetting habitat loss which is the principle threat to elk country in Montana and across the West.

We believe that the Montana Agricultural Heritage Program will provide partnership opportunities that fit our mission and will help preserve family-based agricultural enterprises in Montana. As an example, we provided \$50,000 to help acquire a conservation easement on a Gallatin Valley ranch in a partnership with the Montana Agricultural Heritage Program in its earlier operational history.

While we are concerned that the level of funding proposed for the program is insufficient to meet likely demand, we note that the history of the program when it was operational suggests that it leveraged nearly eight dollars from other sources for every dollar that it expended.

Our support for HB 459 includes support for the amendments that we understand are being offered to include land trusts in the program in a similar fashion as they were in the earlier program. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the re-establishment of the Agricultural Heritage Program and urge your support of HB 459.

Sincerely,

Jim Gladen

Jim Gladen
Vice-President of Lands & Conservation Department
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation