

January 17, 2005

EXHIBIT 6  
DATE 1.25.05  
HB 79

To: House FWP Committee

From: Steven Page, Page Witham Land & Cattle Company, Glasgow

RE: SUPPORT FOR HB 79 – REAUTHORIZING HABITAT MONTANA

During the spring of 1994, Page Whitham Land and Cattle accepted title to the Brewer Ranch from MFWP, in trade for a conservation easement on two ranches in Valley County.

This transaction effectively placed over 40,000 acres of deeded land under easement, and impacts the management of an additional 178,000 acres of intermingled state and federal land.

By terms of the easement, the rangelands are managed under rest-rotation grazing systems, leaving up to 75% of the landscape vacant to the exclusive use of wildlife with more than 50% being rested from grazing during the growing season each year. Additionally, over 1500 acres of irrigated river bottom land is managed for wildlife enhancement, with 300 acres set aside for dense nesting cover.

Following ten years of prescribed grazing, a significant improvement in habitat condition has occurred, livestock production has been enhanced, and healthy populations of wildlife occupy the properties. Each year more than 3000 hunter-days of recreation are provided, and from a ranching perspective, a dramatic increase in calf weaning weights and yearling weight gains are being experienced.

MFWP personnel have been a pleasure to work with and we have absolutely no regrets regarding this arrangement.

“Habitat Montana” is a unique program – one that Montanans can be proud of. It is mutually beneficial to landowners and sportsmen alike, and at no cost to taxpayers. It deserves to be placed permanently into law.

(from Steven Page by e-mail)