

EXHIBIT 1
DATE 2.17.05
HB 544

House Bill 544
February 17, 2005
Presented by Jeff Hagener
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Jeff Hagener, Director for Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here in support of HB544 that provides clear authority for FWP to manage wild buffalo or bison in Montana.

This bill removes the Department of Livestock (DOL) and the state veterinarian as a decision body in the management of bison as a wildlife species. It still requires that FWP and DOL cooperate in managing wild bison where disease threats are a concern.

FWP completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) of a proposed bison hunt in 2004. One hundred and ninety one comments were received on the proposed hunt EA. Comments included a wide range of issues however 36 specifically spoke to the role of DOL. Most (34 out of 36) disagreed with the activities of DOL or their role in wildlife management decisions.

FWP does not view this legislation as diminishing the authority of DOL in the management of wild buffalo for disease control. It simply clarifies the roles of the two state agencies in the management of wild bison – disease control in DOL and wildlife management in FWP.

We urge your support of this bill.