



EXHIBIT 3
DATE 2.17.05
HB 544

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 544
Amy McNamara, National Park Director
Greater Yellowstone Coalition**

February 17, 2005

My name is Amy McNamara and I am National Parks Director for the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. On behalf of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, I am here today to support House Bill 544: An act providing for the recovery and conservation of wild buffalo or bison in Montana. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for HB 544.

As Montanans, we take great pride in our respect for the land and wildlife. This bill recognizes that bison are valued, native wildlife in Montana and designates Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks as the agency responsible for fair-chase public hunting of wild bison. The wildlife professionals at Fish, Wildlife and Parks currently have the authority to manage hunting of all big-game species in Montana, except bison. We believe the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks should be responsible for bison hunting as well.

This bill continues to insure that private property rights and Montana's valued brucellosis-free status are protected by supporting the continued cooperation of the Department of Livestock and the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in bison management.

HB 544, in no way, disrupts the framework of the Interagency Bison Management Plan. In fact this bill outlines a management framework that is more in keeping with the intentions of the plan than the current hunt as defined in statute. The plan allows the Montana Legislature "to authorize the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission to establish regulations for public hunting of bison." If authorized by the Legislature, the plan states that the "regulated hunting strategies would be developed by Fish, Wildlife and Park staff and approved by the Commission, in consultation with the Department of Livestock and the Montana State Veterinarian."

This year, the Montana legislature has the opportunity to lead the way in putting years of divisive bison management behind us. By passing this legislation, the Legislature will make it clear that the State of Montana values all big game species, including bison.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

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