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**SENATE COMMITTEE
ON
AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK & IRRIGATION**

House Bill 266

**Testimony of Nancy K. Peterson
Director, Montana Department of Agriculture**

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

For the record, my name is Nancy K. Peterson, director of the Montana Department of Agriculture. I am here to testify in favor of the passage of House Bill 266.

House Bill 266 is the single most important piece of legislation for noxious weed control since the Legislature enacted the Noxious Weed Trust Fund Act in 1985. The legislation will protect the most innovative and critical funding source for noxious weed control in the country!! It will allow the department to continue to fund research, education, and local cooperative grant projects to help stop noxious weeds from taking over our most valuable assets: Montana's range, pasture, crop lands and wildlife areas.

Last November, 75% of the voters approved Constitutional Amendment 40, protecting the Noxious Weed Trust Fund and allowing it to grow so that the interest can continue to be used to fight invading weed species.

House Bill 266 will provide an additional funding mechanism by directing reverted funds from noxious weed grants that were not fully expended into the principle of the noxious weed trust fund. Over the last five fiscal years, this has averaged approximately \$90,000 per year. This will help increase the principal of the trust fund to reach the \$10 million dollar cap. Growing the trust fund to \$10 million will increase the funding for weed management and provide a reliable and sustainable funding source for on the ground weed control efforts in Montana, it's what Montanan's said!!

We appreciate your consideration and urge your support of House Bill 266.