

Testimony on HB 172, March 24th, 2005
Montana Senate Fish and Game Committee

SENATE FISH AND GAME 7
EXHIBIT NO. 7
DATE 3/24/05
BILL NO. HB 172

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Recently I traveled to Washington, DC to talk to Congress about funding for the State Wildlife Grant Program. I brought with me Jim Gladen, VP for Conservation with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Jim Stone and Hank Getz, President and Board Member respectively with the Blackfoot Challenge, and T.O. Smith, MT State Wildlife Grants Coordinator.

What are state wildlife grants? The State Wildlife Grants program provides federal dollars to every state and territory to support cost-effective conservation aim a preventing wildlife from becoming endangered. **An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!**

A non-federal match requirement assures local ownership and leverages state and private funds to support conservation. This is why Jim Gladen at RMEF is so excited about this program. One of the priority areas for conservation through State Wildlife Grants is the Bitterroot Valley which also is a priority of the RMEF. Working together RMEF can help leverage SWG funds to do more habitat conservation and restoration on the ground. The Blackfoot Challenge is in a similar situation. The Challenge is a group of ranchers and landowners that have gotten together to conserve the Blackfoot Valley's ranching heritage and wildlife habitat. The Blackfoot Valley is another area that the state has designated as a priority area of conservation. This is true grassroots conservation. These opportunities of collaboration will be lost if the current form of HB 172 passes. Phase 2 of HB 172 is needed so that cuts will not be made in HB 2, the Budget bill, to the State Wildlife Grants Program

If the proposed cuts put forth in HB 2 of \$200,000 to the MT SWG program are made Montana will lose ~~the~~ federal match of \$1million. Not only will this cut jobs but it will also be the end of a highly successful program. The federal money will then be re-allocated to other states, do we really want to send \$1million to California?

Our Federal Congressional Delegation supports this program. In tough budgetary times, this is one of the conservation programs that President Bush chose to fund at a higher level then last year, signifying the bi-partisan support and how effective this program really is!

"I admire the man who takes the next step, not those who theorize about the 200th."
Theodore Roosevelt

Take the next step and adopt phase 2 of HB 172.