EXHIBIT 1
DATE 01/25/07
HB 364

# House Bill No. 364

**Re: Creation of Livestock Loss and Mitigation Board**

Enactment of House Bill No. 364 is essential to fulfill the mandates of the Montana Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (hereafter referenced as Montana Wolf Plan). Let me briefly review the historical and factual context for the introduction of H. B. 364.

The Governor's Wolf Advisory Council, representing a broad range of Montana interests, worked with the Mt. Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) staff to find common ground for management of wolves in Montana. It is important to understand that the Council made a decision that unanimous consensus of Council members would be required for all program elements in the proposed plan. The Advisory Council Plan with a few modifications agreed to by the Council was selected as the preferred wolf management plan by FWP. After the EIS process was completed, the Modified Council plan was adopted by Montana as the Montana Wolf Plan and subsequently also received approval by Federal agencies as an acceptable plan meeting requirements for eventual delisting of wolves in Montana.

The adopted Montana Wolf Plan (Wolf EIS pgs. 74-95) calls for the following provisions which directly relate to the necessity of enacting H.B.364:

1. The State of Montana, with FWP in a leadership role, to find or create an entity to administer a compensation program.
2. Development of programs or incentives to proactively reduce wolf predation of livestock (Livestock Loss Reduction).
3. Reimbursement of confirmed and probable livestock losses at fair market value (Mitigation).

In addition, the plan states that securing adequate funding for the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation programs is of equal priority as securing funding for the other state wolf management activities.

In committing to fulfill these provisions of the Montana Wolf Plan, FWP brought together a second diverse group of Montana citizens to further develop and define the terms of the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation programs in accordance with the Montana Wolf Plan. This group has spent considerable time and effort in developing and agreeing upon a framework for the implementation of the Loss Reduction and Mitigation programs. However, an entity to administer these programs needs to be in place before funding can occur and the programs can be implemented. House Bill No. 364 provides for the creation of that entity. Enactment of H.B. 364 is crucial to the fulfillment of these provisions of the Montana Wolf Plan.

I had the privilege to serve as one of the original Wolf Advisory Council members and also as one of the Loss Reduction and Mitigation working group members. I commend all my colleges and FWP staff for the positive manner in which they worked to find common ground and agreement on one of the most controversial issues of our time. The key to compromising and

reaching an agreement was the expectation by our members that all programs to which we agreed upon would be honored in appropriate time. Many management provisions of the Montana Wolf Plan have been implemented. The Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation programs have been a work in progress to this time. The time is now here to implement these particular provisions of the Wolf Management Plan which were crucial elements in the formation and acceptance of the entire plan. House Bill No. 364 will provide the necessary means to do so. H.B. 364 comes as the result of over 6 years of work by Montana citizens and FWP staff. I urge you to consider their efforts and work in requesting that H. B. 364 be enacted into law.

Sincerely,

Nelson Wert, VMD

Nelson Wert, VMD

Wolf Advisory Council member,
FWP Livestock Loss reduction/Mitigation
working group member

January 26, 2007