EXHIBIT 4
DATE 3.22.07
SB 100

Senate Bill 100
March 22, 2007
Presented by Jim Kropp
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Jim Kropp, Chief of Law Enforcement for Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

Montana is indeed, the Last Best Place and just a brief perusal of national magazines show that our state's fish and wildlife resources are the envy of the nation. Along with that notoriety, however, come those who wish to abuse and exploit these resources for their own selfish purposes. To put it bluntly, a by-product of that notoriety has been the growth of unlicensed, illicit outfitting, commercialization and poaching. When involved with hunting, these activities are inextricably tied to hunting without licenses, tag transfers, the use of unlawfully obtained duplicate licenses and a host of other violations. Unlicensed fishing outfitting contributes to river conflicts; access issues as well as substantial congestion at fishing access sites and use areas.

SB 100 provides a deterrent and gives Montana some important tools to address this wholesale theft of our resources. It is similar to laws currently in place in Colorado (the model for this statute), Alaska and other western states. It allows extradition to prosecute cases that are often tangled, convoluted and usually cross state lines. It raises the stakes for being caught from the current hand-slap that misdemeanor status allow, one where paying a small fine is considered no more than simply the cost of doing business. Although a felony conviction can result in prison time, history has shown that in regards to wildlife crime, this is not the case. Most convictions result in significant fines, loss of hunting and fishing privileges for many years (sometimes for life) and a criminal record. The theft of anything over $1000 can be a felony. Why not the theft of some of Montana's most precious public resources?

We all pay for unlicensed outfitters in other ways. They run an unlawful business that pays no taxes on the thousands (if not hundreds of thousands) of dollars they make; they pay neither workman's compensation nor liability insurance; and they regularly make illegal use of public lands –all, at our expense.

Although SB 100 was originally submitted to be under the Outfitter Codes (Title 37), we suggest moving this bill under Title 87 as the appropriate place for this statute. FWP would continue to work in concert with the Board of Outfitters in investigations but the overall responsibility to pursue these cases would rest with FWP, local county attorneys and the Attorney General's Office, which is where it should be.

This bill has gained widespread support from conservation groups, local sportsman's associations, outfitter organizations as well as the Governor's Private Land- Public Wildlife Council. If we truly value our fish and wildlife resources for the economic as well as their intrinsic worth as fundamental elements of our lifestyle and way of life, we must rank these crimes amongst the worst and prosecute them as such. As a major wildlife violator candidly told us following his conviction, "you sure take your wildlife seriously in Montana." We urge your passage of SB 100.