

Exhibit No. 1Date 3-12-07Bill No. HB 269

**SENATE COMMITTEE
ON
FINANCE AND CLAIMS**

House Bill 269

**Testimony of Greg Ames
Administrator, Agricultural Sciences Division
Montana Department of Agriculture**

MADAME CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

For the record, my name is Greg Ames, Administrator of the Agricultural Sciences Division at the Montana Department of Agriculture. On behalf of the Director of Agriculture, Nancy K. Peterson, I am here to testify in favor of House Bill 269.

The Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund grant program was established by the 1985 Montana Legislature to provide funding for development and implementation of weed management programs in Montana. In addition to interest from the Trust Fund, the grants program also receives funding from each vehicle registered in Montana, and from two federal sources: the Cooperative Forestry Grant and from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The extent to which these federal funds will continue, at current or reduced levels, is uncertain. Constitutional Amendment 40 passed by a 3/4 vote of all Montanans and House Bill 266 passed almost unanimously in the 2005 session.

In this current fiscal year, the department received 100 requests for funding totaling \$2,928,108 leaving us \$1,022,466 short to meet all funding requests. The current balance in the trust fund is just under \$5 million dollars. We estimate that increasing the principal in the trust fund to the statutory limit of \$10 million, will generate interest to provide an additional \$225,000 per year for weed management education, research and control activities for all Montanans.

We appreciate your consideration, and urge your support for House Bill 269.