

February 20, 2007

TESTIMONY ON SB 17

My name is Robert Lucas. I live near Missoula. I am the past president of the Big Sky Upland Bird Association and a Pheasants Forever member.

I strongly support SB 17. SB 17 removes the requirement to spend a certain amount of money releasing pen-reared pheasants before the first dollar can be spent on any upland bird habitat improvements. The current law even prevents habitat work to benefit grouse or other upland birds until the required money has been spent to turn out pheasants.

Those who believe that releasing young pheasants is helpful and those of us who think this is ineffective and costly will probably never agree.

Both the Bird Association and Pheasants Forever oppose releasing pheasants. So do I. These released birds rarely survive long. They have been raised in sheltered conditions, fed from a feeder, watered from a waterer, protected from predators and severe weather in secure pens. Most are many generations removed from wild stock.

SB 17 does not prohibit releasing pheasants. Those who want to do so can continue and be paid just as they can now. What they cannot do is to keep holding habitat improvement projects hostage to expenditures for releasing pheasants.

SB 17 is fair to everyone. I ask you to vote yes on it.

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