

Senate Bill 17  
Senate Fish and Game Committee  
February 20, 2007

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the record, my name is Larry Copenhaver, of Helena, and I'm testifying on behalf of Montana Wildlife Federation, the state's oldest and largest organization of hunters and anglers with 23 affiliated clubs and over 6800 members.

MWF supports Senate Bill 17 to eliminate the mandatory expenditure of the Upland Bird Enhancement Program funds on the raising and release of pen-raised upland birds, usually ring-neck pheasants. MWF fully supports the purpose for the Upland Bird Enhancement Program, focused on enhancing upland bird populations by developing new and maximizing existent upland bird habitat and other wildlife management techniques.

Whether or not pen-raised pheasants or other upland game birds ever survive to constitute a naturally reproducing population or even to become available to hunters in the field during the open season is a matter of debate. But this bill does not address whether or not gamebird stocking is appropriate or if it remains a component of the Upland Bird Enhancement Program but simply eliminates the arbitrary requirement that 15% to be set aside strictly for bird releases. Decisions to use supplemental plantings should be made by wildlife managers as a wildlife management technique to be applied when and where appropriate. This 15% requirement is arbitrary does nothing to fulfill the purpose of the program and should be stricken as proposed.

MWF supports SB 17 and asks that the Committee recommend a do-pass. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.