EXHIBIT 4
DATE 3-10-09
SB 184

Senate Bill 184
March 10, 2009
Presented by Chris Smith
House Fish, Wildlife & Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Chris Smith, Deputy Director of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

SB 184 makes a number of minor administrative changes to the way FWP handles license sales and permit applications. The current restriction on sale of bear or lion licenses was adopted to address concerns that individuals were incidentally and/or illegally taking black bears or lions without a license, then purchase a license after-the-fact.

Senator Balyeat approached FWP last fall to discuss alternative ways to address this concern, yet allow license sales after the season opens. We worked with Sen. Balyeat to arrive at the language in SB 184 and are comfortable that the requirement for a hunter to purchase the license at one of our offices, combined with the delayed effective date, will minimize the risk of abuse.

The change in application due dates for bison will not create any difficulties for FWP. The committee should be aware, though, that moving the application date up to coincide with the moose, sheep and goat application date may force hunters to apply for a permit before all the details of the coming hunting season are finalized. Under the current deadline, applications are not due until FWP has determined how many hunt areas and periods will be offered during the season, so hunters can apply for a specific area, sex and hunt period. With an earlier due date, hunters may be able to apply for a general hunt area (e.g., upper Yellowstone vs. West Yellowstone), but may not be able to select a specific hunt area, period or sex of bison. This uncertainty is likely to decline over the next few years assuming bison hunting regulations stabilize with additional experience.

FWP can easily implement any of these changes if approved by the legislature.