



Testimony of Tim Baker, Executive Director
Montana Wilderness Association
House Bill 645
March 12, 2009

EXHIBIT 3
DATE 3/12/09
HB 645

On behalf of the Montana Wilderness Association and its more than 5,000 members, please consider the following comments regarding the proposed revolving loan fund for the timber industry (Department of Commerce, line d, Distressed Wood Products Industry). The Montana Wilderness Association supports this funding.

The recession and general economic malaise now faced by our country has made the health of the wood products industry in Montana tenuous at best.

The Montana Wilderness Association has had a difficult relationship with the wood products industry over the years, but times have changed. Today, many conservationists and other folks who care about the state of our forests want to maintain and support the existing small mill infrastructure in Montana.

If we are to protect our world-class fisheries and hunting opportunities, and meet the challenges presented by climate change, we need an integrated wood products industry and associated trained work force that can work in the woods and perform the vital work that needs to be done. These activities include projects to improve fish and wildlife habitat, watershed health, and recreational opportunities, and address forest health and wildfire risk.

For these reasons, it is vital to Montana that our small mill infrastructure (and supporting secondary infrastructure that these mills depend on) receive economic support during these trying times.

Thank you for your consideration.