SENATE FISH AND GAME
EXHIBIT NO. 4
DATE March 5, 2009
BILL NO. HB 222

House Bill 222
March 5, 2009
Presented by Jim Kropp
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Jim Kropp, Chief of Law Enforcement of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

We Montanans hold dear the fish and wildlife resources of our state. As a result, the penalties imposed on those convicted of abusing those resources or exploiting them for personal gain, are important; not only to see that justice is done, but also as a tangible example of what these resources mean to our citizens.

Following a person's conviction of misdemeanor wildlife offenses, they often are required to pay fines and or restitution. In many cases, the convicted individual is unable to pay the fines or restitution in full and is therefore put on a time-pay program by the court. Because justice courts in the state only extend their authority over a person for a period of two years after conviction, larger fines and restitution which are put on time pay beyond the two-year period often times go unpaid. Some people simply cease paying or move away before finishing out their debt. Revocations of privileges may only extend for two years but their sentencing terms require repayment over time beyond two years. The county and state are left without a complete sentence. At this point, there has been no system to ensure that those who do flaunt their responsibility are held accountable.

HB 222 provides that a person whose hunting, fishing or trapping privileges have been revoked because of conviction of a resource offense may not have them restored until any and all sentencing terms are met. This includes all fines and restitution being paid in full and if part of the order, remedial hunter education is taken and successfully completed. This would ensure that the intent of the sentencing judge as well as the law is met before a person is once again allowed to hunt, fish or trap. It would ensure consistency as well as increase the level of collection of fines, a portion of which go to the counties, as well as all restitution which is used by FWP to pay for investigations and further law enforcement efforts.

I urge your support for HB 222 and am available for your questions.