SENATE FISH AND GAME
EXHIBIT NO. 5
DATE March 5, 2009
BILL NO. HB 137

House Bill 137
Testimony – Proponent
Land Tawney, PL/PW Council Chairman
Senate Fish and Game Committee
March 5, 2009

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record, my name is Land Tawney, Chairman of the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council, and I am here to speak in support of House Bill 137.

As you may know, the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council is a group of landowners, hunters, anglers, and outfitters appointed by the Governor, and by statute, to review FWP hunting and fishing access enhancement programs and make recommendations regarding those programs and related issues.

During the past 18 months, one of the issues the Council examined was whether or not the current license benefit available to landowners enrolling land in the Block Management Program was working effectively. What we found was that many landowners had been asking for changes to two provisions that were enacted in 2005.

One of those provisions was a requirement that if a landowner designated a family member to get the complimentary license in lieu of the landowner receiving the complimentary license, the cost of the license has to be deducted from the landowner's payment.

Most landowners stated that it was more a matter of principle than the actual cost of the license that caused them not to utilize this option, because it seemed only fair to them that if the complimentary license was provided free of charge to the landowner, than it should be provided free of charge if the landowner designated a family member to receive the complimentary license.

Landowners have also requested the ability to designate immediate family members related by marriage and ranch employees. Current law only allows the license to be designated for immediate family members, grandchild to grandparent, who are related by blood. Council members felt that it only made sense to also include family members, grandchild to grandparent, who are also related by marriage.

When the Council circulated this draft recommendation for public comment, some comments indicated people wanted to make sure that only bonafide farm or ranch employees could qualify. For that reason, language in House Bill 137 defines employee as "a person who works full time and year-round for the landowner as part of an active farm or ranch operation."

As a Council, we adopted this recommendation through consensus, where all members agreed that this proposal would improve the current Block Management landowner license benefit. We appreciate your consideration, and hope you will support passage of House Bill 137.