

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER  
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER  
LT. GOVERNOR

May 10, 2011

The Honorable Linda McCulloch  
Secretary of State  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Secretary McCulloch:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto House Bill No. 209 (HB 209), **"AN ACT REVISING LAWS RELATED TO THE MAINTENANCE OF LANDS OWNED OR ACQUIRED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PARKS; ELIMINATING THE STATUTORY APPROPRIATION OF THE MAINTENANCE ACCOUNT; PRIORITIZING THE USE OF CERTAIN MAINTENANCE ACCOUNT MONEY FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS; REQUIRING REPORTING; DEDICATING A PORTION OF NONRESIDENT WOLF AND GRIZZLY BEAR LICENSE REVENUE TO WILDLIFE HABITAT FUNDING; AMENDING SECTIONS 17-7-502, 87-1-230, AND 87-1-242, MCA; AMENDING SECTION 8, CHAPTER 427, LAWS OF 2009; AND PROVIDING EFFECTIVE DATES AND TERMINATION DATES."**

The sportsmen and women of Montana willingly pay fees for the purchase of lands that provide hunting opportunity and access to other public lands for hunting and recreation. This access is routinely rated as the most critical concern of sportsmen for the future of hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, and wildlife resources.

House Bill 209 effectively reduces access funding in the Habitat Montana program by 30% over a four year period and redirects that funding to maintenance. While maintenance is important, adding 30% to the existing 20% directed to maintenance goes too far and cuts in half the dollars available for the purchase of access for hunting.

The bill also prematurely eliminates the statutory appropriation authority found in legislation passed only two years ago, in 2009 (SB 164). The 2009 legislation provided the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) with a suitable mechanism to ensure maintenance of purchased lands, and it is a tool that deserves a chance to be fully implemented. House Bill 209 would do away with this tool prematurely and arbitrarily attempts to pre-determine maintenance needs without consideration of other needs or evaluation of ongoing maintenance efforts.

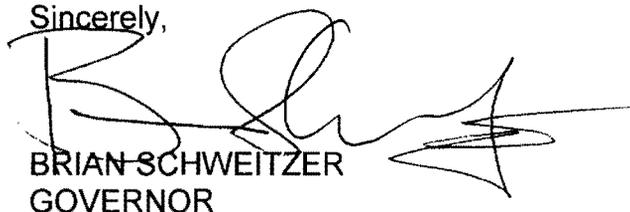
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There is always room for improvement related to maintenance on Wildlife Management Areas and other lands. I have asked FWP to continue making these concerns a high priority, with special emphasis on weed management, boundary fencing, and signing. With my veto of HB 209, however, I leave in place the ability for FWP to maintain these properties using existing statutory authority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Schweitzer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

BRIAN SCHWEITZER  
GOVERNOR

cc: Legislative Services Division