

House Bill 98
January 11 2011
Presented by Charles Van Genderen
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Charles Van Genderen, State Parks Administrator of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here in support of House Bill 98.

Fish, Wildlife and Parks supports passage of HB98. As you may have heard the Department Director say last week, the Park Division needs funding and is different than the Fish and Wildlife Division. This bill begins to help make that difference more clear and helps assure that money earned in state parks goes back into state parks. This bill would only apply to state park lands and no other lands in the Department.

Currently, any monies earned from leases or sale of state park property are placed into a trust for the benefit of the Department. Examples of those leases include a concession building at Tongue River Reservoir, a grazing lease at Rosebud Battlefield, and land upon which radio towers operate. Revenues of this sort amount to approximately \$11,000 per year. Under current law those funds are deposited into an account for the entire Department, and the interest off of those monies can be spent to improve Department lands and buildings. The only way the Parks Division can access those monies currently is through competing for the funding against other fish and wildlife projects and that is a rare occurrence.

Additionally, we are working to improve the state park system and that includes disposing of park lands that have little significance. If any properties were sold as part of this effort, monies from those sales too should go back to State Parks.

HB98 is pretty straightforward and would allow monies earned from state park property to go into an existing state special revenue fund dedicated to improving state parks.