

Missoulian

EXHIBIT 12
DATE 1/25/11
HB Additional Exhibits

State FWP faces costs of acquired lands it now manages

By EVE BYRON Independent Record | Posted: Saturday, January 15, 2011 10:49 pm

HELENA - In the past six years, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has used \$90 million from a variety of new and traditional sources and married it with landowner donations to acquire about 232,000 acres for state parks, wildlife management areas and fishing access sites.

Now the state agency faces the financial hardship of maintaining those and other properties it owns.

The land purchases during Gov. Brian Schweitzer's administration, a Democrat, total almost four times what was bought by or given to FWP during the 12 years of the former Republican Govs. Marc Racicot and Judy Martz eras combined. From 1993 through 2004, FWP spent \$22.9 million on property, and with donated land acquired 56,000 acres. Those administrations also sold off 8,700 acres for \$523,650.

Altogether, using state and federal funds, money from hunting and fishing licenses and recreational fees, FWP has paid out \$113 million for property and acquired about 288,150 acres (including donated land) during that past 18 years, according to an Independent Record analysis.

"I suppose this administration will best be remembered for finding new opportunities for families to hunt, camp and fish," said last week. "I'm proud that we have found the resources to fund land purchases that help Montana families."

Those acquisitions include large parcels, like the 27,000-acre Spotted Dog property near Avon for \$15 million and the 4,740-acre Fish Creek site west of Missoula for \$17 million. They also include dozens of smaller sites, including the 75-acre Stuckey Ridge parcel near Anaconda for \$265,000; the 37-acre Stipek fishing access site on the Yellowstone River north of Glendive for \$164,000; and the 1-acre Scotty Brown Bridge property, adjacent to the Blackfoot- Clearwater Wildlife Management Area for \$97,000.

"I think it's important to note that we have a mix of the kinds of purchases we made," Schweitzer said. "In many cases, like when we purchase fishing access sites, they're not large pieces of land but are critical pieces of land so more people can access our rivers. And in some cases, they are small and medium size purchases that create conduits to much larger pieces of public land for public recreation."

FWP director Joe Maurier said a unique set of circumstances has allowed his agency to buy the properties - Plum Creek Timber Co. sold off hundreds of thousands of acres, including land near the federally owned Bob Marshall and Scapegoat wilderness areas; the 2007 Montana Legislature approved dedicating \$10 million in general funds for property acquisition through the Access Montana program; and three new federal habitat programs, started in the mid 2000s, have provided FWP with around \$30 million to purchase wildlife habitat.

"We could leverage money and had built up some reserves, then had an opportunity that came up with some conservation groups ... and the stars aligned," Maurier said.

Yet now that FWP owns 348,700 acres across Montana in 72 wildlife management areas, 44,000 acres in 53 state parks, and almost 21,000 acres at more than 320 fishing access sites, the budgets for weed control, sanitation and staffing are stretched thin. The head of the FWP Parks Division, Chas Van Genderen, recently told the FWP Commission that his division is in a "terrible fiscal situation" and asked for permission to raise fees at some of the state parks. The commission refused the request last month, citing the national economic downturn.

Maurier said he doesn't have a dollar figure for the maintenance backlog, and while he agrees that the state parks system isn't adequately funded, he downplays concerns that maintenance is overwhelming and strongly defends the purchases.

"Our philosophy in going into this whole thing was that where we had good opportunities that weren't just throwing money away, for places where we really needed access - special places - that we would act now and at the very worst case we might have to mothball them awhile to do necessary things to open them to the public," Maurier said.

A report by the Legislative Fiscal Division adds that it's often difficult to determine what has been spent on maintenance for FWP lands due to a variety of accounting practices.

"For example, to determine how much has been spent on weed control statewide, the amount expended on supplies or contracts can be isolated, but not often the corresponding personal services costs," the report states. "However, expenditures are not an adequate means to measure weed control activities, as paying for weed control and actually controlling weeds are two different things."

Under a 2009 statute, money for maintenance has to be included in the purchase price. But the statute expires in 2013, and the fiscal division report adds that the active land purchasing by FWP, coupled with the relatively flat figures set aside for maintenance, creates "an imbalance between the amount available for maintenance and the requirements of the expanding system."

In the Parks Division alone, while the total fund balance remained positive, expenditures exceeded revenues by \$1.4 million in fiscal year 2008 and by \$755,000 in 2009, reducing the fund balance by \$2.1 million. Those expenses aren't tied to any one line item, but the trend is expected to continue unless changes are made.

Maurier said they're asking the Legislature for permission to increase the voluntary fee people pay when they license their vehicles from \$4 to \$6. The governor's biennial budget proposal also includes an increase of 4.8 percent for the state agency, from \$140 million to \$146 million, but the money isn't necessarily dedicated to maintenance.

In these tight fiscal times, Republican legislators have asked departments to cut their budgets by 5 percent; the impact may not be as great in the FWP Department since it typically doesn't receive general fund money. Most of its budget comes from license and recreational fees, federal funds and the state bed tax.

Maurier said FWP may have to delay opening some sites and continue to defer maintenance elsewhere until the system catches up with itself.

"We'll do the best we can and eventually everything will be open," Maurier said. "Our parks system is not funded very well so we are going to see if people are willing to pay a little more."

At a recent natural resources subcommittee meeting, Barbara Smith with the Legislative Fiscal Division added that the "lack of balance for acquisition and management of land" has been an issue for at least the past three sessions, and continues today.

"We have had a lot of requests to look at state land purchases," Smith said, adding that the queries include land bought by other state agencies, too. "It's a series of issues - what should the state hold, what should FWP hold, what is the relationship with trust lands and who controls the acquisitions."

While Maurier and his staff can recommend buying land, those property purchases or donations need the approval of the five-member FWP Commission. Those involving more than 100 acres or \$100,000 in value also need the go-ahead from the five-member State Land Board.

Since the Legislature last met in 2009, the Legislative Fiscal Division identified maintenance of FWP lands for public safety, resource protection and facility performance as a critical goal for the agency during the next two years. However, the division also pointed out that proposed budget cuts could result in reduced grants to local communities for trail maintenance, as well as delayed maintenance activities in state parks and fishing access sites.

With more than \$15 million in donated land lowering the average cost to about \$392 an acre, no one is accusing FWP of any malfeasance. In fact, many conservation and sporting groups applaud the purchases and work with FWP to increase state holdings.

"I think the state has been thoughtful in their purchases; it's not like they're just buying land anywhere," said Kat Imhoff, state director of The Nature Conservancy. Her organization purchased many of the Plum Creek Timber Co. lands and held them until state or federal agencies found the money to buy them, or they were sold to adjacent landowners with some restrictions.

"Folks from community groups were so concerned about losing access they had for so long from Plum Creek, and that's a huge driver for the state," Imhoff said. "This is impressive in terms of making opportunities for future generations."

But state Sen. John Brenden, R-Scobey, a former rancher who previously was an FWP commissioner, is asking pointed questions about land purchases and maintenance.

"How much is enough? If we can't manage what we have, why do we keep buying land, especially in this economy?" Brenden said. "Then as a rancher, I'm bidding against myself as a taxpayer. It's unfair competition.

"... I want to make things work, not kill FWP, but they need to control their spending. It's easy to spend other people's money."

Maurier has heard the arguments before, but said that during the past two years he's been at the FWP helm, people throughout Montana have told him their No. 1 priority is access to hunting, fishing and recreational areas.

"The bottom line is this land belongs to all Montanans, to our grandchildren and the children that are yet to be born," Maurier said. "We can have a philosophical debate about whether the government owning land is appropriate or not ... but we have decided this is important to do, and we're stretching our funding by buying at the low end of the market, with tough bargaining and maximizing federal dollars."

Maurier said FWP pays taxes on the land, and recently dropped the Parker Homestead as a state park because it was too small to provide many opportunities for the public. But while some legislators have pushed for "no net gains" in state lands, he said the outcry is overwhelming whenever his agency tries to sell off some of the isolated, smaller parcels.

"When the commission attempted to do that a few years ago, there was a huge push back from constituents not wanting to give up any land regardless," Maurier said. "I think you would face that same sentiment today, although I'm willing to look at that."

He noted that on the average, 243,000 people hold hunting licenses and 391,000 people have fishing licenses. State parks have recorded about 2 million visitors annually, and a 2010 economic impact study recently released reported that nonresidents who visited state parks contributed \$122 million to Montana's economy and produced 1,600 jobs last year.

"We have made some remarkable investments for the sportsmen of Montana," Maurier said. "Most important is the Plum Creek land, which is prime habitat for a variety of species and can serve as connecting corridors, which are critical for any (grizzly bear and wolf) delisting opportunities down the road. It preserves public access to those places where we've had it for years that we were going to lose.

Reporter Eve Byron can be reached at eve.byron@helenair.com.

Montana Representative K. Kerns' HB 177 about diseases carried by wolves is simply overkill of a minor set of problems, starting with rabies.

A rather comprehensive analysis of the wolf-rabies topic was included in Varley, J.D., and W.G. Brewster, eds. 1992. *Wolves for Yellowstone? A Report to the United States Congress, Volume IV Research and Analysis*. National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park, Wyo. 750pp. Mark R. Johnson, DVM, wrote *The Potential Role of Rabies in Relation to Possible Yellowstone Wolf Populations*. Pp. 5-45 to 5-67.

In brief, Dr. Johnson listed 5 strains of terrestrial rabies; in skunks, foxes, and raccoons. All other species receive the infection as "spillover" or incidental exposure. Idaho has only bat rabies. In Montana, Wyoming, and Minnesota, skunks comprise over 50% of rabies cases. In Alaska, where the fox strain of rabies, is enzootic, 4 wolves, from an estimated population of 6,000 to 8,000 wolves, (had) been reported with rabies in the last 5 years. In Minnesota, where the skunk strain of rabies is enzootic, no free-ranging wolves, from an estimated population of 1,700 wolves, have been reported with rabies. Fewer than 1 person per year is infected with rabies within the United States and Canada. Because wolves and coyotes, in North America, infrequently become infected with rabies and do not play a role in the spread of rabies, (they are) very unlikely to contribute any additional risks associated with rabies to humans, domestic animals, or wildlife. Dr. Johnson recommends testing and monitoring.

Concern with wolves carrying or transmitting other infectious diseases keeps rearing its head. Again, Dr. Johnson has addressed that issue, in *The Disease Ecology of Brucellosis and Tuberculosis in Potential Relationship to Yellowstone Wolf Populations*, Pp. 5-59 to 5-92 in Varley and Brewster (1992). He notes that *Brucella abortus* primarily infects cattle and has been reported in dogs, foxes, coyotes, and wolves. Canids participate in the disease ecology of brucellosis as mechanical vectors, rather than biological vectors. Tuberculosis is rarely observed in free-ranging wildlife, including canids. Wild canids apparently do not act as reservoirs of tuberculosis. Dr. Johnson recommends using ongoing studies of canids to learn more about the role of canids in diseases.

In 1995 and 1996, Dr. Johnson planned the protocols and supervised the handling of Canadian wolves to be translocated to Yellowstone and central Idaho. Biologists and veterinarians examined the wolves for endo- and ecto-parasites, collected blood and other samples to assess the wolves' health, and gave them medications and vaccines to prevent them from transporting any diseases with them.

From Barry Lopez's 1982 book, *Of Wolves and Men* (Charles Scribner's Sons), we read (P. 183), "...stockmen...had passed an outrageous law requiring the state veterinarian to inoculate wolves with scarcoptic mange and then turn them loose. Cattlemen were to get fifteen dollars from the legislature for every wolf they trapped for the program. In spite of the fact that it didn't work, in spite of the fact that a similar disease spread to domestic stock and the federal government forbade human consumption of cattle from some counties, this program continued for eleven years." In recent years, wolves in Yellowstone National Park have been infected with mange, which is endemic in the region.

Lopez also recorded (Pp. 194-195), "Alberta's Veterinary Services Branch claimed an antirabies campaign was needed to protect people against possibly rabid wolves. Behind the prop of a public health program an astonishing arsenal of poison was distributed: 39,960 cyanide guns, 106,100 cyanide cartridges, and 628,000 strychnine pellets. Sodium fluoroacetate (1080) poison bait stations were increased from 25 in 1951 to 800 by 1956. There is no record of the number of wolves that were killed, along with 246,800 coyotes, but in all that time exactly one rabid wolf was diagnosed, in 1956."

Elimination of top predators (wolves) releases mesopredators (coyotes), which take over some of the niche of the top dog. Eliminating coyotes in turn releases skunks, foxes, and raccoons, whose populations skyrocket in the absence of their predators. Note that it is skunks, foxes, and raccoons, not wolves, that present a threat of the spread of rabies, so it is entirely counterproductive to kill wolves and coyotes in an effort to control wildlife diseases.

Hydatid disease, or *Echinococcus granulosis*, was the major topic at the Environmental Quality Council's Agency Oversight - FWP Wolf Management meeting May 7, 2010.

On the topic of *Echinococcus granulosus*, (E.g.), Dr. Valerius Geist, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science, University of Calgary, gave a ten-minute talk via conference phone to the Council. He had e-mailed a 4-page statement to them. He said there was a chance of transmission of E.g. from deer and elk wintering where family dogs may be. He proposed a number of draconian preventive measures against E.g.

He was followed by Dr. Helen Schwantje, British Columbia wildlife veterinarian. Dr Schwantje took a much calmer approach, saying B.C. doesn't try to eradicate E.g. Pets are simply wormed. She pointed out that E.g. is part of a sylvatic cycle in which the wolf is a definitive host, and that ungulates - cervids - are intermediate hosts. **Wolves, coyotes and foxes all have it.** In B.C., it is uncommon for people to ask questions about hydatid disease. In 2008, after an 8-year-old Saskatchewan girl had an E.g. cyst in her head, the native community was surveyed, and 11% of them had antibodies to E.g. They had no exposure to wildlife, but had lots of free-ranging dogs. She inquired in Alberta, and was told there was a theoretical risk, but all their cases were seen in immigrants, where **family dogs were the source of infection.** She said the Canadian Journal of Zoology had an article on infectious diseases in 2001, that noted that most of the 17 cases of E.g. were found in new immigrants from Europe. In B.C., the disease is endemic, and not of high significance. She said B.C. focuses on public education, because the disease can be readily avoided. Feeding raw offal to dogs, she said, could be a problem. Cysts may cause no problems in humans. During questions, Dr. Geist reiterated his call for de-worming wolves in the wild, with ivermectin in baits dropped from helicopters. He admonished, "High densities of wolves, high rate of infection."

Chairman Sen. Vincent called the attention of the Council to Wildlife Veterinarian Dr. Mark R. Johnson's testimony, that he had emailed to the Council (Dr. Johnson, project veterinarian for the 1995-96 wolf reintroductions in Yellowstone and central Idaho) is the founder and director of Global Wildlife Resources, Inc., P.O. Box 10248, Bozeman, MT 59719). He noted that Dr. Johnson didn't agree with Dr Geist's recommendation, including those for widespread burning of grass to sanitize the areas from E.g., and asked Dr. Geist if he had been in touch with Dr. Johnson. Dr. Geist said he hadn't. In his testimony, Dr. Johnson referred the Council to a case study that was published, listing the medications given to the reintroduced wolves. It is Johnson, M.R. 2001. Case 2. Health Aspects of Gray Wolf Restoration Pp. 163-167 in Maehr, D.S., R.F. Noss, and J.L. Larkin, eds. Large Mammal Restoration. Island Press, Washington.

The Council had heard in a previous session from Krysten Schuler, PhD, Wildlife Ecologist, Field Investigation Team, USGS National Wildlife Health Center, 6006 Schroeder Road, Madison, Wisconsin 53711 on E.g. in wolves. Her 3-page paper, *Echinococcus granulosus* in wolves, is available on the Council's web site. Briefly, she wrote that they know of no transmission of E.g. from a wolf to a human, but hydatid disease has been reported in sheepherders and native people who have **close associations with their dogs.** Other notes: "Our opinion is that mortality and **health risks are low for all groups** based on available literature. Handling wolf feces is the most likely route of infection and can easily be prevented with proper hygiene. It is unlikely this parasite has a substantial impact on wildlife populations."

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Director Joe Maurier was scheduled to talk. On E.g., he said FWP would do what they could to educate the public.

A number of speakers offered comments. Mark Cook of Stevens said he'd looked up information on E.g., and found that Oregon had E.g. in 1920, and that the U. of Texas said sheep feces were the primary source of infection. Merck notes that E.g. is worldwide. In New Zealand, they just advise not feeding dogs gut piles. In Minnesota, no cases have been recorded. He gave the council a March 30 letter that deputy director David W. Ashe of USFWS wrote to Sen. John Barasso of Wyoming on behalf of constituent Josh Skorez, responding to a question about health risks of tape worm in wolves. Key line: "E.g. poses a very low health risk to people." Stan Frazier noted that conservationists had pleaded with the Montana legislature to deal with Chronic Wasting Disease in captive elk, but to no avail. Wolves have the capacity to eliminate CWD, unless we eliminate them first.

Mice in my garage may have hanta virus. The sparrows in my spruce tree may carry West Nile virus. The rabbit under my deck may have tularemia. The Richardson's ground squirrels in my yard may carry plague. The skunk in the culvert out front may be rabid. Shall we legislate their destruction? We do not need House Bill 177. I will be grateful if the committee will give it a decent burial.

Thank you.

Norman A. Bishop
4898 Itana Circle
Bozeman, MT 59715

From: Scott Creel <screel@gemini.msu.montana.edu> **Date:** January 24, 2011 5:10:09 PM MST **To:** Franke Willmer <frankewilmer@bresnan.net> **Subject:** **Re: Echinococcus in wolves**

Hi Franke,

This issue has been over-emphasized to a great degree, disproportionate to actual risk.

There are several species of Echinococcus, which have different definitive hosts (in which they reproduce sexually) and different intermediate hosts (in which they do not reproduce sexually). They also differ with respect to the organs of the intermediate host in which the parasite tends to encyst. Most of the recent internet uproar about Echinococcus in wolves involves *E. granulosus*, which has various carnivores as the definitive host, and various ungulates as the main intermediate hosts, but which can also use humans as an intermediate host. There are nine identified strains of *E. granulosus*, and most of them have domestic dogs as the primary definitive host. One or more wild canids, felids or hyenids can also serve as definitive host for each of the strains.

Transmission from the definitive host (where a roundworm is in the intestines, reproducing sexually and shedding eggs into feces) and a human as the intermediate host (where it encysts, in a tissue that depends on the species of Echinococcus, but is usually the liver for *E. granulosus* in humans) depends on eating an infected carnivore's feces or material contaminated by the carnivore's feces. Obviously, the most common way for this to happen is by association with domestic dogs. Another route that occurs in developing nations is drinking from open water sources shared by carnivores and contaminated by their feces. These are the primary epidemiological risk factors associated with carnivores.

Given that domestic dogs, coyotes and foxes vastly outnumber wolves, and all three species overlap more substantially with the day to day activities of humans (and therefore pose a greater risk of fecal ingestion), the focus specifically on wolves for this proposed bill is illogical as an epidemiological program. If we really want to reduce disease transmission in Montana, programs to promote the typical childhood vaccinations would be a much higher priority for experts in human infectious disease.

In terms of risk management, this bill is probably on a par with creating a program to better inform people on ways to reduce their risk of being in airplane crashes. Moreover, state and federal agencies have already developed information sheets about this issue that are available to the public.

Best, Scott

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Scott Creel
Professor, Dept of Ecology
Montana State University
www.montana.edu/wwwbi/staff/creel/creel.html

REP
Comm.
Sec.

CARA GOLD

HB 151

MY NAME IS, MARVIN MACE. I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT HB 151. I AM THE ONE WHO GOT A BILL PASSED APROX. 10 YEARS AGO GIVING THE FWP COMMISSION THE POWER TO IMPOSE A WAITING PERIOD ON SPECIAL ELK PERMITS. IT'S BEEN A LONG ROAD, THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL PUBLIC COMMENT PERIODS WHERE THE PUBLIC CLEARLY WANTS A WAITING PERIOD FOR THESE THROPHY BULL ELK. ATTACHED IS A COVER LETTER THAT WAS GOING TO BE VOTED ON JAN. 13TH ,THE SAME DAY YOU ALL LISTENED TO 3 BILLS SPONCERED BY REP. WASHBURN. THIS COVER LETTER SHOWS THAT FWP MOTIONED FOR ITS APROVAL, IT GOT Tabled BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT SURE WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN WITH HB 151 ,WHICH WAS 7 YRS AND THEY WANTED 4YRS AND THEY ALSO WANTED THE OTHER THROPHY AREAS THAT HAVE A 10% CHANCE OF DRAWING AS WELL. MY HOPE IS THAT THE SPONCER OR THE COMMITTEE CONSIDER AN AMENDMENT THAT IS CONSISTANT WITH THE COVER LETTER THAT FWP OFFERED THE COMMISSION. THIS IS SOMETHING THE SPORTSMAN HAVE WANTED FOR A LONG TIME, AND IBELIEVE THE COVER LETTER IS AN INDICATION THAT FWP BELIEVES THAT AS WELL. THIS IS A ONCE IN A LIFETIME CHANCE , SOME GET IT EVERY YEAR, AND SOME GET 2 CHANCES EVERY YEAR, IS THAT FAIR? THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION.

MARVIN MACE
PH. 459-8807

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: January 13, 2010

Agenda Item: Four-Year Waiting Period for Some Either Sex Elk Permits

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Approval of Proposed Rule

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 20 minutes

Background: A four-year waiting period for specific "either sex" elk permits has recently seen several variations proposed. As described here, the permits would include limited entry antlered/brow-tined/either sex elk permits with drawing odds of 10 percent or less based on first choice resident and nonresident applicants from the previous year's application/drawing results. If an applicant receives any either sex elk permit that had a drawing success rate of 10 percent or less the previous year, that hunter must wait four years before applying for any either sex elk permit with a 10 percent or less drawing success rate based upon the previous year's drawing results. For instance, any applicant receiving one of these elk permits in 2011 would not be eligible to apply for any other such elk permit with a drawing success rate of 10 percent or less until 2016. The list of permits with drawing odds of 10 percent or less would be updated annually based upon the previous year's drawing results. Based upon 2010 drawing statistics, 23 districts currently exhibit drawing odds of 10% or less for these types of elk permits. Currently available antlered/brow-tined/either sex elk permits that fall into this category are: 282-20, 283-20, 310-20, 339-20, 380-20, 401-20, 410-20, 426-20, 441-20, 447-20, 455-20, 500-20, 502-20, 520-20, 575-20, 620-20, 621-20, 622-20, 631-20, 632-20, 690-20, 690-21, 799-20.

This waiting period would apply to the person, not the land. A landowner who qualifies for landowner preference would not be exempted from the four-year waiting period. The land, however, would remain eligible for use in a landowner preference application every year of the wait period for the landowner's designee who has not drawn one of these permits in any of the previous four years. Additionally for each or any year of the waiting period, a qualifying landowner may potentially secure an either sex elk permit valid only on his/her deeded land via a hunting access contract as defined by "HB 454 access agreements". This option—already available for implementation—requires FWP Commission approval and compliance with other statutory elements to allocate a permit to a landowner in exchange for agreed-to public elk hunting access.

Public Involvement Process & Results: In addition to public comment at the Jan. 13 Commission meeting, public comment on any adoption would run from Jan. 13 thru 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 24, 2011. Any final adoption by the FWP Commission would be on Feb. 10, 2011. The FWP Commission asked staff to engage landowners in order to understand how that community might view this wait period. Results of that informal effort will be presented at the January meeting. Limited comments received to date (to include hunters) vary.

Alternatives and Analysis: Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, additions, deletions or no change from 2010 (status quo) as per staff justifications, public comment and/or Commission discussion.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: The most definitive result of this action is to eliminate the possibility for any one individual to draw the same long-odds type of permit more than once in any four years. While this proposal would not significantly increase drawing odds in most districts, based upon 2010 drawing statistics four of the 23 districts would exhibit improved odds to slightly greater than 10 percent (11 - 17%) after four years of restricted entry. Based upon 2010 quota numbers, the number of hunters "waiting" will grow to approximately 3,700 after four years before individuals drawn the first year will be eligible to apply again. It is unknown what application and/or hunting efforts (and any associated impact) any "waiting" hunters will engage for the subsequent four years after drawing one of these permits. Possibilities include making no permit applications to applying for other permits not now on this proposed list.

Proposed Motion: I move the Commission adopt the proposed four-year waiting period for some elk permits as presented by FWP. (If the Commission does not move on this item, the current status quo of no wait period for these elk permits will remain in place.)



Greater Yellowstone Coalition

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January 13, 2011

Dear Chairman Washburn and members of the House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee,

This afternoon your committee will consider two bills related to the management of large predators generally (HB 144) and grizzly bears specifically (HB 172). The Greater Yellowstone Coalition is concerned that these bills ultimately undermine the authority of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) to scientifically manage these species according to sound wildlife management principles. We offer the following comments for your consideration.

Wolves:

The 2011 Montana legislature will consider a variety of bills related to wolf management, including HB 144. The Greater Yellowstone Coalition believes Montana's current wolf management plan and regulations provide MFWP the necessary tools to manage wolves as part of Montana's wildlife heritage and in conjunction with other game species. The US Fish and Wildlife Service approved Montana's wolf plan and regulations in 2004 as adequate to maintain a recovered population in the state, a critical step under the Endangered Species Act toward the eventual delisting of wolves. **Amending Montana's wolf management regulations now may void that approval and only further delay delisting.**

Specifically, HB 144 could be interpreted to require MFWP eliminate wolves from the landscape if big game objectives are not met. Though we recognize that may not be the intent, we see this amendment as unnecessary as MFWP, once wolves are delisted, already has the authorities it needs to establish the necessary quotas to address concerns related to the impacts of predation on other wildlife species. As a result, GYC opposes HB 144.

The Greater Yellowstone Coalition supports a transition to state management of wolves with plans in place that ensure wolves' long-term viability in the Northern Rockies. This will include the use of regulated, fair-chase hunting to manage Montana's wolf population. We hope the 2011 legislature will uphold Montana's wolf management plan, in order to ensure future progress toward delisting.

Grizzly Bears:

Grizzly bears remain a listed species under the federal Endangered Species Act. More importantly, this iconic species remains threatened by declining food sources such as Yellowstone cutthroat trout and whitebark pine, and increasing conflicts with a growing human population. In contrast to wolves, grizzly bears reproduce slowly and remain vulnerable to environmental changes over which we have no control. Montana's grizzly bear population cannot sustain additional annual mortality from grizzly bear hunting. As a result, it is premature

to reclassify grizzly bears from a rare species to a species in need of management in order to facilitate grizzly bear hunts. We ask that you oppose HB 172.

Thank you for your service in the Montana legislature. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or would like more information.

Sincerely,

Barb Cestero, Montana Director