

**GALLATIN WILDLIFE  
ASSOCIATION**  
P. O. Box 5276  
Bozeman, MT 59717  
(406) 586-1729



February 17, 2011

<sup>FWP</sup>  
Dear House ~~Agriculture~~ Committee Members:

The Gallatin Wildlife Association (GWA) is a non-profit volunteer wildlife conservation organization representing hunters and anglers in Southwest Montana and elsewhere. Our mission is simply to protect habitat and conserve fish and wildlife. GWA supports sustainable management of fish and wildlife populations through fair chase public hunting and fishing opportunities that will ensure these traditions are passed on for future generations to enjoy.

I am Glenn Hockett, representing the Gallatin Wildlife Association a regional sportsmen's group out of Bozeman Montana. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our support for House Bill 482.

Let's talk about the big "B" Boggy Man – Brucellosis. This bill is not about brucellosis because if it were we would have to be talking about elk and all the other mammals in the Greater Yellowstone Area, which includes a relatively wild landscape of at least 22 million acres in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. Brucellosis is not even mentioned in this bill. But let's agree on this point – No one wants one more domestic cow to test positive for brucellosis. Let's also agree on this point - brucellosis is endemic in GYA elk as well as bison. It we want to solve that challenge that discussion will have to happen another day.

However, I believe HB 482 sets a foundation for improving our dialog about brucellosis management in wildlife, in particular bison, as well as better methods to protect livestock from brucellosis transmission. HB 482 does this by improving the cooperative relationship between the Department of Livestock and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks by better aligning the agencies to their stated missions.

Furthermore, there are at least 6 common livestock diseases that cause abortions in cattle and there are many more harmful livestock diseases (Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service 1998). How do we protect cattle from these diseases, through Best Management Practices that include vaccinating the susceptible animals. I don't attempt to vaccinate skunks to protect my dog from rabies, I vaccinate my dog. Granted this is a burden, but it is well worth the cost.

So, the goal of this legislation is to clarify that wild bison are valued native wildlife in Montana and to restore Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks as the primary agency

responsible for their management. It will also ensure private property rights and livestock are protected by maintaining Department of Livestock involvement (see page 1, 81-2-121). Furthermore, current law which allows the DOL to enter private property without permission will be repealed (81-2-120).

Clearly, there is a problem with current bison management that needs fixing. The perpetual gridlock over bison management is costly, unsustainable, disrespectful and unnecessary. Did you know, under current law the government can enter private property without the landowner's permission (81-2-120)? HB 482 will repeal this violation of private property rights. As well, under current bison management millions of tax payer dollars are wasted each year hazing, harassing, capturing, confining and slaughtering bison with no end in sight. This relentless slaughter of bison is literally a bloody mess. Private property rights are being violated and our "management" of a treasured public wildlife species is disgraceful. Let's work together to fix this problem. We believe HB 482 offers a timely and reasonable solution.

It is important to realize this bill does not remove the Department of Livestock or private land or livestock owners from having an important say in bison management. In fact it mandates that private land or livestock owner concerns about any bison threatening their property be addressed in a timely fashion (see page 1, lines 12-28 and page 2, lines 23-25). Indeed, HB 482 empowers any landowner concerned about bison threatening their livestock or private property to lethally remove the bison if necessary, while the rights of those in favor of bison are protected as well. When it comes to bison and private property, HB 482 empowers private landowners to tell us how and where bison will be managed in Montana. Private landowners will both lead and limit bison conservation.

For those concerned about FWP involvement - this bill does not allow FWP to just put bison anywhere. Rather, HB 482 mandates that a public planning process, scientific analysis and consultation with the Departments of Livestock, Agriculture and Health and Human Services will occur before any bison are moved anywhere (see page 3, lines 6-14 and 87-5-716). It also requires that potential impacts from any bison translocation must have significant public benefits and significant public support while minimizing impacts to agriculture production (see page 4, lines 24 & 25). If these conditions are not met concerned parties have the legal right to object and prevent any translocation from proceeding.

Finally, HB 482 recognizes the cultural heritage and treaty rights of tribal sovereign nations related to conservation and management of wild bison (see page 3, lines 3-5). HB 482 gives us an opportunity to right a wrong, to fix a problem, to respect private property rights and eliminate government waste while conserving and managing wild bison as valued native wildlife in the State of Montana. Please pass HB 482.

Sincerely,



Glenn Hockett

Volunteer President, Gallatin Wildlife Association