

HB 482 2/17/2011

Dear Legislators of the House Fish Wildlife and Parks Committee:

When the first European immigrants set foot in Montana in 1805 they reported a wildlife resource that *"for variety and abundance exceeded anything the eye of man had ever looked upon."* Eighty years later, Theodore Roosevelt wrote of a ranchman looking for grazing opportunity who made a journey from Little Missouri North Dakota to within sight of what would become Glacier Park. TR described the trip as a journey of 1,000 miles and then he wrote, *"to use the ranchman's own words, I was never out of sight of a dead buffalo and never in sight of a live one."* All Montana wildlife nearly vanished under the weight of its early management by commerce. Now, a century and a quarter later we stand restored or nearly so. Our wonderful restored abundance has put a few bears in our orchards, goose dung on every golf shoe in America, and if you look close you just might see deer tracks and droppings on the capital lawn. It is part of the greatest wildlife restoration saga in human history and the buffalo, of all animals, deserves to be a part of that legacy. To deny this consummate achievement in American wildlife restoration because of some dogmatically held political ideology would be a shameful tragedy. To do it in Montana would simply compound the shame. Who among us would stand before the children of posterity and tell them we came within one species of restoring, managing and appreciating all the wildlife of what we euphemistically called "The Last Best Place" – but then in 2011 -- we choked? Please vote YES on HB 482, thank you.

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