



EXHIBIT 13
DATE 3/17/2011

World Wildlife Fund 144
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To: House Fish and Wildlife Committee
Re: SB144
March 17, 2011

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee,

On behalf of the 4,500 members of World Wildlife Fund in Montana, we rise in opposition to SB144. SB144, a bill aimed at foreclosing any chance that publicly owned bison will exist anywhere in the state outside of a small periphery around Yellowstone Park, will also foreclose any chance to expand bison hunting in the state, will impair the opportunity for economic development that accompanies wildlife amenities and hunting, denies the opportunity for Montana's Tribes to restore the important cultural and spiritual heritage of bison to their lands, and denies all Montanans the opportunity to restore an important wildlife legacy of this state.

Montanans want more hunting opportunities in the future, not less. Bison could provide an exciting and economically valuable new opportunity for enjoying and utilizing wildlife. Wildlife is a major draw and economic engine in this state...last year record numbers of people, 3.6 million, visited Yellowstone National Park, where bison is a huge draw. Creating huntable public herds elsewhere in the state will not only provide local communities outside of the Yellowstone area to expand the economic pie, but will provide recreational opportunities for thousands of Montanans.

And let's not forget that for many Montanans, those of Native American descent in particular, there is a special cultural and spiritual relationship with bison. The tribes in Montana have worked diligently to prepare homes for bison on their tribal lands. This bill would foreclose efforts of our neighbors to bring bison back to their lands, and restore dignity and cultural bonds that strengthen their communities.

Let's put the issue of bison in perspective: 1) bison grazed this continent long before Montana became a state, in an ecologically sustainable way; 2) bison do not pose a greater health or human safety threat than cattle; 3) There are 2.6 million head of cattle in Montana...even a few thousand public bison would occupy less than a tenth of one percent of Montana rangelands, far too small a number to have any impact on the livestock industry. There is room in Montana for both cattle and bison.

Finally, there is another bill, SB212, that accomplishes a moratorium on bison relocation until Montana has a plan. Montana needs a bison plan, and this bill lacks the incentive to get that done. That's a much more thoughtful bill, that doesn't foreclose bison restoration out of hand. Let's look to the future, not to the past. I ask for you vote to "do not pass" on SB144.

Sincerely,



Steve Forrest
Manager, Restoration Science
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