

Vito Quatraro

From: Vito Quatraro [vrg@lpamt.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2011 9:23 AM
To: 'Austin Knudsen'; 'Bill Harris'; 'Charlie Boland'; 'Cleve Loney'; 'Dan Kennedy'; 'Dan Skattum'; 'Douglas Kary'; 'Franke Wilmer'; 'Jean Price'; 'Jesse O'Hara'; 'Kelly Flynn'; 'Ken Peterson'; 'Max Yates'; 'Mike Miller'; 'Mike Phillips'; 'Pat Connell'; 'Robyn Driscoll'; 'Ted Washburn'; 'Virginia Court'
Subject: SB 255 & SB 301

Dear Representatives:

Headwaters Sportsmen's Association opposes both SB 255 and SB 301!

SB 255 would require the FWP Commission to follow new criteria for making decision relating to the opportunity to hunt. This is a very misguided attempt to dictate new procedures for the FWP to follow when they already have a comprehensive recommendation and review process they must go thru before setting seasons and hunting regulations. The process starts at the local level where the field biologists secure the wildlife population data, harvest records, recruitment levels, landowner tolerance, hunter access, etc. and from that data makes recommendations to the FWP regional wildlife manager who, if they approve of the recommendations, forward them to the regional supervisor who then forwards them to FWP headquarters in Helena who reviews the recommendations. Helena can then either approve or modify the recommendations and then they are moved forward to the Commission. The Commission then decides what recommendation they wish to move forward thru the tentative recommendation process which goes out for public comment @ public meetings around the state. After the public comment has been heard then the Commission decides which regulations to approve. This is my understanding of the process as a lay person who has attended many Commission meetings, public hearings and held numerous conversations with local biologists, wildlife managers and regional supervisors. According to the fiscal note on this bill, it will an annual cost to the FWP between \$574,000 and \$899,000. Where is this money going to come from in light of the various reduction in funds available to FWP from previously submitted bills?

While this may be an attempt to control the FWP Commission, in reality what it does is greatly increases the work load for the local field personnel who are already overworked and under paid. For the life of me I cannot understand why anyone would want to be a biologist for the Montana FWP at their current pay and work load. It is no surprise that we are losing great biologists to other states and industries.

SB 301 would place a moratorium on land purchases by the dept. of FWP. Why would we want to limit the FWP in acquiring new lands for the Montana resident to recreate on? Land prices are at 7-10 year lows and provide a great opportunity to buy critical pieces of property at very low prices. Would we be better off to wait until the real estate market improves and pay 30-50% more for the same ground? Before anyone brings up the argument of maintaining FWP lands against weeds, please be aware that weeds exist on as many acres of private land as FWP land and that in most cases, FWP does a better job of controlling noxious weeds than many of the adjacent private property owners. In a state that is 65-70% privately owned (actually this percentage is much higher when you take into account the huge blocks of public land that are virtually inaccessible to the average hunter because private lands border the public and there are no reasonable access points) we need more public land for the resident hunters, anglers and hikers to recreate on. As our population continues to grow, there will be increased demands for recreation by Montana residents!

WE ADAMANTLY OPPOSE SB 255 AND SB 301 AND RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT YOU TABLE THESE BILLS.

Vito R. Quatraro, President
Headwaters Sportsmen's Association, Bozeman
580-1130