



SENATE AGRICULTURE
EXHIBIT NO. 12
DATE 3-17-11
World Wildlife Fund
Northern Great Plains Ecoregion HB318
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March 17, 2011
Senate Agriculture Committee

Re: HB318

Mr Chairman, Members of the Committee:

On Behalf of the 4,500 members of World Wildlife Fund in Montana, we rise in opposition to HB318. Wildlife Management should be a collaboration between local interests and the state wildlife management agency, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Local concerns are important, need to be heard, and meaningfully addressed. But HB318 goes too far. It gives wildlife management, a state function, over to a few local officials to have the final veto authority on when and where wildlife will occur in the state. It turns the fate of Montana's wildlife over to county governments, and that is bad policy. It is, in fact, the kind of fragmented approach to wildlife management that prompted the formation of independent statewide game and fish agencies throughout the United States in the early years of the last century as a response to unchecked local exploitation of wildlife. Now we want to give those same interests the power to keep wildlife out.

Montana's wildlife belongs to all Montanans, and all Montanans deserve a say in how their state's wildlife are managed. HB318 is flatly undemocratic...it gives veto power to a few local players, who can knock out the will of the majority of Montanans. This is not to say that FWP or any government entity should have the right to ride roughshod over the rights and interests of any Montanan...local voices are important and good mechanisms currently exist to ensure that they are heard and that compromise is reached. For example, local landowners must be consulted by regulation as part of proposals to translocate prairie dogs, black-footed ferrets and many other Montana species. That's how we've done wildlife management from the beginning in this state, by working things out together, with the people that are affected, and that's how it will be with bison. But Montanans deserve an equal seat at the table with county governments, and HB318 would prevent that, by placing undue power in the hands of the few local politicians. Please vote "do not pass" on this bill.

Yours,

Steve Forrest
Manager, Restoration Science
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