

**Testimony on SB 301  
February 15, 2011**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Janet Ellis and I am here today representing Montana Audubon, which has approximately 3800 members in 9 chapters around the state.

We oppose SB 301 for the following reasons:

1. The Habitat Montana program was set up to purchase, lease, and acquire conservation easements on critical wildlife habitat. There is no research or biological basis for placing a moratorium on the fee title purchase portion of this program. Acquisition of land is an important tool that needs to be available—freely available.
2. All acquisitions are between willing sellers and FWP.
3. It doesn't make sense to restrict FWP to lease agreements and conservation easements only—when fee title purchases may be the best option for certain landowners.
4. It is important to retain the full range of options for acquiring interests in land. Conservation easements and lease agreements are important tools in the toolbox, but purchasing land in fee title is also an important tool.

We believe that the four year moratorium on fee title purchases will result in lost opportunities. For these reasons, we ask you to oppose SB 301.