

MWF Testimony on SB 348

Madame Chairwoman, members of the Committee,

My name is Ben Lamb, and I am the Conservation Director of state and national issues for the Montana Wildlife Federation. MWF is Montana's oldest and largest hunter/angler conservation organization with approximately 7,500 members, and 23 affiliated Rod and Gun Clubs.

Today we rise in opposition to SB 348.

MWF opposes the attempt to take license dollars to pay for a federal agency. This bill is a tax on sportsmen and sportswomen. The cost is high, at over \$6,000 per wolf, yet does nothing to help our struggling elk and moose herds. Hunters did not ask for the wolf to be brought back to Montana. To force us to pay for the management of the species, especially at such an inflated price, is not only contrary to the Montana Wolf Management Plan, but it adds insult to injury.

Hunters have lost significant opportunity due to the wolf. Coveted areas such as HD 250, the West Fork of the Bitterroot, and HD 310, Upper Gallatin, have seen marked decreases in elk due to wolves, and other issues. This bill seeks to punish hunters by using license dollars to help only one segment of the populations, rather than fully fund important issues such as predator-prey studies necessary to completely manage wolves for both livestock and wild game conflicts.

MWF is greatly sympathetic to the Livestock community and the shared struggle over wolves, but again, forcing one group of people suffering unduly from wolves to pay for another group is inappropriate and extremely divisive on an issue where hunters and livestock producers share a common goal.

Truly, the State of Montana must find a way to fund wolf management for the benefit of all citizens. To MWF, that means that those who benefit the most from wolves, the non-consumptive user, must share the funding necessary for wolf management. We believe that a general fund appropriation to pay for the management of wolves is a more amenable measure to deal with this growing problem.

We ask for you to vote no on SB 348

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Lamb
Montana Wildlife Federation