

EXHIBIT 12
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HB 580

House Bill 580
March 21, 2013
Presented by Jeff Hagener
House Appropriations Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Jeff Hagener, Director of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here today in support of HB 580.

With one of the strongest remaining populations of sage grouse, Montana has a key role to play in ensuring that sage grouse do not become a listed species under the federal Endangered Species Act. I believe that the establishment of an Advisory Council as proposed by Governor Bullock is a wise approach to ensuring that Montana develops a conservation strategy for sage grouse that precludes the need for the species to be listed while also minimizing the impacts on energy development and agricultural activities in the state.

In its determination that sage grouse are warranted or federal listing under the ESA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified the modification and loss of sage brush habitat from energy development and agricultural operations as the primary threat to sage grouse. Keeping sage grouse off of the federal endangered species list is important to all of Montana, not just hunters. For this reason we believe that the state general fund is the appropriate source of funding for this appropriation.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I will be here to answer any questions.