

Testimony House Bill 33 - Oppose
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I am here representing Defenders of Wildlife and our more than 4,000 members and supporters in Montana. Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns. We oppose House Bill 33 for the following reasons:

- House Bill 33 would require Fish, Wildlife & Parks staff to locate and lethally remove every mountain lion, black bear, grizzly bear, or wolf that is involved in a depredation incident with livestock, including chickens and pets.
- HB 33 requires an intensive response to every "incident" involving a large predator, including those involving "other circumstances" without defining "incident" or "other circumstances". For each incident, FWP staff would have to report on the incident, identify the animal involved, find it, capture it, tag it, and relocate it. This process would be incredibly time-consuming, costly, and difficult, and could be required for even the most minor "incidents" or "other circumstances".
- HB 33 also requires killing all large predators involved in incidents that were deemed an "immediate threat" to human safety, without defining what an immediate threat is.
- Grizzly bears are currently listed under the ESA and would receive appropriate protections until the time that they are delisted. However, the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem and The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem grizzly bear populations appear close to delisting. One criterion for listing a species under the ESA is that there are inadequate regulatory mechanisms for ensuring the continued conservation of the species. This bill, with its potential to increase unnecessary lethal removal of grizzly bears post-delisting, without situational consideration, could be considered an inadequate regulatory mechanism.
- Killing as many grizzly bears and other predators as this bill would require would impact all predator populations and effectively derail grizzly bear recovery. This expected rise in lethal management removals could prove unsustainable for a recovering grizzly population
- Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks would no longer have the authority to scientifically assess conflict situations and make sound management decisions. In regards to grizzly bears, this basically takes Montana's managing authority away before they even receive it. Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks already has ample authority to respond to threats from wildlife to people and livestock, and address any "other circumstances" that may come up. Many predators that depredate on livestock are already lethally removed by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and Wildlife Services. For example, 1995-2012, 885 wolves were killed in Montana in response to livestock depredation.
- This bill shifts the burden for dealing with wildlife on the Montana taxpayer, and eliminates responsibility for living with wildlife on the part of landowners and livestock producers. State and federal agencies and conservation groups can and do assist landowners and livestock

producers with nonlethal methods allowing for coexistence with wildlife but ultimately individuals are responsible for good stewardship of the land and that includes living with the wildlife species that also reside here.

- This bill is a costly overreaction. There are often more efficient and effective strategies for reducing conflicts with wildlife than identifying the individual animal involved, locating it, and killing it. Non-lethal deterrents are increasingly proven to be effective and efficient. For bears, electric fencing is an extremely effective deterrent that can stop conflicts at the source. Tools such as these can allow for coexistence of bears and people without the need for lethal removal.

A recent article on KRTV in regards to a Big Sky man who was cited for feeding bears made an appropriate statement.

Bear specialist Kevin Frey adds that habituating bears threatens their longevity, pointing out that bears that routinely have interaction with humans often have to be euthanized, and it's almost never a bear's fault.

<http://www.krtv.com/news/big-sky-man-fined-for-feeding-bears/>