

House - Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee
Chrm, Welborn and Comm. Members

HB 298

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I rise in support of HD 298

This bill is a result of mismanagement in FWP and some bogus deals that were precipitated by political strong arming.

Two examples are the Aageson Ranch Deal in Northern Montana and the Circle R Ranch purchase near Pompey's Pillar.
Make no mistake, the Aageson Purchase was a political patronage scheme.

The Brd of Regents got caught up in it to appease Gov Schweitzer.
The Regents voted to allow for \$2 million to be used for the purchase of the Archeological & Paleontology Assets.

That 2 million was appropriated in the last session for Research in the University.

If the Brd of Regents and the Commissioner of Higher Education have this kind money to throw at a bogus deal like this, then I would suggest the Legislature should seriously scrutinize the University Budget.

Sadly, FWP doesn't have the funds to manage either property.
The actions of the Fish & Game Commission has caused well over 100,000 acres of Private Land in Northern Montana to be closed to hunting.
There is much more to this saga that the committee should look at if interested if it is truly interested changing the way FWP does business in the state.

The Circle R Ranch was another bogus purchase that has inflicted harm on neighbors. Gov Schweitzer and FWP made promises that were never kept, Thus creating some bad relations in that area.

The Board of Regents did not consider the ramifications of using Funds that were dedicated for Research, but succumbed to political pressure.

The Brd needs to be admonished for a bad decision that could have negatively impacted future funding of the University System.

The Legislature needs to be resolute in how the University System allocates its funding.

The Fish & Game Commission responded to political pressure rather than considering the merits of the Aageson Ranch purchase, therefore Gov Bullock should be encouraged to appoint some new members to the Commission.

Having said that, let's consider ways to address these issues. I'm an optimist, I'm confident that if good minds come together Montana will be better for it.

I would like to suggest a way forward that, in my opinion, would help to create a better relationship between Mt Government, Private Land Owners, Sportsmen and Montanan's in general.

Steve Bullock is now Governor, someone that I believe we can work with. He has expressed a desire to be a governor of all Montanan's.

Jeff Hagener, is the new Dir of FWP. Jeff is a reasonable type of guy, with a vast amount of experience.

We need to engage Gov Bullock and Mr Hagener in a respectful and proactive dialogue.

I'm confident that many of the issues that have arisen can be resolved. HB 298, is a first step. I'm asking the committee to give it a Do Pass
Thank You