

House Bill 324
February 5, 2013
Presented by Ken McDonald
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Ken McDonald, Wildlife Division Administrator of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP). With amendments proposed by the sponsor, FWP has not taken a position on this bill, so I am here to provide information and answer any questions regarding House Bill 324.

Current Montana law does not allow nonresident trapping of statutorily designated furbearers (beaver, otter, muskrat, mink, marten, fisher, wolverine, bobcat, swift fox, and lynx). This bill would allow trapping of furbearers by nonresidents whose state allows those species to be trapped by Montana residents. It would also allow hunting of bobcats, but not with hounds. Nonresidents can currently purchase a license to trap nongame (badger, raccoon, and red fox) and predatory animals (coyote, weasel, and skunk).

We have worked with Rep. Warburton on amendments to make sure the bill provides adequate authority to the FWP Commission to regulate nonresident trappers, including quotas, methods, season dates, and locations where nonresident trapping can occur.

The amended bill will also require reciprocal provisions for nonresident licenses AND species. In a look at surrounding states, Idaho, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota all allow reciprocal nonresident trapping; Washington allows nonresident trapping but doesn't require a reciprocal provision. Idaho and Wyoming only allow reciprocal species (a nonresident is only allowed to trap those species that the resident state allows nonresidents to trap). The amended bill will include similar language as ID and WY. If a Montana trapper can't trap a specific species in a surrounding state, then residents of that state wouldn't be able to trap that species in Montana. For example, North Dakota doesn't allow nonresident trappers to take bobcats. So if this bill passes as amended, North Dakotans would be able to purchase a nonresident trapping license in Montana, but not trap bobcats. Similarly, no other state allows trapping of fisher, so no nonresidents would be allowed to trap fisher in Montana.

Bobcats are the primary issue here, as a bobcat pelt is selling for \$700 - \$1,000 per pelt. Bobcats in Montana are managed on a regional quota system, with the season ending in a region once the quota is met. The total statewide quota is 1,970 bobcats.

<u>Region</u>	<u>Quota</u>
R1	250
R2	180
R3	250
R4	300
R5	300
R6	90
R7	600

We expect that if this bill passes as amended, those quotas may be reached faster. For example, this year the quota was met in 23 days in FWP Region 1, in 27 days in R2, and in 26 days in R3, within the established 75 day season which opens on December 1.

I will be available to answer any questions.