EXHIBIT 5
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HB Montana State Library

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Plum Creek

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To: Chairman Hollandsworth and Members of the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee for Education

Plum Creek would like to submit this letter in support of the Montana Natural Resources Information System (NRIS) and the Montana Natural Heritage Program (NHP).

The Montana NRIS and NHP provide a valuable repository of a wide variety of natural resource information routinely used by Plum Creek. The NHP is a great partner in the environmental stewardship of public and private lands in Montana, providing science-based information on the distribution of Montana's plants, animals and aquatic and terrestrial communities.

An example of how Plum Creek uses the NHP is in our implementation of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). SFI is the largest forest environmental certification program in North America, enrolling over 180 million acres. Mandatory performance measures within SFI require the use of regional databases on plant and animal distribution in resource management planning. NHP fits this requirement perfectly, providing not only site specific locations of endangered and threatened species, but also map-based information that can be used to display and evaluate landscape scale implications of forest management programs. NHP provides this information in a non-regulatory environment and allows Plum Creek the opportunity to access and improve these data as we obtain more precise information on our lands.

In summary, the NHP and NRIS provide valuable services to Montana citizens, business and landowners. In particular, the information compiled and distributed by the NHP positively informs the management of Montana's fish, wildlife and plant community resources. Plum Creek supports the continued funding of NHP and NRIS to improve Montana's biological resource information.

Tom Ray