

SENATE FISH AND GAME
EXHIBIT NO. 3
DATE 4-11-13
BILL NO. HB 404

House Bill 404
April 11, 2013
Presented by Paul Sihler
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Paul Sihler, Field Services Division Administrator of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. I am here today on behalf of the Director to provide informational testimony on HB 404.

I recognize and understand that some legislators and members of the public have concerns about FWP's Habitat Montana program generally, and Department land acquisitions specifically. Director Hagener is committed to addressing these issues, and over the next year the Department will be developing a plan for how to meet its operations and maintenance needs on Department-owned land, re-assessing our habitat program objectives, and placing greater emphasis on the use conservation easements to conserve important habitat and provide hunting access. We also want to maintain the ability within Habitat Montana to acquire some key properties in fee title, although we expect this to be a less frequently used option.

HB 404 is a response to current concerns about Habitat Montana. It also provides a temporary funding source to help the Department address a shortfall in funding for block management.

I'd like to thank Representative Flynn for his leadership on this issue, and thank the committee for the opportunity to appear before you today.