

TESTIMONY OF JIM BROWN
Public Relations Director
Montana Wool Growers Association
In support of HB 145 (Rep. Cuffe)

January 20, 2015

- Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee.
- My name is Jim Brown.
- I appear today on behalf of the membership of the Montana Wool Growers Association.
- The membership of the Wool Growers Association strongly supports this legislation, and considers the bill to be one of the Association's top legislative priorities during 2015.
- Simply stated, this bill is good public policy.
- It is forward thinking policy in that it gets Montana out ahead of grizzly bear delisting.
- The bill, if passed, will help implement Montana's grizzly bear management plans.
- In those management plans, the State recognizes that livestock producers provide critical habitat for grizzly bears.
- In those management plans, the State recognizes that livestock producers can and do suffer depredations of livestock from the increasing presence of grizzly bears on Montana's landscape
- This is borne out by the statistics that show that grizzly bears have killed a documented 40 head of livestock since October 1, 2013, which has caused the State to pay out \$61,156.22 in damages.
- In those grizzly bear management plans, the State recognizes that how those livestock-bear conflicts are managed are critical to both the delisting of the animal and to the success of the Montana's grizzly bear management efforts.
- In those management plans, the State recognizes that the federal Wildlife Services is the lead agency designated to deal with livestock depredation and is the agency that handles livestock conflicts.
- In those management plans, the State recognizes that working with Wildlife Services is critical to the implementation of successful preventive programs aimed at minimizing livestock-grizzly conflicts.
- In those management plans, the State calls for establishing proactive collaborative working agreements with Wildlife Services and landowners to prevent conflicts.
- And, in those management plans, the State calls for developing proactive problem solving programs in order to build public support for increasing grizzly bear numbers and population distribution.

- These programs could include management efforts aimed at eliminating bear attractants, better sanitation measures, building fencing for apiaries, and grizzly bear relocation.
- All these programs require funding to be carried out.
- The grizzly bear is the public's animal, and the public's charge.
- Therefore, it makes sense to take the management funding responsibility off of agriculture and hunters who currently pay for wildlife management, and onto the public at large – given that, presumptively, all Montanans enjoy and benefit from wildlife.
- The present bill, HB 145, addresses head on each and every one of the points I have just raised.
- Thus, the bill is smart public policy.
- It is proactive legislation at a time when the state needs to be proactive in terms of grizzly bear management.
- This is must pass legislation.
- With the Chair's permission, I would like to pass around handouts that support my testimony today, as well as a copy of my remarks.
- Thank you Mr. Chairman.
- The MWGA recommends a 'do-pass' on this bill.