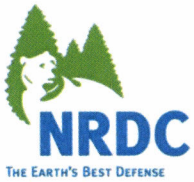
EXHIBIT # 11
DATE 01/20/2015
HB 145



January 20, 2015

Montana House of Representatives
Agriculture Committee

Re: House Bill 145 – SUPPORT

Dear Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and our more than 6,000 members and online activists who live in Montana, we write to express our **support** for House Bill 145 ("HB 145"), sponsored by Representative Mike Cuffe.

While NRDC does not support every aspect of HB 145—specifically, the fact that some of the bill's funds may be used to subsidize the lethal control of predators—we nonetheless support HB 145 because it would establish a much-needed, continuous source of funding to help Montana livestock producers pay for nonlethal, preventive measures to reduce conflicts with large carnivores such as wolves and grizzly bears. In the past, most of the funding for these efforts has come from federal and private sources, with no guarantee of their continued availability. This bill would create a stable and significant source of revenue that would encourage and address the rising interest from producers across the state in purchasing and using proactive deterrent measures.

A growing body of science and anecdotal evidence indicates that such measures can be effective in a wide range of landscapes and conflict situations. At a recent workshop held by Montana Wildlife Services in Dillon, Montana, several ranchers, biologists, and state and federal agency officials presented the positive results they had experienced using nonlethal strategies such as fladry, electric fencing, livestock carcass removal, guard dogs, and range riders to deter coyotes, bears, wolves, mountain lions and other predator species.

In light of these favorable results, several ranching communities in Montana are now conducting programs to implement proactive methods to mitigate conflicts with wildlife. These include communities in the Blackfoot River Valley, Big Hole River Valley, Tom Miner Basin, and Centennial Valley.

We are hopeful that these efforts would benefit from, and be able to expand as a result of, the availability of additional funding for nonlethal measures.

In sum, HB 145would create new opportunities to benefit both livestock owners and wildlife in Montana. We urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Zack Strong
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