

Testimony supporting **SB 176**: designating the Scobey Series, as Montana's Official State Soil and a New State Symbol. Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee at the State Capital Building, Helena, February 3, 2015. 2/3/15

Thank You to Senator Brown and to the Committee for listening to us today. SB 176

I am Mike Choriki from Billings MT. I am a crop consultant and I work with farmers and ranchers in 34 counties across the state. My father Ray, who passed away last fall, spent his life finding ways to diversify crop rotations to reach higher yields and to improve soil health by using cutting edge technology. I've been a student of soils since I was 10 years old and soil is my passion. If you like to eat food, wear clothes and live in a house, then you should be passionate as well.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations projects that the world population will exceed 9 billion people by the year 2050. They also estimate that food production must increase by 70% to meet the demand. These numbers are reasons why 2015 was declared as the "International Year of Soil". The leaders of the UN want the world to recognize the importance of the soil that we depend on to feed the people. A quote from the Resolution notes "that soils constitute the foundation for agricultural development, essential ecosystem functions and food security and hence are key to sustaining life on Earth" (1)

In Montana, our limiting factor to production is water, not soil. We've been asked to double our food, feed and meat production over the next 35 years. We will have to push the land to the limits of production by using the tools of science, knowledge, technology and by creating new tools.

The UN dedicated a year and declared a world soil day to spread the message that soil is essential to our existence. We need to spread the message right here at home by designating the Scobey Series as our state soil and making it a state symbol. This will open the doors to outreach and education to bridge the gap between our cities and our country neighbors. Unfortunately we do not see soil when we drive down the highway. But we all enjoy seeing the trees, grass, animals and crops that it supports. Most of our current state symbols depend on soil to survive.

We take our soil for granted but we cannot live without it. Our soil is the most valuable natural resource we have in Montana and it is the least recognized. If you like to eat food, wear clothes and live in a house, then now I hope you share my passion for soil.

Michael Choriki, Certified Crop Advisor B&C Ag Consultants, mdchoriki@aol.com 406-672-2675
(1) United Nations General Assembly 68th Session, Agenda Item 25. A/RES/68/232, paragraph 2