

House Bill 2  
Monday, March 30, 2015  
Presented by Sue Daly  
Senate Finance and Claims Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Sue Daly, Chief of Administration for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). I am here today to provide information for House Bill 2 on behalf of the Director who is in Denver with his counterparts from Wyoming and Idaho pushing the US Fish and Wildlife Service to get on with delisting of grizzly bears.

Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) appreciates the review and discussion by the Chairman Glimm and the Natural Resource and Transportation subcommittee on our budget, and in particular to Barb Smith for her efforts in reconciling the amounts.

The FWP budget is almost entirely dependent on hunting and fishing license revenues, Parks license plate revenues, user fees, and various federal program dollars. The only general fund we receive is for the Aquatic Invasive Species program. Because of the nature of our funding sources we operate essentially on a fixed income unless a legislative fee increase is approved. All costs such as inflation, gasoline, pay increases, health insurance, and new legislatively directed programs must be absorbed within the existing revenue stream. We are at the point with our fish and wildlife programs that we can no longer fund existing programs with the existing revenues that resulted from a fee increase in 2005.

Prior to the 2015 session, we reduced our general license spending by 1.4 million dollars per year and requested the subcommittee to remove those costs going forward into the next biennium, which they approved. Additionally, we are supporting HB 140, which will provide additional revenue to allow us to maintain existing programs for the next two biennia.

FWP is requesting that you consider four amendments to HB 2 as it now exists that were part of the Executive's original request:

- 1) **Funding of \$253,010 annually for wolf management to bring us in compliance with MCA 87-1-625**, which requires the agency to allocate \$900,000 annually to wolf management. The federal dollars we had been receiving for wolf management have been reduced, requiring us to seek authority for additional earmarked wolf license dollars to meet the \$900,000 statutory requirement.
- 2) **Funding of \$35,000 annually to hire two seasonal bison technicians to deal with bison issues near Yellowstone National Park during winter migration**. The technicians would be responsible for responding to public safety and property damage complaints by landowners and assist in the hazing of bison as necessary.
- 3) **Increased funding for enforcement operations to compensate for increased operating costs**. We are experiencing a high rate of turnover within the warden ranks (currently 14 vacancies) and the cost of training new wardens is approximately \$7,500

per trainee. Additionally, the costs of the contract we have with the Department of Justice to man the dispatch system have increased.

- 4) **Remove the OTO labeling from the base portion of the Hunter Access Enhancement Program (HAEP).** The subcommittee approved our request to add an additional \$600,000 to the HAEP. However, the subcommittee also OTO'ed, restricted and added language to the entire program (new money and the base). FWP is OK with the OTO, restriction and language on the new money. The restriction and language on the base program is also acceptable. The OTO on the base serves to remove this highly popular, 20 + year old program from the base and sends a message that this program may be destined for the short term. Additionally, in 2017 we will be uncertain of authority to continue the program and sign up cooperators for that fall, as those sign ups normally occur between March and June.

Thank you for your consideration of our budget requests and I will be available for questions.