

January 29, 2015

Montana Senate  
Fish and Game Committee

**Re: Senate Bill 189 - SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Brenden and Members of the Senate Fish and Game Committee:

We write to express our support for Senate Bill 189 ("S.B.189"), which would enable Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks ("FWP") to spend wolf management account funds on a wide range of management issues, including public education. Public education is a critically important component of wolf management that could help reduce conflicts between wolves and livestock producers, and ensure that wolves are managed using the best available science.

Collectively our organizations represent more than 20,000 members and activists in Montana who value sharing this landscape with our native carnivores. Education programs benefit all Montanans by improving fact and science based awareness of wolf management. This is a particular need in regards to wolves where widespread misinformation remains prevalent. Adequate funding for education programs could help reduce conflicts between livestock producers and wolves by allowing FWP to proactively approach producers with a suite of tools and provide education on how producers can seek mitigation should depredations occur. These tools help build and maintain support for wolves in Montana while reducing the overall cost of management.

1. This bill would provide funding for educational efforts that could include preventive measures for wolf-livestock conflicts such as fencing, fladry, night penning, livestock herders, riders, and livestock guardian animals. These are the tools that have made the Blackfoot Challenge so successful in reducing carnivore conflicts on private lands by 96% in the past 15 years. If the funding is spent on education on nonlethal measures it will help reduce conflicts elsewhere in Montana.
2. Education on the ecology and biology of wolves on the landscape and FWP's decision making process for the management of wolves can potentially reduce conflicts between hunters, trappers, wildlife watchers, and other recreationists.
3. Investment in education will allow FWP to fully implement the approved Citizen-Stakeholder Wolf Management Plan and maintain and improve FWP's management of wolves. This bill would also provide funding for education programs for young Montanans.

This bill will benefit wildlife enthusiasts, hunters and livestock producers by providing funding that could help reduce conflicts here in Montana. Including education in the \$900,000 wolf management fund will give FWP the tools to minimize wolf conflicts and manage wolves based on the best available science. We ask for your support of S.B.189 and expanding the use of wolf management funding to include education.

Sincerely,

Nathan Varley, President  
Bear Creek Council

Shana Dunkley, Wildlife Program Associate  
Greater Yellowstone Coalition

Zack Strong, Wildlife Advocate  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Marc Cooke, President  
Wolves of the Rockies

Claudia Narcisco, Committee Chair  
Montana Chapter Sierra Club

Derek Goldman, Representative  
Endangered Species Coalition

Erin Edge, Rockies and Plains Representative  
Defenders of Wildlife