

# Montana Sportsmen ALLIANCE

Voice of Reason on Montana Fish and Wildlife Issues

TO THE SENATE FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS COMMITTEE:

**RE: SB 309-An Act Revising he unlocking State Lands Program to include Specific Federal Lands**

**POSITION:** Montana Sportsmen's Alliance hereby goes on record in **SUPPORT of SB 309** based on the following reasons:

- This is a common sense bill that has the potential to increase the number of landowners applying and receiving a State Income Tax Credit due to the addition of public federal lands as qualifying for the program.
- This could potentially open up access to more public land for hunters, fishermen and recreationists.
- Federally owned "public" lands in Montana constitute a large percentage of our recreational lands. There is a significant amount of Federal public land that is currently not reasonably accessible. This bill could possibly open up some of those lands while at the same time providing a financial incentive for the landowner.

Once again we would like to state our **SUPPORT** for SB 309.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Montana Sportsmen Alliance Leadership Group

[www.montanasportsmenalliance.com](http://www.montanasportsmenalliance.com)

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Senate Bill 309  
February 17, 2015  
Presented by Paul Sihler  
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the record my name is Paul Sihler and I am the Chief of Operations for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). I stand in support of SB 309.

SB 309 would expand the scope of the current Unlocking State Lands program to add federal lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. This program is jointly administered by FWP and the Department of Revenue. Under the current program, landowners who provide access across their private land to state land are eligible for a \$500 state tax credit for each qualified access, up to a maximum of a \$2,000 credit annually. To date, two landowners have enrolled a total of four parcels in the program.

The changes proposed by Senator Hinkle in HB 309 are a logical extension of the existing program, and create the opportunity for additional access to public land.

If you have questions about how the program is administered, Alan Charles, the manager of the program, is with me today.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and FWP requests a "Do Pass" on SB 309.

Senate Bill 295  
February 17, 2015  
Presented by Mike Korn  
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Mike Korn, Deputy Chief of Law Enforcement for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). I am here today on behalf of the Director in opposition to Senate Bill 295.

For at the least the last two legislative sessions, FWP has appeared in opposition to this bill or ones just like it. Our opposition is not based on the simple use of suppressors. Our own agency, in fact, utilizes suppressed .22 caliber rifles in the course of handling urban wildlife issues in cities and towns in Montana. Suppressors on these rifles using sub-sonic ammunition are an effective means of dispatching both injured and problem deer, while minimizing disruption in an urban setting.

Neither does our opposition stem from the potential for the illegal use of these accessories. We have had a handful of cases where suppressors were used for poaching or other illegal activities. In most of those cases, the suppressors themselves were illegal, not having paid the requisite tax through the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Suppressors do reduce rifle report, which for both landowners and wardens has been a way to determine that someone is hunting in a particular area.

We oppose this bill on the basis of need and also on the fact that it will be used to tarnish those who hunt big game in the state. The issue is perception- and like it or not, suppressors- or silencers- have a lot of very bad baggage. That baggage is not going to be shed by the legalization of them for big game hunting in Montana. Non-hunters and many hunters believe that suppressors are the domain of those who have something to hide, and they are not interested in perpetuating that notion.

Suppressors are legal at this time in Montana, for general shooting and for the shooting of non-game animals and predators such as coyotes, prairie dogs and gophers. However, in these situations, the shooter is often subjected to the repeated report of a rifle or pistol.

We face numerous new technological advances that pose to radically alter the face of big game hunting. FWP believes that allowing suppressors for big game hunting will contribute to these concerns, and will only serve to fuel the fires of those who wish to radically alter, if not eliminate hunting. We urge a Do Not Pass on SB 295. We will be available for questions.

## HB 212 Executive Action notes for 2/17/15

The word HARVEST is used:

41 times in the 16 pages of the MFW&P Wolf regulations,

51 times in the 16 pages of the Furbearer regulations,

43 times in the 94 pages of fishing regulations.

17 times in 120 pages of the Deer, Elk, & Antelope regs.

The wolf and furbearer regulations are the only MFW&P regulations that deal with take by means of trapping.

It seems obvious that the word harvest in our Montana Constitution includes to "take by means of angling, hunting, and trapping".