



Diving Dog Vineyard
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Thank you for taking the time to hear our concerns about the future of small agriculture in MT. I am not a lawyer or paid lobbyist. To say that appearing here is not in my comfort zone is an understatement, plus it is a pretty long morning drive from Polson to get to Helena so please excuse my lack of polished presentation. I am here to represent my husband and myself and an expanding group of concerned small orchard and vineyard owners/operators. (I drew the short straw). I was told I have 15 minutes so I am going to talk fast.

My name is Deb Carstensen a co-owner of Diving Dog Vineyard. I am a fourth generation Montanan. I come from a blue collar working class family and it is has always been my dream to live on the shores

of Flathead Lake. 20 years ago my husband and I saved a ramshackle lake place two steps ahead of the wrecking ball and have been slowly making improvements to our property ourselves ever since. In 2013 we purchased the lot adjacent to our property for the purpose of creating a retirement produce business. A key component of our business plan was to obtain Agricultural Tax Classification of our properties to free funds required to invest in, build and maintain that business. We sought recommendations from local orchardists, grape growers and representatives from the Lake and Flathead County DOR.

We had originally considered planting a cherry orchard, however, after researching viable crops found late producing cherry varieties being introduced in Oregon and Washington could ultimately hurt our local market. Therefore, we looked at ways to diversify production to generate a higher level of reliable, qualifying income.

Our research led us to an option of growing cold-resistant hybrid wine grapes. We found a ready and motivated market for Montana-grown grapes.

