

April 3, 2023

MT Senate President Jason Ellsworth
State Capitol
1301 E. Sixth Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

RE: Sportsman & Outfitter Support for SB 442, as currently amended

Dear Senator Ellsworth:

Senate Bill 442 from Senator Mike Lang (R-Malta) was amended in Senate Finance and Claims on March 30th to restore funding for Montana's premier conservation program, Habitat Montana, as well as expand the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program as founded by former Representative Kelly Flynn. The amendment also supports the HEART fund, which helps people and communities deal with drug addiction issues, provides increased benefits for veterans and their spouses, increases funding for criminal justice programs and provides a new, stable source of funding for county roads.

This bill as currently amended is worthy of broad support and should be recognized as an important bipartisan compromise. SB 442 brings Montanans together to keep our communities whole, improves the condition of the land, protects our hunting and fishing opportunities for future generations and offers support and recognition to the heroes and their spouses who served America in the armed services.

This is a once in a generation bill that meets the needs of many Montanans. Senator Lang's leadership on this has been heroic and stalwart. We deeply appreciate his willingness to work with all sides to arrive at a legislative fix that invests in rural Montana and the people who call it home.

For our own purposes, the restoration of the Habitat Montana funding through a new Habitat Legacy Account is both innovative and critical for Montana's hunting and angling traditions. It shows that hunting organizations are just as invested in the ongoing maintenance, stewardship, and restoration of private and public lands as we are invested in creating new opportunities to hunt and fish. SB 442 provides a new funding tool to improve landowner tolerance of wildlife and help landowners respond to the challenges of prolonged drought, invasive weeds and other environmental changes.

We believe SB 442 is an opportunity for hunters and rural landowners to collectively improve our land stewardship and showcase Montana's strong land ethic. It protects funding for traditional habitat tools and establishes new tools to improve the condition of the land, improve the distribution of wildlife across public land, reduce conflicts between wildlife and livestock and help ensure better outcomes for hunters, anglers and landowners.

We respectfully request that you expeditiously pass SB 442, as currently amended.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society
Anaconda Sportsmen
Archery Trade Association
Boone and Crockett Club

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Ducks Unlimited
Fishing Outfitters Association of Montana
Flathead Wildlife Inc.
Gallatin Wildlife Association
Hellgate Hunters and Anglers
Laurel Rod and Gun Club
Montana Artemis Alliance
Montana Bowhunters Association
Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Montana Chapter of National Wild Turkey Federation
Montana Outfitters and Guides Association
Montana Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife
Montana Trout Unlimited
Montana Union Sportsmen Alliance
Montana Wildlife Federation
Montana Wild Sheep Foundation
Mule Deer Foundation
National Deer Association
National Wildlife Federation
Pheasants Forever
Quail Forever
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society
Skyline Sportsmen's Association
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Traditional Bowhunters of Montana
Wild Sheep Foundation