



Protecting Montana's wildlife,  
land, waters and hunting & fishing  
heritage for future generations.

June 12, 2018

The Honorable Steve Daines  
US Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Daines,

The Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) represents thousands of Montana hunters, anglers, wildlife watchers, and other conservationists. Since 1936, MWF has led efforts to protect Montana's abundant fish and wildlife, our natural lands and waters, and public access for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation.

As you know, the Farm Bill supports many of the federal government's most significant conservation programs targeted at private land habitat, water quality, soil conservation, and public access. Farm Bill programs provides essential habitat for Montana's waterfowl, upland birds, whitetail deer, and countless other species, as well as supporting access for hunters, anglers, and other recreational users. All Montanans - the family farmer, the rural motel owner, the deer hunter, and the city birdwatcher - benefit from a strong Farm Bill.

MWF appreciates your work to support strong conservation measures in the draft 2018 Farm Bill currently under consideration in the Senate Agriculture Committee. We are pleased that this bill maintains funding within the Conservation Title, in contrast to the House bill. We are especially pleased to see an increase in the Conservation Reserve Program, with the addition for a permanent easement option. The Agriculture Committee's focus on private land conservation and programs that have been proven effective will have considerably benefit for farmers and ranchers, fish and wildlife, and hunters and anglers.

We thank you for your leadership on amendments to improve the core private land conservation programs in the Farm Bill. Increasing the minimum amount of funding within the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for wildlife habitat on working lands from 5% to 10% would result in tens if not hundreds of millions of additional funding going directly towards creating wildlife habitat. We also appreciate your efforts to increase funding for the Voluntary Public Access - Habitat Incentives Program, which incentivizes habitat restoration and public access for hunting and fishing. In addition, we encourage you to support the expansion the Sodsaver provision (which already applies to Montana) nationally, which will save money while removing incentives to convert native grasslands to cropland.

As the Agriculture Committee moves forward with a Farm Bill that contains strong conservation programs, we hope that you will refrain from controversial amendments concerning national forest management. The Montana Wildlife Federation supports changes to national forest management in order to improve forest condition and reduce the wildfire risk, such as your Litigation Relief for Forest Management Projects Act (S. 605) that was largely adopted in the

2018 Omnibus Appropriations Act. However, we are concerned about the prospect of the Farm Bill being used to advance other national forest management reforms that have not been thoroughly discussed with stakeholders, such as proposals to dramatically streamline environmental review, expand exclusions from the National Environmental Policy Act, or other dramatic changes. The Farm Bill's private land conservation programs are too important to be drawn into a political fight over the management of national forests absent a transparent process to determine how those lands are managed.

The Farm Bill, with its bipartisan support, represents an opportunity for this Congress to help Montana's farmers, prairie landscapes, wildlife, outdoor heritage, and local economies. We hope you will work together across the aisle to develop a Senate Farm Bill focused on core conservation programs. This will ensure working farms and ranches, abundant fish and game, and hunting opportunity for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Chadwick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Chadwick  
Executive Director  
Montana Wildlife Federation