



*Protecting  
Montana's  
wildlife, land,  
waters, hunting  
and fishing  
heritage since  
1936*

July 25, 2011

The Honorable Denny Rehberg  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2448 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Rehberg:

As representatives of Montana's hunting and fishing community we collectively wish to express our extreme disappointment in your support for the 2012 Interior Appropriations Bill, which takes Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding to its lowest level since it was created in the 1960s. The Bill's proposed \$61 Million budget is an 80% cut over last year's already small budget, the funding levels in this bill would eliminate funding for both the Tenderfoot Creek and Stimson Forestlands Projects in Montana. Both of these projects are critical for maintaining traditional access to our hunting grounds and in ensuring that elk have room to roam in Central and Western Montana. Simply put, eliminating this funding is a major setback for Montana's hunters and anglers.

The Tenderfoot Creek project is critical in maintaining access to elk herds that are both becoming off limits due to closed private lands surrounding them, and to help conserve critical habitat to ensure the future viability of that elk herd.

The Stimson Forestlands project in the Kootenai River Valley near Troy have been the traditional haunts of hunters and anglers since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The bond of shared access between the timber companies and hunters and anglers helped feed families in the winter. Loss of access to these lands by

disallowing funding directly reduces the amount of land accessible to hunters. In a time of declining hunter numbers directly related to declining acres available for hunting, it makes no sense to vote against increased access for hunter opportunities. This vote will negatively impact the economic viability of rural communities that rely on hunting revenues in lean months.

The LWCF is the main federal program for conserving working lands, protecting wildlife habitats and providing Montana's roughly 250,000 hunters and anglers' access to high quality hunting lands and fishing waters. As you know, LWCF dollars do not come from our tax dollars. They come from a small percentage of royalties paid by oil companies for off-shore oil and gas leases, a common sense funding source for investing in sportsmen access and wildlife habitat. In fact, what this means is increased domestic production of our offshore oil and gas resources in a responsible manner helps increase hunter and angler access throughout the United States, which in turn increases revenues to small communities like Choteau, Troy, Townsend and Malta.

We are greatly concerned about your support for the drastic cuts to LWCF as proposed in the FY2012 Interior appropriations Bill, as they eliminate critical funding for both the Tenderfoot Creek and Stimson Forestlands projects. We further urge you to work proactively with House leadership through the rest of the appropriations process to defend and restore this critical program and to preserve Montana's hunting and fishing traditions.

Respectfully,

Lorry Thomas  
President, Anaconda Sportsman Association (Anaconda, MT)

Irv Wilke  
President, Billings Rod and Gun Club (Billings, MT)

Chuck Hunt  
President, Flathead Wildlife Inc. (Kalispell, MT)

Vito Quatraro  
President, Headwaters Sportsman Association (Bozeman, MT)

Stan Frasier  
President, Helena Hunters and Anglers Association (Helena, MT)

Land Tawney  
President, Hellgate Hunters and Anglers (Missoula, MT)

Herb Stoick  
President, Laurel Rod and Gun Club (Laurel, MT)

Don Clark  
President, Libby Rod and Gun Club (Libby, MT)

Greg Munther  
President, Montana Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (Missoula, MT)

Jason Tounsley  
President, Montana Bow Hunters Association (Billings, MT)

Tim Aldrich  
President, Montana Wildlife Federation (Helena, MT)

Hayes Goosey  
President, Park County Rod and Gun Club (Livingston, MT)

John Gibson  
President, Public Land and Water Access Association (Billings, MT)

Tony Jones  
President, Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association (Hamilton, MT)

George Golie  
President, Russell Country Sportsman Association (Great Falls, MT)

Les Castren  
President, Skyline Sportsman Association (Butte, MT)