

MINUTES

MONTANA SENATE
51st LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON FISH AND GAME

Call to Order: By Chairman Severson, on April 6, 1989, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 402 at the State Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Sen. Elmer Severson, Sen. John Anderson, Jr., Sen. Judy Jacobson, Sen. Al Bishop, Sen. Paul Rapp-Svrcek, Sen. Loren Jenkins, Sen. Bill Yellowtail.

Members Excused: None

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Andrea Merrill, Legislative Council

Announcements/Discussion: None

HEARING ON HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 32

Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor: Sen. Rapp-Svrcek stated he is a substitute sponsor for this resolution. The problems we have had with the bison and the elk in the park system speak to the problem.

List of Testifying Proponents and What Group they Represent:

Ron Marcoux, Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Jerry Jack, Montana Stockgrowers
David McClure, Montana Farm Bureau

List of Testifying Opponents and What Group They Represent:

None

Testimony:

Ron Marcoux left his testimony. See Exhibit #1.

Dave McClure stated that as a farm organization, they are concerned that we certify Montana as a brucellosis free state. We do feel there needs to be long-term solutions.

- Questions From Committee Members: Sen. Bishop asked Mr. Marcoux what the Department determines the incidents of brucellosis is in the bison that have been killed. Mr. Marcoux stated approximately 560 killed and just over 50% had brucellosis.
- Sen. Bishop asked Mr. Marcoux if the elk are tested. Mr. Marcoux stated that they have been testing elk and the incidents with elk is about 5%. We found brucellosis more prevalent adjacent to the park area and in southwest Montana.
- Sen. Rapp-Svrcek asked Dave McClure if brucellosis showed up in Montana cattle. Mr. McClure stated that there is a Wyoming herd adjacent to the Jackson park area that have mingled with park animals.
- Sen. Anderson asked Mr. Marcoux if long-term solutions would require additional winter ranges. Mr. Marcoux stated that three years ago the Department purchased a winter range near Daly Lake. The Forest Service is looking at some land exchanges, and easement potential there would also cause better access for better management.
- Sen. Jenkins asked Mr. Marcoux if there was an intention to maintain this management service. Unless the park service allows for some ability to patrol the animals in the park it will reduce our capability to control numbers.
- Sen. Jenkins asked Mr. Marcoux if there have been some late hunts. Mr. Marcoux stated that the department was concerned about the elk situation and decided to increase our harvest substantially. We harvested 2,300 animals in that late hunt. But we were dealing with a population of 19,000 elk.
- Sen. Jenkins asked Mr. Marcoux if most of the park was surrounded by wilderness area and forest service area. Mr. Marcoux stated that the primary winter range area there is state property.
- Sen. Severson asked Mr. Marcoux about the population of the park buffalo herd. Mr. Marcoux stated that the buffalo herd was about 2,700, that is for the entire park buffalo herd. About 900 buffalo utilize the second range.
- Sen. Severson asked Mr. Marcoux what the MT FWP expects to achieve with the Park Service because that is a "no-management" situation. Mr. Marcoux stated that there are several on-going meetings as a result of this

situation. One meeting is about the brucellosis issue. We are scheduled within the next couple of weeks to start talking about elk and bison as far as mountain patrol and population control.

Sen. Severson mentioned that because of the tremendous fires of last summer there will be grass growth this summer and that will create a tremendous amount of feed. Mr. Marcoux stated that because of the good snowpacks this year there will be a substantial increase in the park.

Sen. Yellowtail asked Jerry Jack if there is any conclusive evidence that supports the long-standing hypothesis that brucellosis is transmitted from bison or elk to domestic livestock. Mr. Jack stated that there was a study done at Texas A & M where bison transmitted brucellosis to domestic cattle.

Sen. Yellowtail asked Mr. Jack if there was evidence relating to a pasture situation. Mr. Jack stated that there are some ranchers in Wyoming who have had this problem and are trying to decipher exactly where it came from. But most of the cattle were in close proximity to elk and bison. At this time the evidence is circumstantial.

Sen. Yellowtail asked Jerry Jack how we can separate domestic livestock from elk and bison on the borders of the park from cattle grazing on multiple use grazing lands or should we vaccinate livestock. Mr. Jack stated that vaccination is the long-term solution.

Sen. Yellowtail asked Valerie Larson of the Farm Bureau if we just shouldn't vaccinate cattle as a standard procedure. The reason that our country first started the movement against brucellosis was because it is transmittable to humans. If you have a cut or bruise and you milk or handle a cow with brucellosis, you are susceptible to undulant fever.

Closing by Sponsor: There was no closing because Rep. Ream did not make it to the meeting.

DISPOSITION OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 32

Discussion: Sen. Yellowtail stated that he believes that the segregation of the animals is impractical and the wrong approach to control brucellosis. For those reasons, brucellosis should not enter this discussion. I think that this issue has been blown out of

proportion and has been used to manipulate the discussion. It was mentioned by Sen. Severson that no vaccination can be 100% effective.

Amendments and Votes: Sen. Yellowtail moved to amend the bill to delete lines 8 and 9 on page two. The motion failed on a voice vote.

Recommendation and Vote: Sen. Yellowtail moved to pass the bill. It was passed on a voice vote UNANIMOUS. BE CONCURRED IN.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment At: 1:45 p.m.


ELMER D. SEVERSON, Chairman

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FISMIN.406

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

April 10, 1989

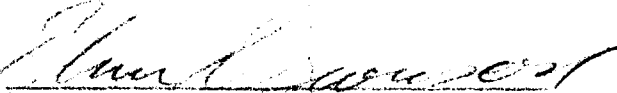
MR. PRESIDENT:

We, your committee on Fish and Game, having had under consideration HJR 32 (third reading copy -- blue), respectfully report that HJR 32 be concurred in.

Sponsor: Daily (Severson)

BE CONCURRED IN

Signed


Elmer D. Severson, Chairman

4/10/89
9:17
h.

HJR 32
April 6, 1989

Testimony presented by Ron Marcoux, Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks supports House Joint Resolution 32. A primary reason for the problems we are currently facing in the Yellowstone Ecosystem with elk and bison, is the "natural regulation" policy of the National Park Service which does not provide for management or population control within the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park. This situation was intensified by high populations of elk and bison due to a succession of mild winters and the fire and drought conditions which occurred last year.

This resolution promotes long-term solutions which we support, such as providing more historic winter range for elk in the Yellowstone Valley, and urging the Park to provide for regulation of elk and bison numbers within park boundaries.

We still do not believe that artificial feeding will resolve the current or future problems and will likely aggravate an already difficult situation.

SENATE FISH AND GAME
EXHIBIT NO. 1
DATE April 6, 1989
BILL NO. HJR 32

ROLL CALL VOTE

SENATE COMMITTEE FISH AND GAME

Date 4/6/89 HJR Bill No. 32 Time 1:43 p.m.

NAME	YES	NO
Sen. Elmer Severson		X
Sen. John Anderson Jr.		X
Sen. Judy Jacobson		
Sen. Al Bishop		
Sen Paul Rapp-Svrcek		
Sen. Loren Jenkins		X
Sen. Bill Yellowtail	X	

Lucy Borer
Secretary

Sen. Severson
Chairman

Motion: Sen. Yellowtail moved to amend the resolution

Amendments failed.