

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
LT. GOVERNOR

May 4, 2015

The Honorable Linda McCulloch
Secretary of State
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Secretary McCulloch:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto Senate Bill 245 (SB 245), "AN ACT PROVIDING FOR POSTSEASON ELK POPULATION MANAGEMENT THROUGH AN ANTLERLESS ELK HUNT; CLARIFYING THE DUTIES OF THE FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PARKS; REQUIRING ANNUAL REPORTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PARKS REGARDING SUSTAINABLE POPULATION NUMBERS FOR BIG GAME AND THE POSTSEASON HUNTS; AMENDING SECTIONS 87-1-201, 87-1-301, 87-1-321, 87-1-323, 87-1-324, 87-1-325, 87-2-501, AND 87-2-513, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

SB 245 is unnecessary. The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) currently possesses the authority to implement the sort of elk harvest management option represented in SB 245. Placing such a provision in statute may inadvertently constrain new harvest management options, and interfere with an ongoing, comprehensive review and implementation of new tools for addressing elk population concerns.

The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and the Commission understand the concerns over elk populations that are exceeding established objectives. They are also fully mindful that the current season structure has not been as effective as is necessary. In response to my mandate for improving landowner, agency, and sportsmen relationships, FWP has initiated a comprehensive effort to assess the current elk harvest tools available, to review and apply lessons from management experience and research to date, and to develop new and innovative tools to better address over objective populations. This ongoing constituent and landowner-based effort to identify better options (including "shoulder seasons" where appropriate) is the preferred method for reaching a full understanding of both public and landowner needs and expectations.

I am very sensitive to balancing the interests of landowners and sportsmen, which are unfortunately too often portrayed as a zero sum game. Working in good faith with landowners, sportsmen, and other stakeholders associated with our wildlife resources is a critical component of providing effective wildlife management in our state. I am directing FWP to step up its efforts to work with affected landowners to mitigate impacts and allow for greater elk harvest and public opportunity, and

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will ask the Private Lands/Public Wildlife Council to work with FWP and the Commission to take up this issue for further public discussion and to assist in providing recommendations. I also fully expect that FWP will keep the interim Environmental Quality Council apprised of these efforts and their measured effectiveness.

For these reasons, I veto SB 245.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Bullock", with a horizontal line above it.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

cc: Legislative Services Division
Debbly Barrett, President of the Senate
Austin Knudsen, Speaker of the House