

The Legislature has passed it's halfway point and is now heading into the transmittal break.

The legislature will take a 5 day break starting Monday; today and tomorrow the senate and house will be primarily voting on bills during their respective floor sessions.

Much of the Legislature's focus when it returns from the transmittal break will be appropriations and getting a budget passed.

The Association will have its grizzly bear delisting resolution up before the House Natural Resources Committee today at 3:00. The Resolution is HJ15, the content of which is linked here.

<http://leg.mt.gov/bills/2017/billpdf/HJ0015.pdf>

Dave McEwen and I will be testifying in support of the Resolution.

MWGA's livestock loss funding bill, SB 73, has passed the Senate and was referred to the House Committee on Agriculture on February 15th. I expect a hearing on that bill during the week of March 6th.

Turning to bills that are not being championed by the Association and that were considered this week.

1. SB 203 -- this bill would revise laws related to the manner in which counties seize animals and hearings related to the same. This bill was sponsored by HSUSA and, if passed, would have allowed animals to be seized and taken without proper due process. MWGA opposed this bill. Fortunately, the bill was killed on the Senate floor yesterday by a vote of 27-23.
2. HB 434 – MWGA supported this legislation. This bill, sponsored by Rep. Kelly Flynn, creates a wildlife habitat improvement act and an associated advisory counsel. The bill allows for use of federal funding to combat noxious weeds and to restore wildlife habitat. Pittman-Robertson funds will be used as the source of the grants. MWGA testified in support of the bill but notified that a much cheaper and natural way to combat weeds is targeted sheep grazing.
3. SB 262 – MWGA opposed this bill. This legislation, sponsored by Senator McClafferty of Butte, would have made it law that all roads are deemed to be public roads unless the landowner proves the road is not a public road. It would have then made it unlawful for the private landowner to gate or otherwise put up a barrier on the road to keep the public out.
4. HB 410 – this bill would have increased funding for the noxious weed trust fund by increasing registration fees for vehicles and off-highway vehicles and revising the allocation of funds generated by those registration fees to the noxious weed trust fund from 1.5% to 2.42%. MWGA did not take a position on this bill. The bill died in the house agriculture committee.
5. HB 286 – this legislation sponsored by ray shaw, if passed, would allow the livestock loss board to compensate livestock owners for losses due to mountain lion predation. This bill has already passed the house and received a senate hearing this week. MWGA supports so long as MWGA's bill, SB 73, is enacted.
6. HJ 9—the house natural resources committee heard a resolution encouraging congress to release 7 wilderness study areas for multiple use purposes. This resolution, carried by Kerry White of Bozeman, received strong opposition by the environmental community.
7. HB 443 – the house agriculture committee also heard a bill this week, which would revise the distribution of brand inspection fees. The bill carried by Brad Hamlett of Cascade would, if

passed, require the board of livestock, should it increase brand inspection fees after October 1 of 2017, to ensure that at least half of the increased revenue go to the Board for its operations. MWGA did not take a position on the bill, but has some concerns about the legislation.