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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

MWGA WORKING FOR YOU – ADVOCACY

On August 1, 2016, MWGA President Dave McEwen and MWGA immediate past President Greg Wichman took time out of their busy schedules to drive to Great Falls to participate in a roundtable discussion on agriculture. The roundtable was hosted by Montana Congressman Ryan Zinke and featured Mike Conaway, Congressman from Texas and the present chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture.

The primary topic of the roundtable was reauthorization of the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is slated to be reauthorized in 2018. Chairman Conaway requested that the agriculture-based organizations in attendance inform him of their priorities for the 2018 bill.

MWGA's touched on Montana's and the American Sheep Industry's issue priorities. These priorities include: (1) bighorn sheep – domestic sheep research; (2) minor use animal drugs; (3) wool marketing loans; and (4) and perfect of mandatory price reporting law. In addition, President McEwen spoke of the need of the Congress to adequately fund USDA Wildlife Services. McEwen pointed out that for every dollar the feds put into the program, Montana producers match those dollars. Further, McEwen pointed out that the federal government needs to move away from direct payment programs for agriculture producers and move to providing additional funding for scientific research. McEwen placed special emphasis on the need for Congress to provide adequate funding for Dubois Sheep Station and the need to fund an ARS sheep scientist position.

In addition to MWGA, among the participants in the Great Falls meeting were the Montana Farm Bureau, the Grain Growers, and the Montana Farmer's Union. MWGA also took this roundtable opportunity to speak with members of the Montana Legislature, who were in attendance, about MWGA's legislative priorities for the 2017 Montana legislative session, which such priorities include funding for the Wool Lab located at MSU, adequate funding for the Livestock Loss Board; and the need for more adequate grizzly bear-livestock depredation prevention efforts.

As part of its mission and as a service to its membership, MWGA engages in sheep policy and advocacy services. Such efforts include traveling around the state to meet with our elected officials. Also, every spring, as part of ASI's annual DC Washington Policy Summit, representatives of MWGA travel to Washington DC to meet with Montana's congressional delegation in their congressional offices. This is the most effective way MWGA communicates with Montanan's congressman about issues that are important to the industry.

MWGA is always looking for persons to attend the DC fly-in. If you are interested in going to DC with MWGA and ASI next year or have questions about the trip, please give Jim Brown or Jesse Wallewein a call.