SENATE FISH AND GAME
EXHIBIT NO. 2
DATE March 10, 2009
BILL NO. HB 223

House Bill 223
March 10, 2009
Presented by Jim Kropp
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Jim Kropp, Chief of Law Enforcement of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

Unlawful acts committed on FWP properties resulted in theft, damage and destruction of parks and fishing access sites as well as illegal entry on game ranges and wildlife management areas during closed portions of the year. During the years 2006 - 2008, vandalism cost FWP over $36,000. In addition, unlawful entry onto Department owned and managed wildlife areas, primarily for the illegal collection of shed big game antlers has become an increasingly significant problem, especially with the rising value of antlers. We believe that as a means of stemming this costly tide, an additional deterrent to these activities (aside from simply fines) needs to be put into place. HB 223 proposes that whereupon a person is convicted of or forfeits bond or bail imposed for committing an act of criminal trespass on FWP property, as defined in 45-6-203, or for an act of criminal mischief, as defined in 45-6-101, involving property owned or administered by the Department, the privileges of a person to hunt, fish, or trap in this state may be revoked for up to 24 months.

Vandalism not only destroys the quality experience of parks and fishing access site visitors but also results in costing the Department dollars that would otherwise go into the improvements of our sites. Illegal shed antler hunters take away opportunities for legal collectors as well as contribute to the disturbance of big game animals during a particularly stressful and difficult time of the year, when animals are at their lowest survival ebb.
Through the suspension of hunting, fishing and trapping privileges for conviction of these acts, an important deterrent will be added to the law. It will underscore the importance that the people of our state place on these resources and the zero-tolerance for damaging or stealing from the public's resources.

We urge your support of HB 223.

Thank you, and I'm available for questions.