Wickman, Erik

From: Parsons, Lindsey
Sent: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 11:33 AM
To: Wickman, Erik
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT
Attachments: FWP Letter regarding Distrct Change Nov 1 2023.docx

Lindsey Parsons
Deer/Elk Coordinator
Wildlife Division
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Lindsey.Parsons@mt.gov

P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
Office: (406) 444-2905
Cell: (406) 594-8278
fwp.mt.gov

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Wickman, Erik

From: kyocera@mt.gov
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 8:37 AM
To: Wickman, Erik
Attachments: doc03431120231121083645.pdf

TASKalfa 7353ci
[00:17:c8:ae:7a:9d]

Wickman, Erik

From: Pavao, Courtney on behalf of FWP General
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2023 3:49 PM
To: Wickman, Erik
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Re: Bill 521

Courtney Pavao
Administrative Assistant
Information Desk
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
Ph: (406) 444-2535
Montana FWP | Montana Outdoors Magazine | Montana WILD

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

From: Melanie West <mwwraft@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2023 1:27 PM
To: Bill Zell <billzell@gmail.com>; MWW Gardiner <mwwgardiner@gmail.com>; Temple, Dustin <dtemple@mt.gov>; Knudsen, Rhonda <Rhonda.Knudsen@legmt.gov>; Brown, Bob <Bob.Brown@legmt.gov>; Vinton, Sue <Sue.Vinton@legmt.gov>; Fitzgerald, Ross <Ross.Fitzgerald@legmt.gov>; Regier, Matt <Matt.Regier@legmt.gov>; FWP General <fwpgen@mt.gov>; Graham, Robin <rgraham@mt.gov>; Gianforte, Greg <greg@mt.gov>; Morris, Cheryl <cherylmorris@mt.gov>; Matthews, Eric <Eric.Matthews@legmt.gov>; Loge, Denley M. <Denley.Loge@legmt.gov>; Abbott, Kim <Kim.Abbott@legmt.gov>; Flowers, Pat <Pat.Flowers@legmt.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Bill 521

Rep. Doge,

If you were confused from our initial email, we are one of the businesses that will suffer from Bill 521. We are not arguing against Bill 521 in its entirety. We are simply arguing for a more fair enforcement of Bill 521 that is not going to damage our business and the tourism revenue that is generated from our region. We want to ensure that FWP is not footing the bill. We also hold permits with BLM, National Park Service and the Forest Service to maintain our operation, and not one charges our clients extra fees on top of the 3% we pay per user to maintain our permit.

Hunters and fishermen should be paying the majority of the costs of providing and maintaining FAS. Hunters and fishermen are paying their fee to hunt and fish on all FWP sites for a period of time up to an entire year. The general public, especially locals who use the site all throughout the year should also contribute to the upkeep of FWP sites. This is something we do not disagree with. A one time user (tourist, friends, family members visiting) of an FWP site should not have to pay more than someone who has access to these sites year round. These users are traversing, paddling, and removing resources from the environment, and have the access and ability to use these sites year round.Tubers, rafters, and floaters are not removing any resources from the environment, they are only using the environment for the sole purpose of enjoyment.

As a commercial outfitter that already pays a percentage of our revenue directly to FWP, we are paying for each and every person that we take down the river. Not only that, we are educating the public, helping bring awareness to keeping the river and access sites clean, but we are physically helping with waste removal from the one FWP site we utilize for our operation. Is that not enough? You are putting the burden of FWP's inability to designate appropriate funding from commercial outfitter permit payments to maintain their own sites, onto our clients.

As a compliant permit holding commercial outfitter, having that permit should mean that our services are inclusive to our guests. With Bill 521, it is showing to our guests that we are not inclusive as it is forcing them to go through an entirely separate process to have access to the river. Shouldn't it be that if you are booking with an outfitter that holds a permit to utilize a river/access point etc that that booking with them means that they are able to access the river on their trip? This makes our operation and our permit seem irrelevant and useless.

Our tubing trip on the Madison River costs $30-35 per person. An additional fee of $10 increases that cost 28-33%, which is not reasonable for our clients. Our suggestion for one time users (the majority of our clients) is that we include this cost in the price of our trip to make it easier on our clients and will not deter them from recreating. Another suggestion is that we could pay a total of 6% to the FWP to maintain our permit (from 3%). This is much more reasonable for us, easier on users so they will not be deterred from recreating at all, and guarantees additional money to FWP for site maintenance. This guaranteed extra 3% might even be more beneficial to FWP. As one time users, they might be motivated to not purchase the license at all and suffer the first warning.

Best,

Melanie West

Operations Manager
Montana Whitewater and Yellowstone ZipLine
406-763-4465 Office

On Mon, Nov 13, 2023 at 7:36 PM Loge, Denley M. <Denley.Loge@legmt.gov> wrote:

> Since hunters and fisherman previously paid all the costs of providing and maintaining FAS, the fee from HB 521 is not for water use fees, but just for the FSA fees. If these fees are going to be so devastating to businesses in the area, perhaps they can each lower their fees by the equivalent amount so as not to lose business and not make FWP pay the non payer costs of keeping these sites open. The other options would be to try and open and maintain their own access sites on private lands. The question to ask them is, would they allow non paying customers to use of those sites as you would have FWP do. It is normal for folks to complain when they have been getting such a great deal for nothing. Try giving your services free, restaurants and motels giving their services free to half their users and see how long you can keep operating. These FAS are not a state land tax dollar supported site but as I stated earlier, from hunter and fisherman conservation license fees. Some thoughts for you to ponder and propose to those businesses going under. Thanks, Rep. Denley Loge
>
> Get Outlook for Android [aka.ms]
>
> ---
>
> **From:** Melanie West <mwwraft@gmail.com>
> **Sent:** Monday, November 6, 2023 12:26:43 PM
> **To:** fwpgen@mt.gov <fwpgen@mt.gov>; Temple, Dustin <dtemple@mt.gov>; Graham, Robin <rgraham@mt.gov>;

Gianforte, Greg <greg@mt.gov>; Morris, Cheryl <cherylmorris@mt.gov>; Matthews, Eric <Eric.Matthews@legmt.gov>; Loge, Denley M. <Denley.Loge@legmt.gov>; Brown, Bob <Bob.Brown@legmt.gov>; Regier, Matt <Matt.Regier@legmt.gov>; Vinton, Sue <Sue.Vinton@legmt.gov>; Abbott, Kim <kim.abbott@legmt.gov>; Knudsen, Rhonda <Rhonda.Knudsen@legmt.gov>; Flowers, Pat <Pat.Flowers@legmt.gov>
Cc: Bill Zell <billzell@gmail.com>; MWW Gardiner <mwwgardiner@gmail.com>
Subject: Bill 521

Bill Zell 06 November 2023
Montana Whitewater in Bozeman
billzell@gmail.com

To Whom it May Concern:

We are writing to you today as an established local business, but also as environmental stewards and recreationalists. Montana Whitewater has been in operation, maintaining permits across various government agencies, and working to minimize our impact on our resources for over thirty years. Not only do we provide accessible and memorable activities to many locals, new residents and tourists, we also gainfully employ over 130 people each and every season. We have witnessed the growth and popularity of our area, our roads, parking lots and river access areas first hand over the years.

The passage of Bill 521, earlier this year, will devastate our business on the Madison River and Yellowstone River. Our business draws many tourists to the area, along with friends and family members of people who live in the area to recreate. The fees that Bill 521 and FWP have instituted will hurt the "one-time" users. We understand that an $8.00 fee for locals who live here and access many of the put-ins and take-outs on the rivers in the area over a one year period is reasonable. But $10.00 for a non-local person or a tourist who is not just recreating on the river but stays in hotels, eats at local restaurants, and supports local businesses seems very high. It puts a large burden on the tourist to have to go online and buy a license, often at the last minute and without phone service, externally from what should be an inclusive trip with us as a permit holder. It is extremely difficult to explain, manage and will hurt our business.

MADISON RIVER
Madison River Tubing, a sect of Montana Whitewater, opened in 2012, out of our Downtown Bozeman outpost offering tubing trips on the Madison River and rental equipment opportunities. Not only do we provide folks with a fun and easy recreation option, we also keep our offerings accessible and inexpensive. Our shuttle service has significantly reduced the amount of people requiring one or more shuttle vehicles to recreate on the Madison River, and reduced the amount of traffic and corresponding accidents on MT-84.

On the Madison River, we are required to pay FWP 3% of our revenue to maintain our permit. We are bringing the people to the river, and paying for them to be there. Placing this license requirement on tourists, family members, and friends who are coming to recreate one day/time is a burden that will deter people from recreating. Which will then in turn, hurt not only our business but the hundreds of businesses that benefit from recreation and tourism in our area. When locals can use that license unlimitedly and the fact that these one day recreationalists are paying more, is unfair and burdensome. The $10.00 fee comes out to be 28% of the total trip cost and we are already paying 3% to FWP for each client.

YELLOWSTONE RIVER
There are 4 other rafting companies in Gardiner that will all suffer with the passing of Bill 521. We are subject to park service fees at the put-in of the Yellowstone River, a 4% Gardiner Resort Tax, and all our guides on the Yellowstone River are required to have a guide license purchased from FWP. Below is a breakdown of what this will look like for our standard half day rafting trip on the Yellowstone River.
An adult costs $72 per person

- $2.88 for resort tax

- $10.00 for FWP

Total for a half day trip is $84.88.
A child costs $62 per person

- $2.48 for resort tax
- $10.00 for FWP

Total for a half day trip is $74.48
The $10.00 fee comes out to be 14% for adults and 16% for children.
A family of four would be paying:
$268 for the trip

- $40 to FWP
- $10.72 resort tax
- Small fee for the park service put-in fee

$318.72 total with almost 19% being fees and taxes.

We are trying to illustrate how these fees are affecting our business and the area. Not only is this a very high tax for a tourist or someone that wants to use our service for one day/use, this will deter a lot of people from using our service and will incentivize people to go to other venues to raft and recreate. We get the majority of our business from Yellowstone National Park visitation. Their options for recreation, lodging, shopping, eating etc, are Jackson Hole, Cody and Bozeman. If we give them incentive to go elsewhere, they will. These fees are a lot of additional money to force families to pay, that a lot of them do not budget for on their trips. You are penalizing families for coming to our area to recreate.

Outdoor recreation generates a significant amount (2.5 billion dollars in 2021) of revenue for our state and discriminating against tourists, our friends, and family members that visit this beautiful place will affect every single business that relies on these folks to continue to visit. A reduction in the accessibility to recreate in our area will decrease overall visitation to our area.

We are willing to discuss possible options to move forward with. Is it possible to have the amount included in our price at a much lower amount and have it so that the user does not have to go online and buy a license? We have last minute reservations and walk-ins all the time, and forcing our clients to have to externally purchase a license will deter people from using our service.

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Commission
November 2, 2023

Dear FW&P Personnel,

My name is Mel Rice. I am a 72 year old born and raised 4th generation resident of the fine state of Montana. I am currently residing in Beaverhead County and have been a resident of Dillon for fifty years. I am writing this letter in regards to our hunting regulations which I believe are long overdue for some major overhauling. I have been an archer and rifle hunter for 50 years. I believe there are several contributing factors to the decline of quality hunting experiences in our great state and need to be addressed immediately.

- There are too many predators. It is time to reduce the number of bears, cats, and wolves. The numbers of these animals are causing elk and deer to move and relocate into unprecedented places, namely private land. They have also annihilated populations in some hunting districts.
- You have all the tools for coming up with scientific data to determine hunting seasons and hunting quotas for every district. It is my understanding that for two years in a row out of state quotas have not been adhered to and some special permit quotas have not been followed. Tags that have been issued for the 23 season have incorrect hunting dates on them. How can this happen? It is high time the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks be held accountable for its mistakes.
- It is time to make every hunter choose the weapon of his/her choice each year. We are long overdue for the hunters of Montana, resident and non-resident to choose the weapon they truly want to hunt with: archery, rifle, or muzzle loader. Times have changed and it is unthinkable to allow someone the opportunity to hunt elk and deer from the first of September until the middle of December. Another issue that has become prevalent is the number of out-of-staters returning for a rifle hunt if they are unsuccessful with archery equipment. We are the only state I know of that allows this to happen.
- There should be a limited number of permits for each hunting district, both resident and non-resident. All hunters would have to apply for the district they want to hunt outside of their resident county. All residents of the State would have the right to hunt anywhere within the county that they reside without application. Out-of-stater hunters would have to apply for specific districts with set quotas.

Beaverhead, Madison, and Gallatin Counties take the brunt of hunters during most of the hunting season. There has to be some means of leveling the playing field across the state so that 3 or 4 counties don't have to absorb the majority of hunters. I have never been as discouraged as I am right now. Hunting on public lands these last five seasons has turned into a real quagmire.

Please think seriously about my concerns and recommendations. We are the only state that is afforded the kinds of hunting opportunities that Montana offers. We have had outstanding opportunities, but times change and Montana's hunting rules and regulations need to change as well.

Cordially,

Melvin D Rice
P.O. Box 1071
Dillon, MT 59725
smr@bresnan.net
406-660-0408

Please acknowledge back to me that you received this letter and what your thoughts are.