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February 11, 2019

Dear State Representative/Senator:

The organizations signified below write today in support of continued spending authority for Montana's diverse habitat programs including, Habitat Montana, Future Fisheries, Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program, Migratory Bird Program, and Fishing Access Site Acquisition.

As independent state Audubon chapters, we are committed to supporting the conservation of Montana's birds and other wildlife through education and habitat protection. We believe Habitat Montana is a critical tool for conserving wildlife habitat across the state and it has been widely supported by Audubon chapters since it was first created by the legislature in 1987. The program has maintained bipartisan support over the decades because of mandated requirements that the program be used to conserve wildlife habitat, promote wildlife-friendly agriculture, incentivize private land conservation, and protect open spaces, scenic areas and valuable water resources.

The success of programs like Habitat Montana are dependent on the secure and stable funding sources supporting them. They are built on earmarked license dollars and matched by stable federal funding sources and even private conservation dollars. By design, the funds cannot be used for other things—so not authorizing their use does not save money!

As of December 2018, Habitat Montana has garnered 293,239 acres in conservation easements and 130,117 acres in fee title acquisitions which are vital wildlife habitat.

Our landscape is changing at a rapid and continual pace, ever increasing the value of proactive habitat protection. As Audubon Chapters in Montana, we urge you to continue your support for habitat conservation programs and to build upon their conservation legacy for the benefit of future Montana generations.

Sincerely,

Kay Mitchell, President
Flathead Audubon Society
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