

Amendment - 1st Reading/2nd House-blue - Requested by: Courtenay Sprunger - (S) Fish and Game

- 2025

69th Legislature 2025

Drafter: Casey Pallister,

HB0568.002.002

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 568

2 INTRODUCED BY C. SPRUNGER, W. GALT, E. ALBUS, J. SECKINGER, P. ELVERUM, M. THIEL, M.
3 BERTOGLIO, E. BUTTREY, S. GIST, L. JONES, G. LAMMERS, D. LOGE, B. LER, J. ETCHART, G. HERTZ,
4 G. PARRY, K. SEEKINS-CROWE, S. MANESS, K. BOGNER, J. HINKLE

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6 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MONTANA HUNTERS FIRST ACT;
7 CREATING A STUDY OF IMPACTS ON MONTANA'S HUNTING SEASONS RELATED TO BLOCK
8 MANAGEMENT, SEASON STRUCTURE, ~~PRIVATE LANDS LEASED FOR HUNTING PURPOSES,~~ AND
9 RESIDENT AND NONRESIDENT LICENSE ALLOCATION; ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STUDY
10 TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PARKS; DEFINING THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY;
11 REQUIRING A PUBLISHED REPORT THAT INCLUDES RECOMMENDATIONS; AND PROVIDING AN
12 IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A TERMINATION DATE."

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14 WHEREAS, there has been a steady growth in nonresident hunting license sales and hunting pressure
15 on publicly accessible lands; and

16 WHEREAS, Montana's significant population growth necessitates a detailed assessment of hunting
17 season structure after 40 years; and

18 WHEREAS, there has been a decline of roughly 1 million acres in the amount of private land enrolled in
19 the block management program over the past 10 years, concentrating hunters on smaller amounts of publicly
20 accessible lands; and

21 WHEREAS, hunter success rates have been steadily falling, while hunter use days have been steadily
22 increasing; and

23 WHEREAS, public sentiment indicates that Montana's wildlife resources are being strained by a variety
24 of factors; and

25 WHEREAS, landowner fatigue with the current hunting season structure relative to elk hunting
26 opportunities is setting in; and

27 WHEREAS, the wildlife of Montana belongs to all citizens; and

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WHEREAS, the process of finding solutions to the issues surrounding the current management of hunting seasons, including resident and nonresident license allocation, should include all stakeholders.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Short title. [Sections 1 and 2] may be cited as the "Montana Hunters First Act".

NEW SECTION. Section 2. Nonresident hunting impact study. (1) The department of fish, wildlife, and parks shall conduct a study of nonresident impacts on deer, ~~and elk,~~ UPLAND GAME BIRD, AND WATER FOWL hunting in the state and in each of the fish and wildlife commission's administrative regions.

(2) The study must utilize a range of data, including but not limited to hunter days, harvest reporting, use of lands that are part of hunting access programs, hunting pressure on public lands, elk and deer population trends, ~~THE ACREAGE AND DURATION OF PRIVATE LAND LEASES FOR HUNTING PURPOSES,~~ and licensing.

(3) Upon completion of the study, the department shall publish a report that is accessible to the public. The report must include:

(a) a comprehensive assessment of the data as it relates to nonresident impacts on deer and elk hunting in the state and in each of the commission's administrative regions;

(b) specific information about the methods used for collecting or acquiring data used in the report; and

(c) the identification of specific issues for consideration by the legislature, department, and commission concerning nonresident impacts on deer and elk hunting.

(4) The study and report must be completed by December 1, 2026.

NEW SECTION. Section 3. Effective date. [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

NEW SECTION. Section 4. Termination. [Sections 1 and 2] terminate December 31, 2026.

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- END -

AMENDED