

RESOLUTION ON LEGISLATION AFFECTING WESTERN PUBLIC LANDS

February 1996

Whereas, there is currently legislation which affects livestock grazing and natural resource management on Federal lands under consideration by Congress which will significantly change management on the National Grasslands and other federal lands, and

Whereas, such legislation is currently embodied in SB852, SBI4S9, and HRI713, and

Whereas, such legislation will affect over 1 million acres of public land in North Dakota, 3 million acres in the Great Plains, and 300 million acres in the western United States, and

Whereas, this legislation will adversely affect fish and wildlife resources, their habitats, and outdoor enthusiasts using public lands by:

Exempting the National Grasslands or other federal lands, wholly or in part, from existing conservation laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act; Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act; Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resource Planning Act and/or National Forest Management Act;

Shifting the basic purpose of the National Grasslands from resource conservation towards legislatively establishing livestock grazing and private ranching interests as the dominant use;

Reducing the ability of all citizens to participate in management decisions, and grants exclusive powers to a limited number of private livestock producers which are not available to other citizens;

Curtailing the ability of Federal land managers and State fish and wildlife agencies to provide professional and technical input into public lands management decisions affecting wildlife and wildlife habitat; Hampering responsive decision making to changing environmental conditions;

Allowing private livestock producers to assert private property rights on public lands, and

Whereas, the changes proposed for the National Grasslands are tailored to benefit existing livestock permittees at the expense of other users and values, and

Whereas, professional resource organizations and managers, such as the U.S. Forest Service, Wildlife Management Institute, The Wildlife Society, etc ..., have repeatedly voiced concern with these bills and these concerns have not been satisfactorily addressed, and

Whereas, the public land base in the Great Plains is limited in size; significantly enriches the quality of our natural resource values and public recreational opportunities; and is increasingly threatened by privatization; and

Whereas, the National Grasslands are public lands and should be managed for the benefit of all citizens; therefore,

Be it resolved, the North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society urges Congress to oppose current or future legislation having the characteristics listed in this resolution and as embodied in current versions of SB852, SB1459, and HRI713, and

Be it further resolved, that should such legislation pass Congress, the North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society urges the President to veto the bill.

Sent to: NO Congressional Delegation, President Clinton, Chair and members of U.S. Senate and House Natural Resource Committees, Governor Schafer, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Wildlife Management Institute, National Wildlife Federation, NO Game and Fish Department, The Wildlife Society, Central Mountain and Plains Section of TWS, ND Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, Cass County Wildlife Club, Audubon Society, Television Stations, Outdoor Editors Daily Newspapers.