

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 17

INTRODUCED BY S. NOVAK, D. LOGE, J. COHENOUR, S. MANESS

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF RESIDENT HUNTER SATISFACTION WITH NONRESIDENT HUNTING PRESSURE IN THE STATE AND LEGISLATIVE ALTERNATIVES FOR RESOLVING UNSATISFACTORY RESULTS; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 70TH LEGISLATURE IN THE FORM OF INTRODUCED BILLS AIMED AT IMPROVING RESIDENT HUNTER SATISFACTION WITH NONRESIDENT HUNTING PRESSURE.

WHEREAS, the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks reported an increase in nonresident base hunting license sales from 58,254 in 2019 to 85,228 in 2023; and

WHEREAS, annual nonresident deer and elk license allocation has increased to greater than 60,000, while many resident hunters believed they were capped at 17,000; and

WHEREAS, public hunting access in many areas has declined, including a 17% overall decrease in block management acreage available for hunting access from 2010 to 2021; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks reported that hunting pressure in the state results from more hunters hunting for longer periods of time in smaller areas; and

WHEREAS, hunting pressure from residents is also increasing as the state population increases; and

WHEREAS, Article IX, section 7, of the Montana Constitution provides that the harvesting of wild game animals is a heritage that must forever be preserved to the individual citizens of the state.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee or statutory committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, to investigate resident hunter satisfaction with nonresident hunting pressure and legislative alternatives for resolving unsatisfactory results, including:

- (1) assigning the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks to implement a human dimensions study

1 of resident hunter satisfaction with nonresident hunting pressure in the state. The study must include, but not be
2 limited to:

3 (a) the level of nonresident hunters and nonresident hunting licenses by hunting species that
4 resident hunters find acceptable relative to 2023 and 2024 levels;

5 (b) resident hunter willingness to support increased fees on resident and nonresident hunting
6 licenses to offset reduced funding to the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks that may result from the
7 reduction in sales of nonresident hunting licenses; and

8 (c) resident hunter support for restricting resident hunting license allocation, without first reducing
9 nonresident hunting license allocation, to reduce hunting pressure;

10 (2) evaluating data from the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks related to hunting, including
11 but not limited to license sales, hunter days in the field, hunter harvests, hunter success rates, and animal
12 populations, as well as relevant science on animal population trends in the state;

13 (3) identifying factors that may contribute to nonresident hunter overcrowding and hunting
14 pressure, such as the availability of accessible hunting lands, the number of nonresident hunters, and the
15 number of nonresident hunting licenses issued;

16 (4) evaluating initiatives in other states to address nonresident hunter overcrowding and hunting
17 pressure;

18 (5) proposing solutions to reduce nonresident hunter overcrowding and hunting pressure, such as
19 the reduction of nonresident licenses, the reduction of nonresident permits, and the reduction of season lengths
20 for nonresident hunters; and

21 (6) identifying alternatives for mitigating lost revenue to the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
22 that would result from reduced nonresident hunting license sales.

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the interim committee collaborate with the general public and
24 relevant stakeholders to examine this topic, including but not limited to the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and
25 Parks.

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
27 presented to and reviewed by the Environmental Quality Council.

28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review

1 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2026.

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
3 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 70th Legislature in the form of
4 introduced bills aimed at resolving resident hunter satisfaction with nonresident hunting pressure.

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