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2300 Lake Elmo Drive
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September 16, 2020

Attn: Big Snowy Mountains WMA Land Project

To Whom It May Concern:

Hellgate Hunters and Anglers (HHA) is an all-volunteer conservation organization based in Missoula, Montana. Since 2005, our mission has been to conserve Montana's wildlife, wild places, and fair-chase hunting and fishing heritage. We represent over 400 members and supporters across the state. We write to you today to voice support for the proposed purchase of 5,677 acres near the Big Snowy Mountains for the purpose of establishing a new wildlife management area.

The proposed Big Snowy Mountains Wildlife Management Area roughly 30 miles east of Judith Gap in Golden Valley County will bolster Montana's conservation legacy and provide valuable opportunities for Montana hunters. This legacy project would provide access not only to the 5,677 acres proposed for purchase, but also to nearly 100,000 acres of adjoining public land that has limited public access. HHA supports this proposal for these and the following reasons:

- The project boundary contains incredible wildlife habitat consisting of a mix of both forested foothills and prairie. This area supports elk, pronghorn antelope, mule deer and white-tailed deer in addition to upland game birds.
- The elk herd in this area, as laid out in the statewide Elk Management Plan, is approximately 900 percent over objective. This proposal would increase public access in an area where we badly need it.
- This property contains important winter range for big game. Protecting these important areas that provide winter forage for big game directly accounts for the abundance that we enjoy today.

Hellgate Hunters & Anglers commends the Department for working to protect critical wildlife habitat while improving hunter access across the state. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Walker Conyngham
President
Hellgate Hunters and Anglers