

## 1 HOUSE BILL NO. 593

2 INTRODUCED BY M. MARLER

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4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE, AND  
5 PARKS TO PUBLISH AN ANNUAL PUBLIC REPORT OF NONRESIDENT LICENSE SALES; AMENDING  
6 SECTION 87-1-201, MCA; AND PROVIDING A DELAYED EFFECTIVE DATE."

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

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10 **Section 1.** Section 87-1-201, MCA, is amended to read:

11 **"87-1-201. Powers and duties.** (1) Except as provided in subsection (12), the department shall  
12 supervise all the wildlife, fish, game, game and nongame birds, waterfowl, and the game and fur-bearing  
13 animals of the state and may implement voluntary programs that encourage hunting access on private lands  
14 and that promote harmonious relations between landowners and the hunting public. The department possesses  
15 all powers necessary to fulfill the duties prescribed by law and to bring actions in the proper courts of this state  
16 for the enforcement of the fish and game laws and the rules adopted by the department.

17 (2) Except as provided in subsection (12), the department shall enforce all the laws of the state  
18 regarding the protection, preservation, management, and propagation of fish, game, fur-bearing animals, and  
19 game and nongame birds within the state.

20 (3) The department has the exclusive power to spend for the protection, preservation,  
21 management, and propagation of fish, game, fur-bearing animals, and game and nongame birds all state funds  
22 collected or acquired for that purpose, whether arising from state appropriation, licenses, fines, gifts, or  
23 otherwise. Money collected or received from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses or permits, from the sale of  
24 seized game or hides, from fines or damages collected for violations of the fish and game laws, or from  
25 appropriations or received by the department from any other sources is under the control of the department and  
26 is available for appropriation to the department.

27 (4) The department may discharge any appointee or employee of the department for cause at any  
28 time.

1           (5)     The department may dispose of all property owned by the state used for the protection,  
2     preservation, management, and propagation of fish, game, fur-bearing animals, and game and nongame birds  
3     that is of no further value or use to the state and shall turn over the proceeds from the sale to the state  
4     treasurer to be credited to the fish and game account in the state special revenue fund.

5           (6)     The department may not issue permits to carry firearms within this state to anyone except  
6     regularly appointed officers or wardens.

7           (7)     Except as provided in subsection (12), the department is authorized to make, promulgate, and  
8     enforce reasonable rules and regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of Title 87, chapter 2, that in its  
9     judgment will accomplish the purpose of chapter 2.

10          (8)     The department is authorized to promulgate rules relative to tagging, possession, or  
11     transportation of bear within or outside of the state.

12          (9)     (a) The department shall implement programs that:

13           (i)     manage wildlife, fish, game, and nongame animals in a manner that prevents the need for  
14     listing under 87-5-107 or under the federal Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq.;

15           (ii)    manage listed species, sensitive species, or a species that is a potential candidate for listing  
16     under 87-5-107 or under the federal Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq., in a manner that assists  
17     in the maintenance or recovery of those species;

18           (iii)   manage elk, deer, and antelope populations based on habitat estimates determined as  
19     provided in 87-1-322 and maintain elk, deer, and antelope population numbers at or below population estimates  
20     as provided in 87-1-323. In implementing an elk management plan, the department shall, as necessary to  
21     achieve harvest and population objectives, request that land management agencies open public lands and  
22     public roads to public access during the big game hunting season.

23           (iv)    in accordance with the forest management plan required by 87-1-622, address fire mitigation,  
24     pine beetle infestation, and wildlife habitat enhancement giving priority to forested lands in excess of 50  
25     contiguous acres in any state park, fishing access site, or wildlife management area under the department's  
26     jurisdiction.

27          (b)     In maintaining or recovering a listed species, a sensitive species, or a species that is a potential  
28     candidate for listing, the department shall seek, to the fullest extent possible, to balance maintenance or

1 recovery of those species with the social and economic impacts of species maintenance or recovery.

2 (c) Any management plan developed by the department pursuant to this subsection (9) is subject  
3 to the requirements of Title 75, chapter 1, part 1.

4 (d) This subsection (9) does not affect the ownership or possession, as authorized under law, of a  
5 privately held listed species, a sensitive species, or a species that is a potential candidate for listing.

6 (10) The department shall publish an annual game count, estimating to the department's best ability  
7 the numbers of each species of game animal, as defined in 87-2-101, in the hunting districts and administrative  
8 regions of the state. In preparing the publication, the department may incorporate field observations, hunter  
9 reporting statistics, or any other suitable method of determining game numbers. The publication must include  
10 an explanation of the basis used in determining the game count.

11 (11) The department shall report current sage grouse population numbers, including the number of  
12 leks, to the Montana sage grouse oversight team, established in 2-15-243, and the environmental quality  
13 council in accordance with 5-11-210 on an annual basis. The report must include seasonal and historic  
14 population data available from the department or any other source.

15 (12) The department may not regulate the use or possession of firearms, firearm accessories, or  
16 ammunition, including the chemical elements of ammunition used for hunting. This does not prevent:

17 (a) the restriction of certain hunting seasons to the use of specified hunting arms, such as the  
18 establishment of special archery seasons and the special muzzleloader heritage hunting season established in  
19 87-1-304;

20 (b) for human safety, the restriction of certain areas to the use of only specified hunting arms,  
21 including bows and arrows, traditional handguns, and muzzleloading rifles;

22 (c) the restriction of the use of shotguns for the hunting of deer and elk pursuant to 87-6-401(1)(f);

23 (d) the regulation of migratory game bird hunting pursuant to 87-3-403; or

24 (e) the restriction of the use of rifles for bird hunting pursuant to 87-6-401(1)(g) or (1)(h).

25 (13) The department shall publish an annual public report that shows the number of licenses sold to  
26 nonresidents in the previous license year for each species in which the purchase of a license or permit is  
27 required. The report must also show how many licenses were issued through opportunities or programs for  
28 nonresidents, such as those for the following:

- 1            (a) youths;
- 2            (b) college students;
- 3            (c) nonresidents who were former residents;
- 4            (d) nonresident licenses purchased by utilizing an outfitter preference point;
- 5            (e) sponsorships by a landowner, family member, or current Montana resident; or
- 6            (f) any other license opportunity or program for nonresidents.

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8            NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Effective date.** [This act] is effective March 1, 2024.

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