

**From:** [Rex Rogers](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] \$1M Pen Raised Pheasant  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 12:36:01 PM

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I am against using my license dollars and Pitman Robert's dollars for prisoners busy work. I support Alternative A, no pheasant stocking.

Rex Rogers  
Boulder MT

**From:** [garry king](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 6:43:51 AM

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I am writing to voice my vote against the Pheasant Release program under consideration. I am a land owner, avid bird hunter, active member of Pheasants Forever, and have some experience in building better bird habitat as a method of increasing the bird population. I never heard or read any research that could verify a success of releasing pen raised bird as a method of increasing the resident population. The pen raised birds are ill equipped to survive against the predators they will face. Investing \$500,000 in such a program in Montana would be irresponsible, and have little lasting effect. Thank you, Garry King  
Denton, Mt

**From:** [Matthew Williams](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 4:30:23 PM

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This day and age so many youth are engaged in video games. To keep the interest and preserve the upland drive or interest in youth. You want to get them into birds. Unfortunately as they lose habitat I think this is in the best interest for next generations and like the idea of pen raised birds.

Thank you for your

Matt Williams

**From:** [James McCloy](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:39:56 AM

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I am opposed to pen raised pheasants to be released for hunting.

Jim McCloy  
1565 Cornerstone Drive  
Missoula Montana 59802



**From:** [Steinkraus](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] "NO" to the release of pen-raised pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 10:04:41 AM

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I used to love hunting pheasants. It was my favorite fall experience in Montana and opportunities were many during the height of the CRP years, 30 years ago. At that time, releasing pheasants on new CRP enrolled acreage was a big boost to introducing birds into areas where habitat was favorable for sustaining a breeding populations. Without habitat, releasing pen-raised pheasants is a waist of time and money. I would only support the release of pheasants in areas where population augmentation has a chance improve the over-all breeding population and consequently, the hunting opportunities in future years.

Thanks for your consideration,

Mark Potter  
Polson, Montana

**From:** [Barbara Gregovich](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] AGAINST Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 10:58:46 AM

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I am AGAINST Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants, for ANY amount, let alone \$1 million!!! My grandfather, D.Y. Wilson, Jr., was an avid sportsman and fisherman here in Montana. He died at the age of 94 in 1995 and he must be rolling over in his Lewistown, Montana grave!!!

**I support Alternative A: No Action in the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants.** I agree with everything the BHA, Mr. Don Thomas and, I'm sure, thousands of others say about the unethicality and waste of this obscene proposal. See links to their opinions, below.

[https://www.backcountryhunters.org/montana\\_bha\\_comments\\_in\\_opposition\\_to\\_pen\\_raised\\_pheasant\\_releases?](https://www.backcountryhunters.org/montana_bha_comments_in_opposition_to_pen_raised_pheasant_releases?utm_campaign=pheasant_ea_comments_due&utm_medium=email&utm_source=backcountryhunters)

[utm\\_campaign=pheasant\\_ea\\_comments\\_due&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=backcountryhunters](https://www.backcountryhunters.org/montana_bha_comments_in_opposition_to_pen_raised_pheasant_releases?utm_campaign=pheasant_ea_comments_due&utm_medium=email&utm_source=backcountryhunters) [backcountryhunters.org]

[https://mtstandard.com/opinion/columnists/guest-view-tame-pheasants-bad-biology-in-state-effort/article\\_a564a97e-a433-5b20-89af-a848756984b1.html?](https://mtstandard.com/opinion/columnists/guest-view-tame-pheasants-bad-biology-in-state-effort/article_a564a97e-a433-5b20-89af-a848756984b1.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share)

[utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=email&utm\\_campaign=user-share](https://mtstandard.com/opinion/columnists/guest-view-tame-pheasants-bad-biology-in-state-effort/article_a564a97e-a433-5b20-89af-a848756984b1.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share) [mtstandard.com]

Barbara Gregovich  
1301 W Porphyry St  
Butte, MT 59701  
406-782-3470

[bgbmontana1@msn.com](mailto:bgbmontana1@msn.com)

**From:** [Mark Kuipers](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Against Pen Raised Pheasants Program  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 10:38:20 AM

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FWP,

Put me down as against the pen raised pheasant program. It is a waste of sportsmen's dollars, ineffective in providing meaningful opportunities for hunters due to the low survival rates.

Let's use this million dollars for habitat as that is the key to good strong wild pheasant populations and good hunting.

Mark Kuipers

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Mark Kuipers  
MAK Direct  
4770 Duncan Drive  
Missoula, MT 59802  
406 327-9990  
[mark@makdirect.net](mailto:mark@makdirect.net)  
[www.makdirect.net](http://www.makdirect.net) [[makdirect.net](http://www.makdirect.net)]

**From:** [rochelle gravance](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Alternative A: No Action in response to the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants.  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 9:04:30 AM

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In regard to Programmatic Pheasant Release:

These pen-raised birds rarely survive long enough to be effectively utilized by hunters. Montana FWP's own 2004 review of upland game bird biology and habitat relationships as part of the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program states, "Stocked birds contribute little to harvest or population growth in pheasant populations. In Montana, Weigand and Janson (1976) noted that hunters subsequently harvested only 13%-24% of pheasants released 1-3 weeks prior to hunting season opening."

I have personally been involved in youth pheasant hunts here in Montana which utilized pen raised birds. These birds have little in terms of natural instincts. Youth hunters were able to walk up on birds and shoot them without actually having to "hunt" a bird. Quota takes were filled easily without having to engage in the act of hunting. A common response by youth hunters after the hunt was, "that was easy".

If we are using this program as an R3 effort, what type of hunter are we creating? One that experiences great disappointment when hunting wild birds? One that does not pursue knowledge of game animals to eventually become a successful hunter? One that eventually stops buying licenses because we failed to create an educational experience for young and new hunters? One that feels entitled to fill their bag limit with each outing? And if so, what does that mean for the future of wildlife management?

Fewer hunter dollars, a less educated hunter, entitlement, and certainly more and more generations of "hunters" who will fail to preserve the legacy of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. In fact, this particular model is in direct conflict with NAMWC from the start. So why are we funding it?

We should be using the suggested allocation of money to actual conservation projects. We need more habitat management to improve the quality and quantity of wild bird habitat. We need to be funding programs to educate and supplement landowners to preserve quality habitat. We need to be teaching young and new hunters the art of hunting and how to preserve the tradition. We need to be guiding these same hunters on the importance of knowing your quarry's habits and requirements for survival which will enhance success in the field. We should be preparing hunters to manage adversity and the importance of supporting the game animals and the places they live in order to preserve the ability to hunt. Need we be reminded of the current struggles of landowner/hunter relations in order to fund programs that would bridge that gap?

Additionally, we cannot risk any further criticism or scrutiny of hunter behavior and wildlife management decisions in the eye of the non-hunting public when it comes to the morality of this type of program.

After analyzing the facts, there remains very little, if any validity to promoting and maintaining this particular program. Let us use the dollars in ways that will support the wild bird population and the myriad of additional species that would benefit from habitat conservation efforts.

Respectfully,  
Rochelle Gravance

**From:** [Jeff Sturm](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Annual pen raised pheasant release program proposal  
**Date:** Sunday, February 20, 2022 3:45:05 PM

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I am writing in strong OPPOSITION to any pheasant release program.

Montana has plenty of habitat that will sustain pheasants with little or no help. I've spent over 40 years hunting pheasants and enjoy the challenge and hard work of pheasant hunting. Hunting should be challenging and any hunter that puts the effort into it will find pheasants. Teaching kids and others that pheasant hunting is as easy as shooting at clay pigeons is the wrong idea. Teach them to love and respect the outdoors, good hunter ethics, and a commitment to hunting and they will love the sport as much as I do.

Don't keep wasting taxpayer dollars on ideas that everyone that knows pheasants, including my guess most upland wildlife biologists, will tell you doesn't work. Put the funds into habitat improvement and improving hunter access and Montana won't have to come up with wasteful ideas like pheasant stocking.

Thankyou  
Jeff Sturm  
3445 York Rd  
Helena Mt 59602

**From:** [Mark Savinski](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Annual release of pen raised pheasants on State Lands  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 8:50:45 AM

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Hello: I am sending this email to voice my tentative approval for the annual pen raised pheasant release program. My tentative approval is based on the program being geared toward increasing youth hunting opportunities and that the program MUST be monitored very closely by game biologists to ensure that this program does not have ANY negative effect on wild gamebird populations by disease introduction, etc. The program NEEDS TO follow the science to see what type of impact it has on native bird populations. Thank you in advance for taking my comments into consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark T. Savinski  
25 Sundowner Road  
Sheridan, MT 59749  
phone (406) 843-5389

**From:** [Carolyne Whelan](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Annual release of pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 7:23:15 PM

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Dear Deb O'Neill,

I was just reading the proposal for the annual release of pen raised ring-necked pheasants and would like to offer my community support AGAINST this proposal. It seems like a huge waste of funds, energy, and lives when it comes to the fledgeling/juvenile pheasants. From everything I've read in the proposal, this release doesn't adequately teach youths to hunt, and isn't a fair shot to adults. They also largely go un hunted or escape the hunting parameter, leaving them to be coyote food, which has a ripple effect on nearby communities.

Additionally, the use of prison labor to raise birds only for them to be killed is not rehabilitary for our incarcerated community and provides no real skills for them to use when reintegrating into society, but rather using them as free/cheap labor. Why not teach them to care for injured wildlife, or grow a garden? Why not start our youth out young by teaching them to hunt wild, adult pheasants, or deer, or better yet teach them to care for injured wildlife or grow a garden? This seems like spending for spending's sake, with no real wins for anyone but the coyotes. I appreciate you being open to public comment and hope you stay warm during this cold snap.

Your neighbor,

Carolyne Whelan  
Missoula, Montana



**From:** [Matt Fregerio](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Annual release of pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Saturday, February 26, 2022 8:07:48 AM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill,

I've read through and considered the details in the draft environmental assessment for the release of pen raised ring-neck pheasants. I'm writing to tell you that I'm in support of Alternative A: No Action.

I'm a native, resident Montanan and father of two young children. I hope they become Montana hunters in the near future. The funds that will be spent releasing pheasants would be better spent securing access and lands that myself and my kids could one day hunt and recreate on. Securing access and opportunity is much better way to achieve the goals of R3 as opposed to releasing pheasants.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Matt Fregerio  
(406) 239-7396

**From:** [Thure Johnson](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] ANNUAL RELEASE OF PEN-RAISED RING-NECKED PHEASANTS  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 10:27:26 AM

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When will we get off our high horse and realize that our attempts to manipulate nature usually end up screwing things up? Pheasants are a non-native species, and as much as I enjoy hunting and eating them, they are not a natural part of the ecosystem and biodiversity of our region. Stocking of any non-native species has consequences even though we may not realize what those consequences are. Let well enough alone and don't add to the mistakes of the past.

NO STOCKING OF NON-NATIVE SPECIES1

ThureJohnson@Gmail.com  
(406) 891-0127

**From:** [Cam Stringer](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] ANNUAL RELEASE OF PEN-RAISED RING-NECKED PHEASANTS DRAFT EA  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:49:22 AM

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I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed release of pen raised pheasants on state land in Montana.

Although I really appreciate that legislatures intent to expand pheasant hunting opportunities in Montana. This is not the ways to achieve it. We need to improve pheasant and wildlife habitat across the state including increasing CRP acreage. Release of dumb pen raised birds will have unattended consequences. Most hunters to hunt wild birds. If a few want to be able to walk up and shoot pen raised birds, they can go to private shooting preserves. Pen raised birds will probably just spread disease.

Please expend public funds on habitat improvements rather than a put and take approach to pheasant hunting.

Cam Stringer  
6823 Linda Vista Blvd  
Missoula, MT 59803

**From:** [Dustin Farrar](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] ANNUAL RELEASE OF PEN-RAISED RING-NECKED PHEASANTS DRAFT EA  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 3:53:22 PM

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I don't often take time to write comments on much. However looking at how many people are talking about this online and the fact most their opinions differ from mine I wanted to comment. I've read through the PDF and I for one support what is being proposed and I think it would bring a lot of opportunity for not only hunters and wildlife viewers. Most public land Montana is void of pheasant. Especially after opening weekend. And unless someone wants to pay to hunt on private you probably aren't going to find much unless you live in Northern or Eastern MT. Having pheasant introduced to public land is going to provide that opportunity. And possibly spread out the public land hunters so they aren't all flocking to just a few areas to hunt the truly wild population. There are a number of bird farms in MT and they all release birds for hunters and to my knowledge everything there is successful for both wild and pen raised birds. No reason to suspect doing it on public land would be any different. Yes mortality rates are high with pen raised birds but considering the annual mortality rate of a wild pheasant in MT is 72% its not really significantly higher. Honeslty I'm tired of traveling out of state to spend my money bird hunting and look forward to more opportunities to do it in state.

Dustin

**From:** [Tyler Patton - WCEC](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Annual Release of Pen-Raised Ring-Necked Pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:07:33 AM

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Raising and releasing pen-raised pheasants is a waste of money.

Tyler Patton

Environmental Scientist

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**West Central Environmental Consultants, Inc.**

1030 South Ave. W | Missoula, MT 59801

406.549.8487 tel | 406.529.0622 cell | 406.549.8490 fax

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**From:** [Ken Nyce](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] ANNUAL RELEASE OF PEN-RAISED RING-NECKED PHEASANTS  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 3:33:59 PM

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I prefer Alternative A (no stocking of farm birds). I believe stocking is a waste of my hunting license dollars.

Thanks,

Ken Nyce  
ALS# 03/10/1965-19

**From:** [Joey Paxman](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants Draft EA  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 22, 2022 3:03:15 PM

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To Whom it May Concern,

Greetings. I am a Montana resident and a licensed Montana upland bird hunting guide. I am writing to you to voice my opinion about the stocking of pen-raised pheasants in the State of Montana.

I am staunchly opposed to spending any amount of money on the stocking of pen-raised pheasants. This is a disgusting practice that does not encourage proper sportsmanship. It is also a gross waste of funds that would be better spent on improving habitat for our native species of game birds, such as sage grouse and sharptails.

Please consider ending this antiquated practice and instead spend the money on our native game bird species instead.

Thanks for your time,

~Joey Paxman  
Clinton, Montana

**From:** [Rich Hahn](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Attn: Deb O'Neill.annual pheasant release  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 3:36:11 PM

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Attn: Deb O'Neill

I received the email regarding the pheasant release program public comment. After reading the info you have posted and noticed some the references cited, i figured I give my 2 cents which I believe there is an important part that is being overlooked...atleast I'm not seeing it as a factor in this program.

My background for my comment: Back in mid 80s I raised and released pheasants for several years as a FFA project (in rural SW Minnesota) and in 1989 I worked at a private hunting reserve in California that do private guided hunts on their private land , while I was in the military too. My released pheasants survival rate was very high that could be compared to wild survival rate; while the private reserve was 90-100 percent fatality even beyond the hunt. Was rare to see any living past 4 months beyond hunt, and they released several thousand a year.

What I learned is there is a huge difference in how they are raised - including facilities in terms of survival and natural characteristics in the wild. All normal seasoned hunters can easily tell the difference between wild and these pen raised. Most if not all pen raised facilities are doing it wrong and that's why the results have a high fatality rate after being released. I'm guessing it's the lack of knowledge and more concerned about profits than the transition for the bird.

So my point is that in order for this expanded and existing program to be successful with the pheasant stock, the testing and awareness of disease is important but also the process (from incubation all the way to transport to release site) needs to be a requirement - regulated. The standard pen raised and especially like chickens and turkeys will never work. Use non-conventional methods to raise them and not enclosed facilities.

Good luck and all the best.

Rich Hahn



**From:** [Bryce Shaffer](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Bird Release  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 8:21:35 PM

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I support the release of these birds and feel it will help with the youth to get into the outdoors also into hunting!

**From:** [Tyler Heine](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comment for pheasant release.  
**Date:** Saturday, February 26, 2022 7:39:39 PM

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Tyler Heine's comment for the public comment period on the states prison raised pheasant release program.

I think the release of birds on state land during hunting season is a great idea. I run a lot of pheasants forever events and while PF's stance is no released birds for adults I see demand for it at every event. I have adults who have moved here from other states ask me where does MT release birds at ? There are big groups of people in other states who just hunt the WMA's for released birds. It is just another style of hunting. We seem to have opposition from people in our state who say we need the money focused on habitat. The best habitat in the country can't support enough birds for the western

Montana population. Maybe some of the money should go to habitat and some to release birds. I think having the state prison raise the birds is a great idea. That keeps costs down compared to private growers.

In the event of bad weather even the best habitat needs birds added to it or people will loose interest in the sport.

One idea I have is for adults who hunt the wmas to buy a pheasant wma permit. This could help offset some cost so people don't whine about the money. Then have under 18 yr olds be able to hunt wmas for free so that we can encourage youth to hunt.

I would be curious to know how much money is spent on Kokanee salmon and rainbow trout stocking. It is no different than birds and yet has a different stigma.

Thanks for your efforts.

Tyler Heine.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [mitch@silverstar.com](mailto:mitch@silverstar.com)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comment on Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants Draft EA  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 4:09:00 PM

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Please just stop releasing pen-reared pheasants.

Put the money into habitat management so that currently wild pheasants can remain healthy and self-sustaining.

Put-and-take operations, whether birds or fish, basically send a message that wildlife population and habitat management isn't necessary.

You might as well change your mission statement to: "If there aren't enough \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank), we'll just raise some and release them so you can shoot or catch as many as you want. Nature isn't needed."

Stocking any captive raised species (except for rare or Endangered Species in some cases) is antiquated, counter-productive and unnecessary. It's BAD wildlife management.

Just stop it.

--

Carl D. Mitchell  
Wildlife Biologist (Retired)  
55 Eagle Creek Road  
Wayan, ID 83285 USA

"The penalty of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds." Aldo Leopold.

**From:** [Raymond Gross](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#); [Raymond Gross](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comment on EA for PEN Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 5:32:32 PM

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I support Alternative A, NO ACTION. Stocking pen raised pheasants creates a possible disease risk to wild pheasants. States that have went to stocking pen raised birds have seen a crash in populations of wild birds. South Dakota and Pennsylvania are two of the states. Until there is scientific evidence that pen raised birds have no impact on wild birds this proposal should not be implemented.

Raymond Gross  
Dillon, Montana

**From:** [Raymond Gross](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comment on EA for pen released pheasants  
**Date:** Saturday, January 29, 2022 8:06:07 AM

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I OPPOSE STOCKING OF PEN RELEASED PHEASANTS.

I think it's great that they're doing this for youth hunters, but to release more in October and November to help harvest numbers is a ridiculous idea. The people who enjoy "shooting" pen raised birds, already have their private reserves and don't need to waste tax payers money on it.

I used to pheasant hunt and have friends in South Dakota. My friends tell me South Dakota is now primarily pen raised, stocked pheasants. They say that there are very few wild birds. They believe that the stocked birds transmitted diseases to the wild birds and there was a die off. This EA should include research about pen raised birds spreading disease and what has happened to wild bird populations in other states that have stocking of pen raised birds.

Ray Gross  
Dillon, MT

**From:** [Evan Phillippe](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comment on pheasant release EA  
**Date:** Sunday, January 30, 2022 10:42:12 AM

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I am writing to express my strong opposition to FWP's proposal to increase pheasant releases in Montana to provide hunter opportunities. Numerous studies have shown that released pheasants have extremely poor survival rates and can prove harmful to wild bird populations. Most bird hunters do not enjoy hunting pen raised birds. I'm an avid bird hunter and a parent and I have no interest in hunting released birds with my children.

Montana is fortunate to still have a lot of great upland bird habitat. It's all about habitat. FWP should focus their attention and resources on preserving existing habitat and acquiring more public lands where habitat can be improved to provide more future hunting opportunities, not on costly and ineffective pheasant release programs that jeopardize our existing wild bird hunting opportunities.

Thank you for considering my comment.

Sincerely,  
Evan Phillippe  
Missoula

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Chuck Harvey](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comment on Pheasant Release Program  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 7:27:12 PM

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Deb

I firmly believe in the Pheasant release program. I had suggested this to FWP at least 7 years ago when I lived in Townsend near the wildlife management area. I have English pointer bird dogs and the only way they get trained is to experience live birds in the wild. For years I worked the wildlife management area and would never find hens or roosters. I also applied to have birds released on my farm ground North of Geraldine but did not have enough winter cover or water so was turned down.

My premise is that if dogs and hunters find birds both are very happy. If you turn 100 birds lose and 90 get shot and only 2 or 3 survive the winter you still have dogs and hunters that have had a good experience. All of the wildlife management areas should be receiving birds (maybe even a couple times during the hunting season.).

Thanks for allowing me to comment.

Chuck Harvey

--

Chuck Harvey  
39 Antelope Dr  
Dillon, MT 59725

**From:** [Allison Stringer](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comment on proposed pheasant release  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 5:00:48 PM

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Hello,

I'd like to express my disagreement with the proposal to release so many pen-raised pheasants. I am an avid upland bird hunter and I would much rather those license dollars be spent on habitat improvement rather than a silly release of pen raised birds that won't make it through a winter with insufficient habitat and feed in many places. I appreciate your work to attempt to provide more bird hunting opportunities, but please be smart with our license dollars and use them on habitat improvement instead.

Respectfully,  
Allison Stringer  
Bozeman, MT  
406-529-8901



**From:** [Susan Peterson](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comment on Release of Pen-raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 2:55:31 PM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill,

I am opposed to the raising of pen raised pheasants and put and take hunting. It is not fair to the pheasants and not fair to hunters. This is not how Montana works.

I encourage you to choose Alternative A, which is No Action in the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants.

Sincerely,  
Susan Peterson  
PO Box 427  
Drummond, MT 59832

**From:** [Will Daniels](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] COMMENT: ANNUAL RELEASE OF PEN-RAISED RING-NECKED PHEASANTS  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 3:33:29 PM

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Thank you for the opportunity for input. I support Alternative A: No Action in the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants.

FWP has previously found pen-raised birds represent a futile effort toward bolstering populations. Dollars would be better spent on meaningful change and habitat improvements. I recommend you stick with wild birds and keep it that way.

Will Daniels  
4213 Jefferson Ct  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
(406) 564-0335

**From:** [Glenn Elison](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments on Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked pheasants EA  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 3:22:05 PM

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I support Alternative A, no action, in the draft EA regarding stocking pen-raised pheasants. The proposal to stock pheasants is:

- Bad biology. Survival of stocked pheasants is very low. Low survival is well documented in the scientific literature, including Montana FWP's own data. The number of stocked pheasants that are actually harvested by hunters is de minimise.
- The expenditure for raising and stocking pheasants is fiscally irresponsible. Because the harvest is de minimise the cost of each pheasant harvested is very high.
- The EA contains almost no cost analysis. Using the EA's figure of 50,000 released pheasants for \$1,000,000 with the well documented low harvest rates of 10% - 25%, the cost per pheasant is \$80 - \$200 per bird. This estimated cost is almost certainly low since some staff costs will undoubtedly be covered under other program costs by redirecting staff work. Expenditure of \$1,000,000 on almost anything habitat or access related would provide a larger benefit for the hunting public and hunter recruitment than this wasteful program.

This program is archaic. Metaphorically, it is stone age biology that predates the wheel. The fact that the program direction originates in the Legislature just makes it irresponsible at multiple levels.

Glenn Elison

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows

**From:** [Don Helmbrecht](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments on ANNUAL RELEASE OF PEN-RAISED RING-NECKED PHEASANTS DRAFT EA  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 5:25:16 PM

---

Dear Ms. O'Neill,

I am a 26-year resident of Montana and an avid upland bird hunter. I am writing to support Alternative A (No Action) in the proposed annual release of pen-raised ring-necked pheasants environmental assessment. The science clearly shows that introducing pen-raised birds does little to increase populations and that money could be more effectively used in improving and protecting pheasant habitat.

I am also very concerned with the issues raised by the Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers regarding ulterior motives in the appropriation process and whether this comment period is being conducted in good faith.

Let us follow the best available science in managing our State's wildlife and ensure that due consideration is given to public comment as the process is designed to do.

Sincerely,  
Don Helmbrecht  
Emigrant, MT

**From:** [Andrew McKean](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Cc:** [FWP Commissioner Region 6](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] comments on draft EA for annual pheasant release  
**Date:** Saturday, February 12, 2022 10:02:45 AM

---

Dear Deb O'Neill,

Please consider this correspondence (pasted here as an email message and attached as a Word document) as my official comments regarding the draft Environmental Assessment for FWP's annual pheasant release program.

While I acknowledge the legislative direction mandated by HB637, and fully understand the department's requirement to deliver programs in line with the legislation, I'd like to offer a couple of considerations that might provide a greater public value to pheasant releases and amplify the hunter recruitment and R3 efforts already enjoined by the department.

First, I strongly encourage the department to establish some sort of evaluation process that can inform both wildlife managers and agency constituents of the efficacy of the program. One of the tenets of the national R3 movement is to apply the same scientific rigor to hunter recruitment and retention efforts that agencies apply to wildlife management. I don't see any indication in the draft EA that informs how this evaluation will be conducted, or success will be measured. Without that, this appears to satisfy only the most basic requirement of the legislation: to dump birds on the ground in hopes that young hunters have a positive encounter with them.

I have reviewed a copy of the "Youth Pheasant Hunt Summary - Sept. 25-26, 2021" and find it lacking in analytic rigor. It's essentially a survey conducted in the moment and without the sort of nuance that can inform program managers of corrective actions. I note that the report also references a couple of unfortunate instances of dangerous hunting behavior and disappointing "wildness" of the planted birds.

Second, these pheasant releases can and should be considered an extension of FWP's established hunter education program. As a 20-year hunter education instructor and former Region 6 information and education program officer, I observe that upland bird hunting can be the most problematic hunting experience for beginning hunters. In these situations, hunters must often walk over uneven terrain with a loaded gun, know and observe safe shooting lanes, be aware of birds flying in erratic directions, be conscious of dogs and fellow hunters, and bring untested gun-handling skills to bear on a flying target. Those dynamics are compounded by the poor flight characteristics of pen-raised pheasants.

I'd argue that all these considerations create a graduate-level hunting experience rather than a safe and productive beginning hunting experience.

With those considerations, I'd encourage FWP to conduct a more intentional introduction to the day, possibly by inviting hunter ed instructors to prepare participants for success with a brief skills workshop. This would also tie the pheasant release program back to the established hunter ed program, which itself could promote the youth pheasant opportunities in a more cohesive and coherent manner.

On a programmatic level, I encourage FWP to work with participants, partners, and legislators

to sunset this initiative, rather than to build infrastructure (the Deer Lodge prison bird-rearing facility) to perpetuate it. At its essence, this is a backward-looking program that uses artificial propagation to establish hunting traditions and ethics. To borrow a term from political theory, this looks a lot like welfare for hunters.

Put-and-take hunting programs tend to have very little support from the non-hunting public, and represent a poor investment of license dollars compared with the expansive benefits of improving upland habitats on both public and private lands. Additionally, basing hunter recruitment efforts on long-term infrastructure is both more cost-effective over time and creates a more durable relationship between hunter and agency.

Thanks for the opportunity to provide these comments. Please let me know if I can clarify or expand on any of my points.

Yours in conservation,  
Andrew McKean

--

Andrew McKean  
359 Aitken Road  
Glasgow, MT 59230  
[montanamckean@gmail.com](mailto:montanamckean@gmail.com)  
406.263.5442

**From:** [Tana Kradolfer](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments on draft EA for pheasant releases  
**Date:** Thursday, February 10, 2022 12:01:45 PM

---

To Whom it May Concern: I have the following comments regarding the EA for release of pheasants for hunter recruitment:

1. In Part 1 number 2 of the EA it states that this type of activity is prohibited unless the commission determines, based on scientific investigation and after public hearing that a species of wildlife poses no threat to native wildlife and plants...and has significant public benefits. Since the only scientific study sighted in the entire EA(Part 1, #5) is from a study done in 1951 it would appear that there is very little interest in having science to back up the results of pheasant releases good or bad. The EA also states that FWP has been conducting pheasant releases on private land for 35 with no significant impacts(13a). In truth the actual number of years of pheasant release is less than that since in recent years the demand for release from private land owners dried up leaving extra funds in the UGBHEP pheasant release fund. Essentially this program up to now is based on and will continue on with hearsay and opinion to measure the outcomes.

[2.In \[2.in\]](#) Part 1 #3 we are presented with a vague schedule for the releases to occur in September, October and November. A more detailed schedule of release timing, locations and bird quantities should be provided.

3. I would also like more information on the established R3 Work group in #13e. Who will be establishing the metrics to measure the success of the program and how? If we are to assume as stated in the EA that there is some concern about predators being attracted to the release areas to get a easy meal of released birds will there be a complete assessment of what wild birds are present prior to release?

4. In region 3 it is stated in the Upland Gamebird Habitat Enhancement Program that no time or monetary resources exist for any habitat projects in Region 3. If you have no manpower with time for habitat projects where will you get the manpower for 3 months of bird releases and the assessment of the results of those releases? I am concerned that if the only scientific feedback that you will rely on is the spring/summer crow counts then it's possible that your assessment and response times will be too slow to intervene if a predator problem arises in a release site. All it takes is one red fox and all her offspring to move into an area like Canyon Ferry to make a big impact on brood mortality. I hope you have allowed for the man power it will take to stay on top of this. Otherwise you have risked the few wild birds that are established there all for a few shots at some poor flying pen raised birds.

Overall the EA is lacking in detail and the very science it is mandated to be guided by.

Respectfully submitted,

Tana Kradofer  
Belgrade, MT



**From:** [Paul Bradford](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments on Pheasant EA  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 6:56:53 PM

---

I support the proposed action (Alternative B) in the EA, and as a long-time Montana bird hunter, think it's the right way to go. Please continue to press forward with the action, realizing that you'll likely face opposition to the action.

Paul Bradford  
102 Pine Street  
Libby, MT 59923

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows

**From:** [Matt Valitchka](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments on proposed pheasant release in 2022  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 9:10:46 AM

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Since I could not find where to offer comments on this topic on the FWP website, I wanted to send you this email with my thoughts.

I've been an active member of Pheasants Forever since it began in the early '80s in Minnesota. The story of PF's success all across the pheasant range has been focused on habitat improvement, whether through CRP under the Farm Bill, various other federal or state programs to set aside farmlands, and private efforts to improve winter cover, food plots, and nesting cover, etc.

Planting pen-raised pheasants has time and again proven to be both costly and ineffective. I also find it rather far fetched that in Montana the republican sponsors of this initiative are grasping at a rationale of using prison inmates to raise pheasants so they might learn "occupational skills"--seriously? (We know that actually all this contortion relates to losing a milk contract at the prisons ...).

Any new young person entering the field toting a shotgun to hunt pheasants will be misguided and shocked at the difference between wild birds who run and fly very fast, compared to pen raised "chickens" that don't want to fly. Why give these youngsters some false sense of this sport being so darn "easy"? PF has mentoring programs that do a much better job of preparing and introducing young hunters to upland birds, maybe the legislature should put its funding into those efforts instead.

So with all due respect, I consider the state's idea of planting pheasants for youth hunts entirely misguided. Let's put those funds to real work improving habitat (that will include many more species than just pheasants) or access, mentoring and other more meaningful job training options at the prisons.

Thank you,  
Matt Valitchka  
221 Lewis and Clark Trl  
Bozeman, MT. 50718  
(Member of Gallatin Valley Pheasants Forever)

--

Matt Valitchka

[mjvalitchka@gmail.com](mailto:mjvalitchka@gmail.com)



**From:** [Garret Visser](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments on Release of Pen-Raised Ring-Necked Pheasants  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 22, 2022 11:50:59 AM

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Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants. While I appreciate MFWPs efforts to create additional hunting opportunities, especially for youth hunters, I urge the Department to select Alternative A (No Action).

I am an avid bird hunter and spend 40 days a year chasing around my dogs. While I currently reside in Idaho, I have many of my best memories chasing wild pheasants in Montana. I moved away from Montana three years ago and still miss the wild pheasant opportunities that Montana offers. Idaho has many pen-raised pheasant release sites across the state- some of these provide good opportunities for hunters new and old. However, there is chronic overcrowding and significant safety issues correlating to the increase in hunting pressure on the release sites. While most of Idaho's pen-raised release efforts have focused on areas where wild pheasants do not occur in significant numbers, they have been starting to release birds in prime wild bird habitat. I have experienced a precipitous decline in wild bird encounters in certain areas where release birds have been placed over wild birds. There will be increased hunting pressure and habitat degradation that will need to be addressed if the program increases. Additionally, there have been issues with adjacent landowners due to the increase in hunting pressure.

Idaho has all but lost its' wild pheasant populations due to a combination of agricultural practices, human development, loss of enrolled acres in the Conservation Reserve Program, and planting pen-raised birds over wild birds. I encourage MFWP to prioritize their efforts to address these factors before they reach the levels that Idaho currently is experiencing. Relying on wild birds will be a time and money saver for the state if the Department provides them with the resources they need- Good cover, food, and water. The release program will only be a band-aid over the larger issues facing pheasant hunting in Montana. In fact, it will likely exacerbate the issues and may inhibit good work that could be done for wild birds.

While I understand legislation ties the Department to pen-raised birds, I encourage managers to consider investments into habitat improvements on state lands instead. If increasing opportunities for youth hunters is the main goal, I would suggest MFWP to only release pen-raised birds prior to the youth pheasant season opener, then cease release efforts after the youth season.

Thank you very much for opportunity to comment.

Garret Visser  
Boise, Idaho

**From:** [Ben Deeble](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Cc:** [Tom Deveny](#); [Bob Hayler](#); [Robert Jeffrey](#); [Jay Gore \(tealdux@hotmail.com\)](#); [Glenn Marangelo](#); [Todd Cross](#); [Trent Kleppen](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments: pheasant release program, Big Sky Upland Bird Assoc.  
**Date:** Friday, February 25, 2022 4:03:05 PM  
**Attachments:** [Pheasant\\_release\\_cmts\\_BSUBA\\_final.pdf](#)

---

Dear Ms. O'Neill:

Please see our comments attached.

Regards,

Ben Deeble, pres.  
Big Sky Upland Bird Assoc.  
c. 406-327-9939

**From:** [Michael Garrity](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Cc:** [Sara Johnson](#); [Jason Christensen](#); [John Carter](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Draft EA for annual pheasant release  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 6:49:24 PM

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February 28, 2022

Deb O'Neill  
Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
P.O. Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Dear Ms. O'Neill,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. Please accept these comments from me on behalf of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Native Ecosystems Council, and Yellowstone to Uintas Connection.

How will this proposal affect native birds? Is there a risk of transmission of disease from the pen-raised pheasants to native birds and the predators that might eat them?

Scientific studies overwhelmingly show a negligible survival rate among pen-raised pheasants released into the wild. They lack both the genetics and experience to evade predators. This proposal asks license buyers and taxpayers to fork over a million dollars to feed predators.

Will any of the pen-raised pheasants be released in wilderness study areas or wilderness areas?

Pen raised birds do not provide that challenge. Shooting them is similar to shooting chickens in a barrel rather than wild birds.

The stated objective of this effort is to address the well-documented decline in young hunter numbers by providing them with opportunity. No doubt these are laudable goals, but is this the best way to pursue them? The problem of declining number of hunters isn't lack of opportunity to hunt tame [pheasants.It \[pheasants.it\]](#) is because young hunters are running out of places to hunt due to of lack of access to public lands and denial of private land opportunities due to epidemic outfitter leasing and

sale of Montana lands to uber-rich out-of-state interests. MT FWP would be better directed in protecting habitat for native birds.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely yours,

Mike Garrity

Executive Director

Alliance for the Wild Rockies

P.O. Box 505

Helena, MT 59624

and for

Sara Johnson, Director

Native Ecosystems Council

P.O. Box 125

Willow Creek, MT 59760

And for

Jason L. Christensen

Director Yellowstone to Uintas Connection

P.O. Box 363

Paris, Idaho 83261

**From:** [Dave](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Draft EA: Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 6:58:13 PM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill:

Regarding the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA): Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants, I am writing to support Alternative A (No Action).

As mentioned in the draft EA, attempts to supplement wild ring-necked pheasant populations by releasing pen-reared birds is not a new idea in Montana or elsewhere. However, more than 40 years ago studies (including those in Montana) began to present evidence that the release of pen-reared birds is neither effective nor cost efficient. I appreciate that FWP does not suggest in the draft that this reality would change if the proposed action were to be taken.

Therefore, it appears the primary question is regarding how public funding should be used to create opportunity for new hunters. In my opinion, the goal of promoting hunter success by expanding the illusion of an unnatural "shooting-fish-in-a-bowl" scenario for a few days each season likely would not result in long-term hunter recruitment or retention.

In addition to providing no supporting evidence regarding the potential for recruiting new hunters, I find it very troubling that FWP offers no scientifically sound plan for assessing the effectiveness of the proposed program should it be implemented. The legislative language suggesting that three counties "are ineligible for pheasant releases in order to serve as control sites should any assessment of releases vs non-releases counties be desired" does not reassure the public that any such study would be conducted.

The above concern is compounded by the *ex post facto* timing of FWP's statement that "In September 2021, the first season of this effort, FWP released 2,094 16-week-old pheasants on seven WMAs in FWP Regions 3, 4, 5, and 7..." In essence, the public is being asked to comment on a program already initiated on state lands. The legislatively steered FWP cart continues to remain an unsettling distance ahead of the horse when it comes to public involvement.

I commend FWP on its past efforts to protect, restore and enhance native habitat for upland game birds and other wildlife species. However, House Bill 637 and this EA do not represent an effort to continue following this course.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Dave Hagen, Helena



**From:** [Royal Merrill](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Draft Pheasant EA  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 4:40:32 PM

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I am thoroughly impressed with how forward thinking Montana is when it comes to management of its resources in regards to both the game and even more so the hunters.

I follow most of the Western States wildlife sites and forums, and although a few are ramping up their visions and efforts, others are way back down the curve. I am a native Idahoan, transplanted by circumstances many years ago to the Dystopian State of Kalifornia. I long ago stopped hunting, fishing, birding in that state as the experience continually degraded over time. I continue to hunt in Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming and Montana, as the opportunity arises.

Hunting pheasants in my youth (early 60's) was a primal joy. My dad and I would take the Lab out early in the morning, hunt on nearby farms, with permission, and be home with a brace of ring-necks in time for me to catch the bus to school. I am now 75 and haven't hunted birds for many years, but the memory of the experience is clear and sweet. That you are actively working to make that experience available for today's youth is praiseworthy.

Kudos to you!

Royal Merrill

Pioneer, CA

**From:** [mark korte](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Expanded pheasant release proposal  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:58:03 AM

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To Whom it May Concern -

I have been avidly hunting upland birds in MT for over 30 years. I would like to voice my strong disapproval for the proposed expansion of the MT Pheasant Release program. This is not only bad biology - its a colossal waste of license revenues that could be directed towards habitat improvement and Youth Hunter Education programs.

MT offers world-class wild bird hunting opportunities. Hunters come from all over the world to hunt wild upland birds here. Stocking programs have never added materially to the health of our wild birds - they have only provided "targets" for a few weeks each year - birds surviving the first few weeks of season almost invariably succumb to weather and predators - in large part due to insufficient overwintering habitat. Stocking tame birds is a band aid that does not drill to the core of the real problem of poor carryover. This can only be addressed thru habitat improvement. Please do not waste our license dollars on such short sighted schemes. Let's spend that money on lasting improvements, not higher body counts of semi-tame birds. We had to learn this lesson the hard way with trout. Lets take a lesson from this and do something real for our upland bird hunting heritage.

I respectfully Thank You for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

Thank You

Mark Korte  
PO Box 14541  
Choteau, MT 59422

**From:** [Curtis Settergren](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Farm raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 8:06:19 AM

---

This is a waste of money at the very least and a risk to wild pheasants by potentially spreading disease. Available research shows very low survival rates and essentially no reproduction in the wild of farm raised pheasants - ie study by Washington state.  
The only reason for such a proposal is to line someone's pockets.  
Leave farming pheasants to the private sector and people who want to train their dogs on them can pay the farmers directly.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Brian Rogers](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Delivery Status Notification (Failure)  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 12:25:24 PM

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Date: Tue, 15 Feb 2022 11:30:50 -0700  
Subject: Proposal for 2022 pheasant release program  
Dear Deb,

I have been an avid pheasant hunter in MT since 1972.

I think the mandate by the 2021 legislature to increase funding for the pheasant release program is short sighted and is biologically ill conceived.

While releasing pheasants in the WMA may increase hunter recruitment, we both know released birds are mostly killed by hunters or predators within 36 hours of release. Releasing birds does **nothing** to improve pheasant populations.'

I personally feel **limited funds** should be spent on pheasant release and **more funds** should be spent on acquisition or long-term lease of habitat.

Thanks for considering my views

Brian Rogers  
Townsend, MT

**From:** [Paul Schnell](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fwd: FWP pheasant releases  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 4:43:03 PM

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Paul Schnell** <[pschnell0@gmail.com](mailto:pschnell0@gmail.com)>  
Date: Wed, Feb 23, 2022 at 4:04 PM  
Subject: FWP pheasant releases  
To: <[doneil@mt.gov](mailto:doneil@mt.gov)>

Dear Mr. O" Neil,

**After reviewing the department's EA on put and take (P&T) RNP's I am weighing in AGAINST this activity on several grounds.**

- 1) RNP releases are a wasteful use of taxpayer/sportsmen's dollars.
- 2) P&T does NOTHING to bolster habitat and biodiversity.
- 3) \$ is BETTER spent on habitat preservation and/or purchase.
- 4) I studied this activity in upstate NY in the early '80's and found that P&T RNP's essentially fed the predators e.g. owls, hawks and foxes. In other words, this 'feel good' activity possesses very limited sporting potential and was a gross waste of \$ better spent on habitat or native wildlife programs/reintroductions.

Please reply when you receive/read this email letter. Thank you!

Paul Schnell  
Montana's Eagle Experience, LLC  
Noxon, MT 59853  
406-847-7008

--

*Paul Schnell*

**From:** [Paul Schnell](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fwd: FWP pheasant releases  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 11:41:21 PM

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Paul Schnell** <[pschnell0@gmail.com](mailto:pschnell0@gmail.com)>  
Date: Wed, Feb 23, 2022 at 4:04 PM  
Subject: FWP pheasant releases  
To: <[doneil@mt.gov](mailto:doneil@mt.gov)>

Dear Mr. O" Neil,

**After reviewing the department's EA on put and take (P&T) RNP's I am weighing in AGAINST this activity on several grounds.**

- 1) RNP releases are a wasteful use of taxpayer/sportsmen's dollars.
- 2) P&T does NOTHING to bolster habitat and biodiversity.
- 3) \$ is BETTER spent on habitat preservation and/or purchase.
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Please reply when you receive/read this email letter. Thank you!

Paul Schnell  
Montana's Eagle Experience, LLC  
Noxon, MT 59853  
406-847-7008

**From:** [Jeff Herbert](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fwd: MSA Comments - Pheasant Release EA  
**Date:** Friday, February 25, 2022 11:17:15 AM  
**Attachments:** [MSA Comments Pheasant Release EA .docx](#)

---

Please accept the attached comments from the Montana Sportsmen Alliance in regards to the proposed Pheasant Release EA.

Montana Sportsmen Alliance Leadership Group

Joe Perry - Conrad

John Borgreen - Gt Falls

Don Thomas - Lewistown

Doug Kring - Lewistown

Steve Schindler - Glasgow

Andrew McKean - Glasgow

Dale Tribby - Miles City

JW Westman - Park City

Jeff Herbert - Helena

Ray Gross- Dillon

Robert Wood - Hamilton

Tim Their - Eureka

>

>

**From:** [Allan Gadoury](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] FWP Pheasant release  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 5:28:05 PM

---

I support FWP pheasant release program.

Best Regards,

Allan Gadoury  
Bozeman, MT



**From:** [craig v eggers](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] FWP pheasant releases  
**Date:** Saturday, January 29, 2022 5:44:07 PM

---

Having read the EA proposal I fully support the proposal from FWP. The positives for youth hunting; ability for people with slight disabilities to participate in hunting birds, and the (very rare) possibility for growth of a native bird population from holdovers outweigh the possible negatives.

The fact is, the concern for pen raised birds polluting any native gene pool is minimal given the mortality estimates for pen raised birds and given the precautions FWP is taking with regarding to disease etc. Anything that makes the outdoor experience richer and more rewarding for Montanans is a good thing.

Craig V Eggers  
340 Montana Way  
Ennis, Montana  
59729

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows

**From:** [R.D. GRIFFIN](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] HB 637 Comment  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 1:53:07 PM  
**Attachments:** [HB 637 Comment.docx](#)

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**From:** [John William Miller](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] HB 637  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 10:28:48 AM

---

To whom it may concern:

I ask that you not support the provision in HB 637 that provides funding for stocking "farm raised pheasants" in our state. The estimated cost of 1 million dollars for this program is a poor use of this money as it could be used elsewhere towards areas of greater needs for Montana's FW&P. Many years ago we stopped the stocking of hatchery raised trout in our streams and rivers as good research demonstrated that hatchery reared fish have a very low chance of surviving over the long term in these moving water ecosystems. The result has been our streams and rivers now are populated with trout that have been reared by resident populations, thus adapting from birth to that particular habitat. Farm-raised pheasants is nothing more than a program that would allow for easy taking of these birds by hunters and predators thus resulting in a very slim chance of these populations sustaining themselves year to year.

Again this is money that could be used in a much more beneficial manner elsewhere.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
John Miller

Roscoe, Montana

**From:** [Denny Parsons](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] I put regarding pheasant release  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 7:57:07 PM

---

To whom it may concern, I fully support and would like to see annual pen-raised pheasant releases as proposed in the draft proposal.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Bruce Thomas](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] I'm all for the release of pen raised pheasants. Hopefully you can release some around Fairfield an Conrad. The pheasant hunting has been terrible up there the last few years  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 2:01:07 PM

---

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [jim\\_xplortheoutdoors.com](mailto:jim_xplortheoutdoors.com)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] In addition to my citizen application.  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 8:56:13 PM

---

Sorry, I also forgot that I started teaching field dressing and butchering classes down at the Glendale Cabela's for 6 years and then six years at the Missoula location.

**From:** [dave@daveheine.com](mailto:dave@daveheine.com)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] MT building upland bird hunting  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 11:07:06 AM

---

Good morning, Deb:

I previously sent you an email supporting the proposed raising and/or purchasing rooster Pheasants for release on various state owned wildlife management areas. My understanding this is to occur prior to the youth weekend.

I'm the VP of the big sky chapter of the National Shoot to Retrieve Association. This is an upland field trial group. Our membership of over 60 people has voiced their support for the importance of recruiting youth and I know our members that I visited with all shown support the mentoring youth in the field. We would love to see this program in the future have mentors paired with youth who don't have an opportunity to hunt or do not have a hunting dog. We can provide the dog and provide solid mentoring to these kids. I have been involved in this for approximately 5 years through our Pheasants forever chapter in the Flathead Valley. It is very rewarding.

We would love to see the program grow and have stocking occur on federal refuge land that are appropriate. Such as Batavia and Blaisdel here in the Flathead Valley. The federal ground along the North Shore is immense as well. If this could all be included that would be a wonderful bonus for hunters in our valley.

Once again thank you for all of your efforts and I appreciate the proactive action of FWP and the state of Montana. Good things are in the future for Montana.

Thank you,  
Dave Heine MA ARA, Broker  
Accredited Rural Appraiser  
David J Heine & Associates LLC  
A Montana Licensed Broker  
240 First Avenue West  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
Phone: (406) 890-2117  
Fax: (406) 890-2119  
Cell:(406) 253-4991  
[www.daveheine.com](http://www.daveheine.com) [[dave@daveheine.com](mailto:dave@daveheine.com)]

**From:** [Marcus Strange](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] MWF Comments re Programmatic Pheasant Release EA  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 11:15:12 PM  
**Attachments:** [MWF 2022 February Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments.pdf](#)

---

Ms. O'Neill,

I hope this finds you well. Please see the attached comments from the Montana Wildlife Federation in regards to the Programmatic Pheasant Release EA. We are incredibly grateful for not only this opportunity, but also for all the work you and your colleagues have done to bring this forward.

Best regards,



**Marcus Strange (He/Him)**  
Director of State Policy and Government  
Relations  
Montana Wildlife Federation

- [\(406\) 4580227](#) | [\(406\) 9162585](#)
- [mstrange@mtwf.org](mailto:mstrange@mtwf.org)
- [www.montanawildlife.org](http://www.montanawildlife.org)  
[\[montanawildlife.org\]](#)
- PO Box 1175, Helena, MT, 59624



**Become a Wildlife Advocate**  
[\[montanawildlife.org\]](#)

*I gratefully acknowledge I live, work, hunt, fish, and grow in the homeland of the Niitsítpiis-stahkoi and Salish Kootenai. Visit <https://native-land.ca/> [\[native-land.ca\]](#) to learn more about the Indigenous land where you live.*



**From:** [Bob Bahr](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] New pheasant release plan comment.  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 1:52:27 PM

---

I am against this plan. I feel that the proposed pheasant release plan should not proceed. The current problem is lack of nesting habitat and huntable cover on public accessible lands. Drought and loss of CRP is a major factor.

Releasing large numbers of pen raised birds will a waste of time and money. It will also concentrate hunter's, many with little or no upland bird hunting experience creating potential safety issues. Most birds will end up feeding predators and winter kill. The money would be much better spent on habitat improvements and developing more public hunting access.

Keep politicians and politically appointed board members out of wildlife management decisions!!!

23 year Montana resident and active upland bird hunter.

Robert Allen Bahr  
ALS# 10/07/1960  
1223 Water St Lewistown MT 59457

**From:** [John Bateman](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] No pen-raised pheasants with my dime  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 11:37:03 AM

---

Dear Ms. O'Neill,

I am writing as an avid upland bird hunter and Montana resident to encourage you to oppose the proposed \$1 million dollar outlay by FWP to stock pen-raised pheasants. This proposal will only waste an enormous amount of money and not result in improved hunting opportunities. I want my FWP dollars to go to supporting habitat expansion and improvement and to increasing opportunities to hunt wild, not farmed, birds. Thank you very much.

--

John Bateman  
Missoula, MT  
406-370-4004

**From:** [Noah Davis](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NO to Pen-Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 9:01:59 AM

---

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my disagreement with the million dollars allotted to pen-raised pheasants.

Coming from Pennsylvania where there is a robust pheasant stocking program, the common hunter understands that these birds have an average life-expectancy after release of 10-14 days. Between hunters, hawks, owls, eagles, falcons, coyotes, foxes, and cars these birds are the easiest target in the field. More natural predators will kill the pheasants than the youth hunters this initiative hopes to help.

Then the weather. The mountains of PA can be brutally cold and snowy, but it's still not as intense as Montana winters, which take a toll on wild birds who are hardier than their farmyard cousins.

This money would be better used for habitat improvement or property acquisition. More land for young hunters to hunt, and better quality habitat means better birds, this will recruit and retain hunters.

Thank you,  
Noah Davis

**From:** [Bob Gates](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] No to Pen-Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 10:14:33 AM

---

Dear Ms.O'Neill,

I am writing to support Alternative A: No Action in the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants.

Biologically, I object to stocking tame,pen-raised birds, which have a very low survival rate. Studies show that pen-raised birds represent a wasted effort toward bolstering populations. These birds do not survive long enough to be hunted by hunters.

This fake put-and-take opportunity teaches to kill, rather than to hunt; it diminishes the experience.These birds are tame.

Fiscally, I am completely opposed to this wasteful use of fish and game dollars. Again this is politics over science.

Thank you,  
Bob Gates

**From:** [Michael McLeod](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] No to Pheasant stocking  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:19:57 AM

---

If I want to eat a pen raised bird I'll go to the grocery store and buy a chicken. Furthermore, this is just an expensive target practice session and should not be confused with hunting.. No to Pheasant stocking and the R3 movement.

Mike McLeod  
Helena, MT

**From:** [Eric Cole](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] No to Programmatic Pheasant Release EA  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:43:15 AM

---

Big no on wasting vital conservation dollars to introduce a penned “game bird” enjoyed by mostly wealthy individuals who are more interested in killing than conserving. Barriers of entry to hunting upland game are high, but seems like bird numbers aren’t the number one issue. There are many places where conservation dollars are well spent but this doesn’t seem to be that. Habitat protection and revitalization seems like it should be a higher priority to the longevity of upland birds. Gallatin County is destroying habitat, Madison County is destroying habitat, these “big influx of human” area that are destroying wildlife habitat need to be reeled in a bit. That’s the long term impact that will play the most vital role in a species survival.

Thank you,

Eric Cole

**From:** [Eric Goldwarg](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Objection to pen-raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:47:56 AM

---

Dear Ms. O'Neill:

I am writing to object to FWP releasing pen-raised pheasants, for the reasons set forth in BHA's Feb. 22, 2022 letter to you. Thank for you considering the views of Montana upland hunters.

Eric Goldwarg  
Bozeman, MT

**From:** [Eric Scranton](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Objection to Pheasant stocking proposal  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 1:26:10 PM

---

**I am writing writing to support Alternative A: No Action** on the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants. I oppose the use of a substantial amount of license dollars to purchase pen-raised ring-necked pheasants as a half-hearted gesture toward recruiting new hunters. There are many further reasons biological and otherwise which have been enumerated by others and conservation organizations.

Eric Scranton  
Bozeman, MT.

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**From:** [dave.daveheine.com](http://dave.daveheine.com)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] opportunities  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 10:53:22 AM

---

Deb:

I appreciate the department looking into releasing birds to increase hunting opportunities. We have many areas of Montana now that is difficult for newcomers or for youth to be able to successfully hunt Pheasants.

When raised properly these pheasants will be disease-free, will be strong flyers and as hearty as we could expect for domesticated bird.

I have been involved with youth hunting programs through pheasants forever and when a hunt is replicated over and over it may have a negative effect on a young bird-dog. If this is a hunt for an afternoon where young dog is exposed to 2 or 3 domesticated roosters it's not an issue. Many times naïve roosters are much better for young bird dogs than the wise old rooster.

I am very excited to see the department so involved in our upland birds in Montana. We have a wonderful resource in this state and I'm glad to see this resource getting the respect it deserves.

Once again thank you for all the good discussion that were having about different options and potential programs. I am for the release of birds with a review of the success and the challenges on an annual basis. This is not a stocking program this is a hunting opportunity program.

Thank you,  
Dave Heine MA ARA, Broker  
Accredited Rural Appraiser  
David J Heine & Associates LLC  
A Montana Licensed Broker  
240 First Avenue West  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
Phone: (406) 890-2117  
Fax: (406) 890-2119  
Cell:(406) 253-4991  
[www.daveheine.com](http://www.daveheine.com) [[daveheine.com](http://daveheine.com)]

**From:** [Bill](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Oppose Release of pen raised birds.  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:18:50 AM

---

My ranching family strongly opposes release of pen raised birds as their survival rate is proven to be very low in the wild and the monetary cost to the tax payers is ridiculous.

Professional Regards,  
Bill Waldron

**From:** [william shoutis](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Opposed to pen raised pheasant plan  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:37:16 AM

---

We don't need more helpless pheasants for the coyotes, and the money could be better spent on habitat for the native upland birds.

Please don't try to make Montana a giant pheasant farm like SD.

There are enough pheasants to hunt in MT. We don't need to recruit more hunters to compete on the block management access land where these birds reside. Recruitment is not an issue in MT.

Thanks,

William Shoutis

**From:** [John Beaver](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Opposed to pen-raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:15:28 AM

---

Ms. O'Neill:

Please note my opposition to releasing pen-raised pheasants as an attempt to improve hunter success and recruit young hunters. As an enthusiastic upland bird hunter, and a biologist, it is clear from my own experience and the literature that releasing pheasants is a very poor substitute for improving and maintaining habitat, or providing additional access.

Please direct the time and funds identified for releasing birds to improving habitat and access.

Thank you.

**John Beaver**

**WESTECH Environmental Services, Inc.**

P.O. Box 6045 | Helena, MT | 59604

Office 406.442.0950 | Cell 406.459.4150

[WESTECH-ENV.COM](http://WESTECH-ENV.COM) [[westech-env.com](http://westech-env.com)]



**From:** [Rob Kayser](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Opposed to planned pheasant releases  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 8:18:59 AM

---

Good afternoon,

It has come to my attention that the MT FWP is planning on stocking pheasants to address declining bird numbers.

I find this plan highly concerning for a multitude of reasons. The primary concern that I have is this will do nothing to stop the decline of game bird populations in the state. Habitat is what produces wild birds and maintains population numbers, and without addressing the habitat aspect of the problem, the population will continue to decline until opportunity is wholly dependent on released, pen-raised birds.

Not to mention the added cost of my funding dollars being spent- correction, wasted- on an increasingly unsustainable model of hunting opportunity.

Protecting game bird habitat also protects habitat for a large amount of other game and non-game species. It is the best use of funding dollars, has the widest of benefits, and it doesn't have the hint of funneling public funds into pre-selected private pockets. Released game birds have been shown to have survival rates near zero, meaning they are one of the worst options for expanding or restoring pheasant populations.

I hope this email finds you well, and that you will take these considerations to heart.

Regards,

Robert Kayser

**From:** [Bill Cunningham](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Opposition to pen-raised pheasant program  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 11:00:30 AM

---

As a long time avid Montana pheasant hunter I am strongly opposed to wasting sportsman dollars on a million dollar folly for releasing pen-raised pheasants. A very low percentage of these domesticated birds survive in the wild and the few that do may adversely impact wild pheasants and other wildlife.

The risk and expense isn't worth the marginal and unproven gains.

Put the money to better use, such as increasing hunter access and improving upland bird game habitat.

Sincerely,

Bill Cunningham  
P.O. Box 1404  
Choteau, MT 59422  
(406) 466-5699

**From:** [Michael Kubas](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Opposition to RELEASE OF PEN-RAISED RING-NECKED PHEASANTS  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 12:48:26 PM

---

I am writing in opposition to the release of pheasants on State Lands. This is a very poor use of funds. The vast majority of pen raised pheasants will simply be food for skunks, coyotes, foxes, owls, and other predator specie given the very low survival rate of pen raised birds. Further, hunting these birds is not consistent with fair chase principles given their relative ease to hunt. Montana made the wise decision in the 1970's to stop stocking our rivers with trout and we have seen the benefits compound over time. I feel if we were to spend this money on improving wildlife habitat on these State lands, a similar story could be told in 30 years.

Respectfully,

**MIKE KUBAS** | 406.781.0193

Great Falls MT

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**From:** [Kyle Reedy](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Peasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 3:16:54 PM

---

Hello,

I'm writing to support Alternative A: No Action in the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants. Since the inception of this proposal via HB 637, we have opposed the use of license dollars to purchase pen-raised ring-necked pheasants as a half-hearted gesture toward recruiting new hunters.

Biologically, I object to stocking pen-raised birds, which have an embarrassingly low survival rate. Study after study, many cited in this EA, find that pen-raised birds represent a futile effort toward bolstering populations. These birds rarely survive long enough to be effectively utilized by hunters. Montana FWP's own 2004 review of upland game bird biology and habitat relationships as part of the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program states, "Stocked birds contribute little to harvest or population growth in pheasant populations. In Montana, Weigand and Janson (1976) noted that hunters subsequently harvested only 13%-24% of pheasants released 1-3 weeks prior to hunting season opening." We trust FWP to make sound biological decisions when managing our wildlife and question why it would go against its own science to conduct these releases.

Is there a better place to spend money? Habitat improvement for natural regeneration might be more sustainable.

Thanks,

Kyle

Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [Daniel Ermatinger](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised birds.  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 8:47:56 AM

---

I oppose the funding of pen raised and believe efforts should focus on wild birds, habitat and access.

Thank you,

Dan Ermatinger

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Andrew Brown](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised Pheasant  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:10:43 AM

---

Greetings to FWP !

I'm writing in support of BHA's Alternative A proposal (no put and shoot pen raised pheasant hunts).

Please don't waste our monies on the million dollar proposal in favor of released birds.

Pen raised pheasant often aren't even able to fly.

They do little to prepare hunters and dogs for true bird hunting.

The true joy in wild bird hunting comes from working with your dog(s), (hopefully) choosing suitable wild bird habitat, walking miles, watching them do what they were born and bred to do, and building a relationship and bond that is hard to describe to people who haven't shared it.

This all has to be earned and canned hunts do little to promote this.

My observation is that it encourages the participants to obsess on limits filled (birds killed). Their dogs are often back in their kennels until the next time. Quick, easy limits. Fair-Chase? Hardly...

Some of the best days hunting with my dogs (may) have yielded one bird after miles of walking. Feathers for them, smiles all around, fresh wild meat for dinner, satisfaction earned...

Monies spent on developing or improving wildlife habitat would be much better use of our license dollars.

Thank you for accepting and considering comments.

Regards, Andrew J Brown

**From:** [Steve Summerhill](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised Pheasant  
**Date:** Thursday, February 10, 2022 12:39:33 PM

---

It has never successfully increased the populations. Most birds are dead in under 2 weeks.

Spend our money on more habitat, more block management

Jack Weiss

**From:** [Cindy McCarthy](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasant  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 2:01:29 PM

---

Sent from my iPad Sir. I am registering to you my opposition to the program to pen raise pheasants for release as a hunting opportunity. I believe money allocated to this program is a waste and should be applied to other more sustainable programs enhancing public access. Thank you. Joe McCarthy, Butte, Mt.

**From:** [Eric Tangedahl](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised Pheasants - Comments  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:57:25 AM

---

MT FWP,

Please consider enhancing pheasant habitat rather than releasing pen raised birds. The return on investment in wild birds would be much greater than releasing pen raised birds that have basically a zero survival rate.

From Pheasants Forever:

A South Dakota study published a decade earlier in The Journal of Wildlife Management showed similar results. Anthony Leif of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks radio-collared and released 44 wild hens and 159 pen-raised hens in two areas in eastern South Dakota. While most wild hens survived through the study period, the pen-raised hens were easy pickings for predators. Additionally, the wild hens were ten times as successful at raising broods. Leif concluded, "Because of low survival and reproductive rates, pen-reared hens should not be released in habitats containing wild pheasants."

Thanks,  
Eric Tangedahl

**From:** [Paul Gierach](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 10:28:55 AM

---

Sorry, but spending a million dollars to release pen raised birds is a waste of money. 99% of those birds will feed the hawks, coyotes, foxes, and everything else that might eat pheasants. These dollars should be spent on improving habitat for wild birds to help them survive and flourish. That is the best way to improve population numbers for the long term.

Paul Gierach  
Huson, MT  
406-626-4050

**From:** [Mark Brown](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 7:41:24 AM

---

It is my opinion that Montana should not spend the time, effort and money on pen raised pheasants. These birds do not have the instincts to survive and avoid predators such as hawks, owls and coyotes. Many, if not all, would not survive the winter months.

We would be better off investing that money into habitat enhancement and payment to property owners to leave more nesting habitat, cover and food crops standing to allow wild birds populations to increase.

Mark Brown  
109 Skipper Street  
Belgrade

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Brody Henderson](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:17:33 AM

---

I adamantly oppose the proposal to spend one million dollars on raising and releasing pen raised pheasants in Montana. There are other more important wildlife management and conservation projects where that money could be used. Montana has healthy numbers of wild pheasants and plenty of other upland bird hunting opportunities. How about using that money to open up more access for bird hunters on private land? Or improving habitat that will benefit wild pheasants and other species of wildlife. Spending a million dollars on pen raised pheasants is essentially flushing that money down the toilet.

Brody Henderson  
Belgrade, Montana

Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [Jesse LeNeve](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 22, 2022 12:31:11 PM

---

Dear sir or madam:

Please consider stopping the Montana prison system from raising pheasants to be released to then be prey for fox, coyote and raccoons. If the prisons need jobs, they should take the Million and raise vegetables to be disbursed around the state .

We know that we need habitat, buy habitat , not grain for pen birds to shoot them.

Thanks  
Jesse LeNeve

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [daniel.harper](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 4:09:25 PM

---

I support fair chase hunting and oppose spending money on pen raised pheasants.  
Thank you,  
Daniel Harper, MD  
3000 Marshall Canyon  
Missoula, MT 59802

**From:** [Mike Schaub](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants = coyote, raptor, etc. food  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 10:41:36 AM

---

Dear Ms. O'Neill,

As a resident of Montana I strongly oppose the waste of money on pen raised birds to be released in this state. As a former Minnesotan, my family and friends have tried multiple times to release birds on our lands and have never seen the results that were expected. I have also hunted on game farms that use pen raised birds. Pen raised birds are not the same as wild birds. They do not fly like wild birds. Spending up to a million dollars on this project is essentially like spending a million dollars on coyote feed. It will be a waste of money and is fiscally irresponsible. It is robbing from Peter to pay Paul. Using license money to plant birds will not increase license sales. Please use these dollars to improve habitat that is the only thing that will increase sustainable bird numbers and increase hunters afield.

Sincerely,  
Mike Schaub  
Bozeman, MT  
406-599-1603

**From:** [Cody Ristau](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised Pheasants On State Land  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 22, 2022 12:19:51 PM

---

Dear FWP,

Releasing pen raised pheasants on Montana lands would hurt the overall hunting experience and populations of Wild Pheasants in Montana. Studies have shown the pen raised pheasants do not last in the wild and in fact could bring greater predation to the wild pheasants. Instead of pouring more money into farmed birds that will die, why not put it into creating habitat and unlocking more public lands for hunters to enjoy. Studies show with the right habitat the wild birds will comeback in great number creating opportunities for hunters. I understand the thinking for doing it but I think you will have a stronger retention of hunters if you can create better wild bird hunting experience. Please vote no and do not bring more farmed birds on the Montana landscape.

Thank you for your time and listening,

Cody Ristau

**From:** [Errol Meidinger](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised Pheasants Proposal  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 8:11:02 AM

---

Dear Montana FWP:

I am writing to express my opposition to spending valuable license dollars on raising and releasing pheasants from pens. Pheasant hunting is interesting and enjoyable, but this proposal isn't really going to help in the long term — either with pheasant populations or with recruiting new hunters. Pheasants aren't that smart to begin with, and pen raised pheasants are significantly dumber. A few may be easy for hunters to kill after release, but almost none will last for later hunting or population building. We would be better off paying more attention to encouraging better habitat practices for wild pheasants and accepting that our predator populations and climate will generally mean we are not a great pheasant destination. There will still be a goodly amount of pheasant hunting, though. The fact that it is challenging but also exciting will continue to attract hunters.

Thank you for considering my input.

Sincerely

Errol Meidinger  
86 Trouthaven Drive  
PO Box 288  
Clinton, MT 59825

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Allan Gadoury](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 7:07:46 AM

---

Dear Sir

Spending a million dollars on pen raised pheasants would be a terrible waste of money. The money should be used to improve habitat on public lands and to provide hunting opportunity.

Best Regards,

Allan Gadoury  
6X Outfitters  
Bozeman, MT

**From:** [Corey Ellis](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 3:33:56 PM

---

No.

This is obviously a waste of conservation dollars. It has been well understood for some time that stocking pheasants is a nearly pointless effort. Even Pheasants Forever opposes these efforts.

In light of the futility of this effort I urge FWP to TAKE NO ACTION on this proposal.

Thank you,  
Corey Ellis  
970-551-0019

**From:** [Randall Knowles](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Cc:** [McKalip@backcountryhunters.org](mailto:McKalip@backcountryhunters.org)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 7:12:47 PM

---

## Pen Raised Pheasants is a TOTAL waste [documented by science] of Sportsmen Dollars...

Deb O'Neill - Special Projects Director - Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

PO Box 200701 - Helena, MT 59620 - [doneill@mt.gov](mailto:doneill@mt.gov)

**RE: Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments**

**BY: Randall Knowles, Region 4 CAC Member, Life Member BAC, Life Member RMEF, Life Member SCI**

Dear Ms. O'Neill:

The Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (Montana BHA) represents roughly 3,000 dues-paying sportsmen and women in Montana who value quality recreational opportunities and ethical conduct in the outdoors. Our Chapter values the opportunity to pursue wild upland birds in quality habitat and strives to pass our fair-chase opportunities to the next generation of responsible hunters.

Montana BHA is writing to support Alternative A: No Action in the proposed Annual Release of Pen - raised Ring - necked Pheasants. Since the inception of this proposal via HB 637, we have opposed the use of license dollars to purchase pen-raised ring-necked pheasants as a half-hearted gesture toward recruiting new hunters.

Biologically, we object to stocking pen-raised birds, which have an embarrassingly low survival rate. Study after study, many cited in this EA, find that pen-raised birds represent a futile effort toward bolstering populations. These birds rarely survive long enough to be effectively utilized by hunters. Montana FWP's own 2004 review of upland game bird biology and habitat relationships as part of the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program states, "Stocked birds contribute little to harvest or population growth in pheasant populations. In Montana, Weigand and Janson (1976) noted that hunters subsequently harvested only 13%-24% of pheasants released 1-3 weeks prior to hunting season opening." We trust FWP to make sound biological decisions when managing our wildlife and question why it would go against its own science to conduct these releases.

Socially, while we appreciate and support more opportunities for new and novice hunters, we prefer these to be fair-chase opportunities that present an honest take of hunting including both the difficulty and the thrill, two aspects that make this heritage so rewarding. Presenting a fabricated put-and-take opportunity teaches to kill, rather than to hunt; it diminishes the experience. Small, colorless, pen-raised birds without a wild instinct to rely on provide few challenges compared with wild pheasant hunting, and this scenario will fail to help new hunters by presenting them with unrealistic expectations. At best, this stocking proposal will see poor retention for new hunters while proving to be a waste of dollars better spent on meaningful change and habitat improvements. These are not the kind of R3 efforts we see as recruiting the next generation of fair-chase hunters.

Fiscally, we are completely opposed to this wasteful use of fish and game dollars. While we understand that the funds appropriated from the state special revenue fund established in 87 - 1 - 601 are separate from the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program funding, we do not agree that this is the best use for those license dollars. We believe these funds could be better used by the myriad fish and wildlife recovery and restoration efforts FWP biologists propose annually, or any number of more impactful R3 efforts. There is a reason most states and nonprofits have stopped stocking birds and instead focus on the most critical factor impacting wild birds: quality habitat. Any efforts to increase wild pheasant populations in Montana should be focused on continuing to improve and protect their habitat. We do not



support efforts through the legislature to circumvent the sound biological findings of this Department and trusted upland bird researchers nationwide by appropriating funds and forcing projects that have no merit.

As mentioned in the EA, Montana BHA questions where the decision-making process to raise these pheasants at the State Prison in Deer Lodge occurred. HB 637 appropriates funds for this stocking effort but does not specify anything about the facility of origin. In fact, we have seen no public notice of a competitive bid process related to the state contract for providing these birds. This causes us to question whether there were ulterior motives in this appropriation process and whether our license dollars are being covertly funneled into subsidizing other state agencies.

Finally, we do not believe this public comment process is being conducted in good faith toward the Montana hunter. It is stated twice within this EA that, "FWP has been mandated by the legislature to proceed with pheasant releases..." (Comment 13e and Part III). In fact, this EA clearly states in Comment 13e that many concerns have been raised over pen-raised pheasant releases and then concludes that because FWP has been mandated to proceed with these releases, newly implemented monitoring will measure the success of this project as it will be proceeding. Montana BHA thus fears that the decision making for this proposal has already occurred and that FWP is conducting a farcical effort to engage hunters before ultimately ignoring our comments. We therefore suggest that FWP amend the EA to correct this inaccuracy and ensure that due consideration is given to public comment on this issue and is not being ignored in favor of legislative whims.

For these reasons, Montana BHA supports only Alternative A: No Action in response to the proposed Annual Release of Pen - raised Ring - necked Pheasants. We recommend you stick with wild birds and keep it that way.

Sincerely,

Randall Knowles  
Region 4 CAC Member  
Life Member BAC  
Life Member RMEF  
Life Member SCI

**"Any fool can try to defend his or her mistakes — and most fools do — but it raises one above the herd and gives one a feeling of nobility and exultation to admit one's mistakes." – Dale Carnegie**

– Randall Gene Knowles, 3017 Ninth Avenue South, Great Falls, MT 59405-3421 voice, cell, & text **406-799-1547** **KnowlesMontana@Juno.com**

**From:** [Nicholas Romano](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 11:42:48 AM

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Hello

I'm writing to express my opposition to the annual release of pen raised pheasants. I'm a life long bird hunter that calls Livingston MT home and I understand the motivation for this activity. However, I don't feel that it supports the correct hunting ethic. Montana has excellent wild bird populations that already provide an amazing hunting experience. This artificial hunting opportunity creates a false sense of expectation and detracts from resources that should be dedicated to fostering wild bird populations.

In my opinion, the annual release of pen raised pheasants is not the right ethic and certainly doesn't warrant the cost.

Sincerely

Nick Romano

**From:** [Paul Dinkins](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 11:15:35 AM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill:

I'm a Montana resident and avid bird hunter and dog handler. I hunt all over the state and travel throughout the western states during upland bird hunting seasons. I am OPPOSED to any increase in pen raised pheasant releases in Montana. It's a waste of money. Pen raised birds are pale simulacra of the real thing. They do nothing to bolster wild stocks and provide a poor hunting experience compared to wild birds. Take that money and use it toward habitat improvement, the block management program, research, hunters' education... ANYTHING would have a better return on investment with regard to the future of pheasants and hunting in our great state. Releasing captive raised critters of any species, will never have remotely the same affect as any effort toward improving and increasing the habitat necessary to sustain those same species.

Regards,  
Paul Dinkins  
406-697-7408

**From:** [Brian Lindquist](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 9:53:01 AM

---

I would like to record my opposition to funding the stocking of Pen-Raised Pheasants on to MT Public Lands. Our license & hunting-related revenue can be spent in much more valuable ways. Please oppose this effort & stick to wild birds on our public lands.

Sincerely,

Brian Lindquist  
309 S 9th St  
Livingston, MT 59047  
[bjlindquist@outlook.com](mailto:bjlindquist@outlook.com)

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone  
Get [Outlook for Android \[aka.ms\]](#)

**From:** [John Ryan](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 7:28:27 AM

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I think putting more money into fake birds isn't a great investment. While short term benefits would be seen I fear it would support those predators and increase their dependency on that species, giving wild birds less of a chance.

What happens after. What if it's the way stocked trout interfere with wild populations. You're spreading unfiltered genetics and diluting good ones.

Why not focus those funds on public land access, habitat preservation and improvement and better wildlife management and measurement?

I've lived in states with pheasant stocking programs. There aren't any wild birds around, period. The stocked birds are dead within a few weeks and the woods and farmlands are devoid of any game birds.

Montana is so big I doubt these programs could have any impact but what about the public accessible land? Will you have people coming out on stocking days and shooting birds off the truck?

We should be focused on the long game of access and habitat, not just the fun part. Let's pay our dues.

JR

--

John Ryan  
7172653347

**From:** [A. Sienkiewicz](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:12:36 AM

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Dear MT FWP Professionals,

Please find my comment on expenditures of public funds on pen-raised pheasants. In a time when native habitats such as aspen-willow systems, riparian forests and other habitat types on public lands (often managed for multiple uses) are in need of restoration (that could benefit all manner of native game birds), it seems imprudent and wasteful to expend public tax dollars on non native pen-raised birds. Without knowing who the beneficiaries of the purchase contracts are, it seems local economies and contractors could benefit from native species restoration projects on public lands just as much.

Please consider projects that benefit ruffed grouse, blue grouse, sage grouse, native waterfowl, and other wild, native species. Habitat, habitat, habitat. Restore it and they will come.

Put and take pheasant hunting... not the Montana I know and love.

Thank your for your public service, hard work , and consideration.

Respectfully,

Alex Sienkiewicz

**Alex Sienkiewicz**  
[piscatorviator@yahoo.com](mailto:piscatorviator@yahoo.com)  
(406) 946-2258  
Livingston, MT

**From:** [joseph mangiamele](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 22, 2022 11:37:24 AM

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Do not spend 1,000,000 dollars to feed coyotes pen raised pheasants. Montana needs wild pheasants. And nothing but wild pheasants. Joseph Matthew Mangiamele, Silver Star Montana.

**From:** [Trevor Thorpe](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Friday, February 25, 2022 8:21:54 PM

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Hello Deb,

As a MT resident and avid upland bird hunter, I would like to give my thoughts on raising and releasing pheasants. One of the greatest parts of Montana is its wildlife. The opportunity to hunt wild birds is something that is shrinking in our country. Many states no longer have huntable populations of wild pheasants. The Challenge and thrill of chasing wild roosters is second to none. Pen raised birds can be found on game farms, which provide great opportunity and fast action for hunters of any age. We are blessed in the state to have a sustainable huntable populations of pheasants. Let's keep our pheasants wild.

Thank you,  
Trevor Thorpe



**From:** [sawilson1@q.com](mailto:sawilson1@q.com)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 4:23:13 PM

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You will soon find that this is a waste of money, every predator from the ground or sky will be feasting on these as they have no defense system. This money would be better spent on flying surveys for elk and deer in the Bitterroot region two, As we've been told there is no money in the budget to fly surveys thank you Steve awesome

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Tony Reinhardt](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 5:44:41 PM

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I would prefer that my license dollars be spent on just about anything else versus pen raised birds that will be dead in a few days whether a youth hunter gets the chance to shoot at them or not. Recruitment and retention is very important for the youth of Montana. Creating an artificial environment to foster the 3Rs is the wrong approach. Thank you for your time.

Tony Reinhardt

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Steve Platt](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 3:47:36 PM

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Dear Montana FWP,

Please scrap this dismal concept. Pen raised birds are already available via private business, for dog training and private “hunting” opportunities.

Using R3 as a reason for releasing pen raised birds is incredibly stupid. Upland hunting is inherently dangerous and requires quick thinking and good judgement under all circumstances. Mixing weak, low flying, pen raised pheasants and new hunters is an accident waiting to happen.

Lastly, pen raised birds have an incredibly low survival rate, often less than 5%.

Putting a million dollars into upland bird habitat enhancement is the way to improve pheasant hunting in Montana, for new hunters and old alike.

Thank you,

Steve Platt  
528 West Lawrence Street  
Helena, MT 59601

**From:** [Randall Knowles](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 12:04:37 PM

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Ms. O'Neill; the Pen Raised Pheasant program smells like a political favor to a donor or politician. There are no logical reasons to spend 1 million dollars of sportsmen's dollars on pen-raised pheasants. Who ever is selling the chicks is reaping the reward, no one else is. You have received scientific and biological evidence that this boondoggle is a waste of money. Randall Knowles, CAC Region 4 member ...

**“Any fool can try to defend his or her mistakes — and most fools do — but it raises one above the herd and gives one a feeling of nobility and exultation to admit one's mistakes.” – Dale Carnegie**

– Randall Gene Knowles, 3017 Ninth Avenue South, Great Falls, MT 59405-3421 voice, cell, & text [406-799-1547](tel:406-799-1547) [KnowlesMontana@Juno.com](mailto:KnowlesMontana@Juno.com)

**From:** [Steve Potter](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen Raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:12:16 AM

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Good afternoon.

Just a quick note in relation to the proposal to earmark \$1,000,000 for pen raised pheasants for youth hunts.

I appreciate the Montana fish and Wildlife working towards opportunities for youth. My personal experiences with pen raised pheasants are less than stellar. My vote would be to utilize those dollars for habitat improvement and sportsman's access. I know \$1,000,000 doesn't go far these days. Maybe the funds could be used for training volunteers and having a "dedicated hunter" program like they do in other states.

A wild, mature rooster pheasant was the spark that ignited a lifetime love of upland bird hunting. Anything less than wild birds is unlikely to inspire the rising generation to continue the sport and to give back.

Thanks for all you do for fish and game in Montana.

Steve Potter

**From:** [Kathy Looney](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 10:34:01 AM

---

Dear FWP,

Please find a more equitable sensible way to spend a million of our dollars.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Kathy Looney  
[info@madisonmanagement.com](mailto:info@madisonmanagement.com)  
406-685-3609 Office  
406-570-5401 Cell

**From:** [Steve Summerhill](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen raisedPheasants  
**Date:** Thursday, February 10, 2022 12:39:36 PM

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This has never successfully worked.

We are wasting our money.

**From:** [donavon nickel](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pinned Pheasant release proposal  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 22, 2022 11:33:37 AM

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Respectfully, I must admit that the proposal for the annual release of pen raise pheasants is one of the most asinine proposals to reach and leave the desks of FWP officials. As an avid hunter, fisherman, camper, and believer/proponent of the North American Model of Conservation it has become increasingly hard for me to support and defend FWP in recent years. From myopic and disingenuous changes in regulations for deer and elk populations that favors, not what is best for the wildlife populations or the greater public that utilizes and enjoys them, but for oligarchical powers that be, to now this; a waste of money for the illusion of an aesthetic of youth hunter recruitment. How about we put this money to better use, like expanding public access via already proven programs like Block Management and habitat projects, these in themselves would create meaningful and lasting benefits that will better serve the youth hunters that this proposal purports it is trying to benefit.

Sincerely,

An increasingly frustrated outdoorsman and citizen

Donavon Nickel

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows



**From:** [Jay Gore](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pinned pheasants  
**Date:** Saturday, January 29, 2022 10:04:30 AM

---

Spending funds on penned raised pheasants to put out for hunting is a big waste of funds. Check the history and experience of other states that tried this. Debby has the data. Please use those funds for habitat improvements. Thanks, Jay Gore

**From:** [Amy Groen](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen-raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 12:19:09 PM

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I'm currently on the road and not much time to articulate why I'm adamantly opposed to this proposal to sink \$1 million into pen-raised pheasants. In short, they're non-native, the cost is exorbitant, and there's no indication that this will result in recruitment of more youth hunters, of which I have reservations about anyhow as Montana's hunter numbers are doing just fine. Please reconsider this option, and sink this money into protection and enhancement of native game species and their habitat.

Thank You,  
Amy

**From:** [Joan Harding](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen-Raised pheasants are a waste.  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 11:40:49 AM

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Please don't waste \$1 million of our funds on this. Again, look at the science that shows these birds don't survive and do nothing for the wild population. I do not want to see our money wasted on such a underwhelming program.

Sincerely,  
Joan Harding  
202 Eagle Dr  
Polson, MT 59860

Joan Harding  
816-516-6703

**From:** [Jennifer White](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] pen-raised pheasants comment  
**Date:** Friday, February 11, 2022 11:57:32 AM

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I'm submitting my comments for the pen-raised pheasant draft ...

I am against increasing the number of birds released each year. I am an avid pheasant hunter/bird-dog owner.

According to Pheasants Forever: "Stocking of pen-raised birds is not an efficient means to increase wild bird populations, as shown by numerous studies over the past 25 years. Developing and enhancing habitat, on the other hand, has proven to help increase ring-necked numbers."

I'm in favor of redirecting the proposed increase to habitat improvements. It makes more sense to build a thriving wild population than it does to raise birds that don't make it a week (and not because they're being shot by hunters).

Why don't I want more pen-raised birds?

1) It seems like a huge waste of resources with such a low survival rate.

2) I haven't seen good hunting in released areas. I hunted Canyon Ferry area last fall within a week of the release, and the hunting was not good and it was crowded. (I talked to others who echoed that.) I've also hunted an area in Wyoming that releases weekly: also not great, but beyond that, it was incredibly crowded on a Tuesday, and that detracted from the experience. Weekly releases did not result in a robust wild population of birds. It simply put a few more roosters on the landscape for a few days. And it increased hunter density—which is neither safe nor attractive for new youth hunters. That is not going to improve RRR.

3) Finally, pen-raised birds are a pale substitute for wild birds. The few times I've put my dogs on planted/pen-raised birds, I've also had the unfortunate experience (3x) of my dogs snatching up weak, poor-flying birds—something that does not happen on wild birds. This creates bad habits in my dogs. And it often creates a scenario in which birds fly low more frequently, creating unsafe shooting if your dogs aren't steady to shot. Again, not ideal conditions for new hunters. (Yes, they hold a bit better ... but most wild birds also hold better early in the season.)

Having had the opportunity to walk the fields alongside a few youth who were out there for the first time, I can tell you that having a dumb, domestic pheasant holding still is not the key to turning those kids into lifelong hunters. It was having adults willing to take them out. Having a family friend (us) with a few dogs to give them that first experience. But probably more than anything, it's the chance for them to see the dogs work, to see the camaraderie and stories that emerge from a day out in the field. To see a retrieve. That's RRR when it comes to upland bird hunting.

If you want to increase opportunities, find ways to create more pockets like some of these WMAs that have great cover crops, corn and wheat planted adjacent to excellent cover. More of that = more hunting opportunities.

If RRR is the goal ... go to the root of the problem. Support people and education. Support habitat improvement on both public and private lands. Enhance your block management programs. Create more pockets around the state that can support thriving populations. Putting \$1million into a program that essentially does nothing to move the needle on habitat or wild populations seems like a fool's game.

Jenny White  
editor & writer

[jenniferduffieldwhite.com](http://jenniferduffieldwhite.com) [jenniferduffieldwhite.com]

**From:** [Rick](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] pen-raised pheasants release proposal  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 8:19:09 AM

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I wanted to write to express my opposition to the use of license dollars (lots of them) to release pen-raised pheasants. I am an avid pheasant hunter, and would love to see more pheasants on public and accessible private (block management) lands, but release of pen-raised pheasants is not the answer! I have witnessed the release of these birds onto the Poindexter Slough area near my home by the local chapter of Pheasants Forever only to see them slaughtered by predators in a matter of a few weeks.

I fully support improving pheasant hunting opportunities, but I think that needs to be accomplished through habitat improvement and enhanced block management opportunities. Please don't waste license dollars that would be much better spent elsewhere.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Rick Waldrup  
Dillon, MT

**From:** [Roger Furlong](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen-raised pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 1:36:40 PM

---

Dear FWP:

I am opposed to the plan to spend \$1 million dollars on pen-raised pheasants to be released in eastern Montana. The survival of these birds is low and this is a lot of money to create an artificial hunting situation. This money can be better spent on other wildlife priorities.

Please reject this misguided effort and pursue more relevant conservation measures.

Thank you for your attention to this effort.

Sincerely,

Roger Furlong

428 E Pine St.

Missoula MT 59802

406 240 6006

**From:** [delidogfarr@gmail.com](mailto:delidogfarr@gmail.com)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen-raised pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 10:26:51 AM

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I'm asking you to support Alternative A: No Action in response to the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants. We've seen through studies that pen raised bird have a very low survival rate. I don't not believe this is inline with fair chase practices. This will not lead to recruiting young ethical hunters but We'll losing recruitment with the loss of the excitement of a fair chase hunt. Killing animals lacking natural survival skills, the non hunting public will see us as killers and not ethical hunters participating in our long shared outdoor heritage. This money comes all from hunters and should be used to better habitat to increase populations of the wildlife we already have. Thank you for your time.

Jackson Farr  
16 Carlson Road  
Nashua, MT 59248  
406-230-0353



**From:** [Chip Westerman](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen-Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Thursday, February 24, 2022 9:14:21 AM

---

Hello,

I was surprised and saddened to see that serious consideration is being given to large-scale releases of pen-raised pheasants. Having raised and released pheasants myself in the past, I can confidently say very few of the birds will make it through a season, meaning the only realistic goal of such a program would be creation of an artificial, put-and-take hunting situation. It seems likely that introducing released birds would impact wild populations as has been observed with fish stocking, and the experience of hunting pen-raised birds pales in comparison to the real thing. We are incredibly fortunate in Montana to have great populations of wild game birds, including pheasants. I am glad to see that there is a desire to improve upland hunting opportunities in the state, but am baffled that bird stocking is the approach under consideration instead of habitat or access projects. Whatever money is available would be much better used supporting wild bird populations.

Please do not move forward with this ill-conceived proposal. Let's keep the focus on wild birds and invest available funds in ways that will yield long-term benefits rather than move Montana towards becoming a shooting preserve!

Thank you,  
Chip Westerman

505 Mineral Ave.  
Bozeman, MT 59718

406-589-7792

**From:** [Richard Strong](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pen-raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 2:43:19 PM

---

Time and money spent on pen-raised pheasants is a complete wast of both.

I am against this plan.

Rich Strong  
Bigfork, MT  
406-250-5409

**From:** [Shafter Johnston](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 4:32:38 PM

---

I would like to voice my opposition to the one million dollars in funding directed toward pen raised pheasant. I believe it would be much better spent on habitat. As a father I do not see it as a better way for hunter recruitment or getting kids interested in the sport. The simple act of killing is rarely what brings someone into our hunting heritage. I'm montana we have a great example of restoring habitat and letting trout reproduce naturally. Getting rid of stocking was the best thing ever done for our rivers. The same should be done with pheasant.

**From:** [Joe Hundley](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant comment to FWP  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 9:36:22 AM

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I support Alternative A: No Action in the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants. Biologically, every hunter knows this is a waste of hunters dollars. The return on the investment is dismal at best.

I'm completely opposed to this wasteful use of fish and game dollars.

**From:** [JACQUES HANSEN](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant comments.  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 12:45:04 AM

---

I strongly support any initiative by FWP to expand access and opportunities for pheasant hunting to include pen raised pheasants in the management.

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone  
Get [Outlook for Android \[aka.ms\]](#)

**From:** [Jack Austin](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant comments  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 3:08:42 PM

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Hi Deb, Sorry to email you directly, but this is where the website sends me? Purely anecdotal, but last year I had a couple of occasions to direct youth hunters with their parents to pheasant release locations during the youth pheasant opener. None of them were interested, saying they had no desire to teach their kids to hunt pen raised birds. It would be better to teach prisoners trade occupations.

So I guess my comment would be to stop the pheasant release program. Thank you, Jack Austin

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**From:** [Blake Henning](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant EA  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 12:42:04 PM

---

I support the pheasant release program.

Blake Henning  
Missoula

**From:** [Tom Loomis](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant in the Deer Lodge valley  
**Date:** Saturday, February 5, 2022 7:17:32 PM

---

My name is Tom Loomis. I was right where you are now 25 years ago. I set up a town meeting with Bob Greene about the possibility of having pheasant in the Deer Lodge valley. It didn't work. There is not enough grain to support them other than on the prison. The prison will not let you hunt. The birds will stay where the food is. On the prison. Bob Greene released a lot of pheasant and raised them at warm springs. The predator problem was hard on them. The only pheasant I have seen here was thirty years ago I had one bounce off my truck window. None since then. Sorry to bust a bubble but if you want to hunt pheasant go north of great falls in the wheat fields and CRP. That is where the fwp need to concentrate on planting birds. Not in the Deer Lodge valley. Thank you for your time. Tom Loomis



**From:** [Patricia Godtel](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant plant EA  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 6:17:07 PM

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Looking through your ea for planting pheasants, I do believe they do have an effect on noxious weeds...their feathers can collect them and spread seeds as well as if they eat the seed heads and spread them with their poop. As for no releases in grizzly bear recovery zones, we all know that there are bears way outside the recovery zone areas, especially in the main riparian areas and I see no mention of that. As far as your alternatives, it is a disgrace. You do not consider anything but what you propose. I may suggest that you add alternatives of spending that money on habitat improvement and or reduced amount of birds plus habitat improvement especially on state lands...I have been on state lands and because of grazing practices you could not hide a pheasant let alone have them survive. Thank you for considering my comments...Don Godtel, (retired National Forest Service wildlife biologist and pheasant hunter).

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Mike Maples](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant planting  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 10:47:10 AM

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Dear sirs:

I'm not a fan of planting pheasants. As a former wildlife biologist I'm aware published data suggests their survival rate of pen raised birds is minimal in the wild.

I've lived in Choteau for over 20 years and have watched pheasant numbers decrease every year simultaneous to the loss of crp and habitat.

I'd suggest spending \$1,000,000 on habitat instead of feeding coyotes.

Sincerely,

Mike Maples  
PO Box 1042  
Choteau, Montana 59422  
(406)590-2262

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [David Shimek](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant program  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 9:20:54 PM

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I am in full support of future and additional pheasant releases for youth as well as adult pheasant hunters. I took my son out last year and had a great time hunting pheasants. It was a great opportunity and a fun and successful time. Please keep stocking pheasants for kids and expand the program to include releases during the regular season! Yes yes yes!!!

Please expand the hunt to include kids to age 17! I don't understand why you have an arbitrary cut off at age 15. Kids are still kids until they turn 18. Please give all kids the opportunity to pheasant hunt. Families like to hunt together and it just isn't fair to make the 16 year old not hunt while the 15 year old can. I understand you need a cut off but cut it off at 18. This is the only time kids 16 and 17 aren't still considered youth!.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Meagher County Sportsmen Association](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Proposal  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 11:53:10 AM  
**Attachments:** [FWP pheasant letter.doc](#)

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Dear Ms. O'Neill;

The Meagher County Sportsmen Association supports the ring-necked pheasant program.

Please see our attached letter.

Thank you.

--

MCSA Secretary/Treasure

**From:** [Greg Munther](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant raising and release  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 12:30:14 PM

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Alternative A. Such programs have not shown to be efficient and monies would be better spent elsewhere. Legislators should stay with something they know.

Greg Munther

**From:** [michele dieterich](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] pheasant release comments  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 11:15:45 AM

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Thanks for taking my comments. I am a resident of Montana and have grave concerns about farming animals to be released in the wild. I also think that this release goes against the fair chase and the actual experience of hunting. Sometimes you are unsuccessful. That is as big a part of hunting as anything. It should be about being outside, not success.

As far as farming animals, this has caused problems with fish farmed fish spreading disease to native fish. I don't doubt that these pheasants being raised in close quarters will incubate and spread diseases not just to birds in the wild but also to their handlers. Considering our recent bird flu, it amazes me that you are considering farming pheasants for release in the wild.

Thanks for considering my comments.

Michele Dieterich

[Michele Dieterich](#)

["May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view."](#)

[Edward Abbey](#)

**From:** [j hjelt](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 11:14:17 AM

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Deb O'Neill

Special Projects Director

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

PO Box 200701

Helena, MT 59620

doneill@mt.gov

Dear Director O'Neill,

I am writing to put my vote towards Alternative A: No Action in regard to the proposed release of 50,000 farm-raised pheasants into Montana for the purpose of "increased youth hunting opportunity." I oppose the release on the following grounds:

1. Farm-raised pheasants have very short lives when released in the wild with potential negative impacts to wild breeding populations.
2. Shooting farm-raised birds isn't much of a hunting experience for our youth, and a definite negative experience for other hunters who desire to hunt wild populations.
3. The money spent on this program, while separate from the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program funding, is still a waste of our limited fiscal resources.
4. This statement on FWP's own site introducing this action raises serious concerns "FWP has been mandated by the legislature to proceed with pen-raised pheasant releases to this end." If I remember correctly, the legislature is not comprised of many scientists nor biologists. For the legislature to *mandate* FWP to undertake this action speaks volumes about how little science plays into this.
5. Part II of the EA: Environmental Review Checklist raises MANY scientific concerns regarding this release, yet as noted above under #4, FWP is mandated to proceed? That is not how this FWP is supposed to work.
6. There is also scant information on how the process to procure these 50,000 birds has happened. Were there bids received? Where was the public notice of this action? If \$1,000,000 worth of state and federal funds are going into this program, how was this procurement process bidded?? Supposedly the correctional facility at Deer Lodge is going to create a program to raise these birds, but how quickly will that happen? Where are the 50,000 birds coming from in the meantime? Seems a bit fishy.

I highly disagree with this proposed release and strongly recommend Alternative A: No Action

to be the course of action in this situation.

Thank you.

Jeff A Hjelt

Missoula, MT 59802



**From:** [Buster Front](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 12:48:26 PM

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February 28, 2022

FWP:

I am strongly opposed to wasting hunters' dollars on releasing mostly featherless, flightless farm-raised pheasants and only support Alternative A (No Action) in FWP's pheasant release EA. However, I also realize the EA process is a farce because regardless of comments received the Department will fall back on the statutory requirements of HB637 and continue this senseless program. But you best be careful - based on public comments received you may need to revisit 13.e. and 13.f. in the EA to be MEPA compliant.

Representative Berglee rammed HB637 through the legislature on the second to last day of the session, wrongly precluding sportsmen and women from having the opportunity of commenting on this last minute legislation. And now we pay the price.

And what is the price? Using Freezout Wildlife Management area as my local example illustrates how ridiculous this program is. For the 2021 youth hunt, 510 pheasants were stocked at Freezout. Cost for the birds alone was \$10,200 (\$20 per bird, contract price to Rimrock Valley Preserve). FWP's Freezout staff completed a comprehensive survey of youth hunter participation and documented three parties of youth pheasant hunters on September 25 and four parties on September 26. This averages out to a cost of \$1,457 per party for this program. Keep in mind that this cost does not include staff time, which was 227 hours just for Region 4 (for Beckman and Freezout WMAs; data provided by FWP). Thus, the additional costs of staff time and operations (mileage and per diem) were significant. Might I suggest it would be considerably more cost-effective for FWP to pay for interested youth hunters to go to Orvis Wingshooting Lodges to shoot their birds?

I am pleased to read that FWP has a R3 working group developing metrics to evaluate this program. Any evaluation has been lacking thus far. I trust that the process and metrics will be in place before the 2022 youth hunt and that there will be complete transparency in how this program will be evaluated. Thus far all I have seen from the Director's Office is that there were "smiles" from the youth hunters, so the 2021 stocking was a success. I am expecting much more quantifiable data (e.g., youth license sales) to determine the success of this program. This data needs to be available prior to the 2023 legislative session.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Dave Yerk  
Choteau, MT

**From:** [John Wachsmuth](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release EA  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 6:46:51 PM

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Hello,

As avid resident upland bird hunter for over 40 years in Montana I agree with FWPs plan to release farm raised pheasants . As you know the many years years of drought , bad weather during hatching , the constant decline of CRP in Montana hasn't done anything to help promote a wild healthy pheasant population all over the state .

I hope FWP let's us what regions the birds are being distributed and amounts?

I wish you good luck and success with the program.

Best ,

John L. Wachsmuth

POB 2185

Kalispell, Mt 59903

406.250.9038

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Jim Vashro](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release EA  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 1:46:49 AM

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I have read the Environmental Assessment titled "Annual Release of Pen-reared Ring-necked Pheasants". I urge you to adopt Alternative A, the No Action Alternative and to not stock pen-reared pheasants.

Hunter recruitment and retention is a worthy goal but "put-and-take" pheasant hunting is the wrong approach. FWP operated game bird farms for decades at Warm Springs and other locations until the early 1980s. The program was ended at that time as being ineffective. The cost of putting a bird in a hunter's bag was estimated at \$40/bird which is an incredibly poor rate of return on an upland game bird license now costing \$7:50. That kind of cost is not sustainable and a poor expenditure of government dollars.

In later years the program devolved into put-and-take pheasant shooting. I participated in one of those shoots as a teen-ager in the mid-1960s. We could see the birds standing in a field as we waited for the signal to start. As we moved in it was a wonder that no one got shot. I finally found a pheasant, despite several efforts I couldn't get it to fly so I ground-sluiced it. Even as a blood-thirsty teenager I knew that wasn't the real deal, I never asked to go back. I did get hooked on bird hunting by chasing wild pheasants, sage grouse, sharptails and waterfowl in high quality habitat.

I'm not aware of any studies that have measured whether pheasant releases really recruit hunters or whether they would have been recruited just as well or better by hunting wild birds in quality habitat as I was? Indeed, pheasant releases may have the opposite effect by creating unrealistic expectations shooting at poor flying birds in high densities. I don't think FWP can raise enough birds to put tame birds in front of hunters every weekend of the season.

As a tax-payer I object to state and federal dollars going to such a cost-ineffective program with no clearly stated goals, no apparent monitoring program and, based on previous similar programs, a poor rate of return and accompanying high cost per bird. This program was created by the Montana Legislature as a replacement for the Prison Industries Dairy Program, I do not see where pen rearing pheasants will result in job skills for convicts upon release which makes it another ineffective program.

I urge Fish, Wildlife and Parks to adopt Alternative A: No Action alternative and to not stock pheasants. I urge FWP to go back to the Montana Legislature to allow the use of those dollars to create high quality habitat and robust wildlife populations for which Montana is famous. And the Prison Industries Program should be retooled to teach prisoners actual job skills that would make them employable upon release. Thank you.

Jim Vashro  
1837 Stag Lane, Kalispell, MT 59901



This email has been checked for viruses by Avast antivirus software.  
[www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com) [\[avast.com\]](http://www.avast.com)

**From:** [Jeff Sturm](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release opposition  
**Date:** Sunday, February 20, 2022 4:03:27 PM

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I have carefully read through the Draft EA and found it's premise flawed.

1. The idea of releasing Pen raised pheasants to expand youth hunting opportunities is wrong. Do our youth need to believe that there is always success in a hunt?

2. True - pen raised birds for the most part will be dead within the week. Either through hunting (if you can call it that), predation, weather, car accident, starvation, etc  
A few days after release I witnessed dead birds on the road, unweary birds in huddles under wind rows and flightless birds. How did I know they were the pen raised birds? It was their disheveled feathers and lack of tail feathers. They were pen raised in flocks where food was provided and predators were not allowed. Release is cruel and has nothing in common with fair chase.

3. The draft EA states that the money is earmarked for bird raising and release. Next legislation could turn that around. The money is better spent on improving habitat to develop a stronger natural breeding program.

4. The prison has the contract to raise the pheasant for release. It is regrettable that they lost their milk contract but raising pheasants is a poor substitute. Raising pheasants does not provide marketable job experience.

In conclusion, I do not support an expanded program for the pen raising and release of pheasants. Option A.

Thank you!

Donna Hansen

**From:** [Matt Cashell](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release Plan Comment  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:33:58 AM

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Hello,

I am writing in support of option A regarding the planned release of pen-raised pheasants on state lands in Montana.

Releasing pen-raised pheasants just prior to any open season will do little to attract new hunters, goes against the concept of fair chase, and is a waste of taxpayer money.

I would prefer the money be used to improve long-term pheasant habitat for wild birds.

Thank you,

Matt Cashell  
441 Dutch Hill Rd.  
Hamilton, MT 59840  
(406) 381-2593

**From:** [Bill Schultz](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release Plan  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 4:12:28 PM

---

Please spend your time and money pursuing habitat and habitat improvements rather than raising birds in pens for release. A much better long term solution to healthy bird populations.

Thanks,

Bill Schultz, a pheasant hunter for 50 years

Get [Outlook for Android \[aka.ms\]](#)

**From:** [Marian Olsen](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release Program  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 11:09:07 AM

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To Whom it may concern,

I'm not sure where the funding for this comes from but I'm convinced that those funds would be better spent on habitat improvement for the long term benefit of the wild Pheasant population. I don't believe that pen-raised birds are very long lived in the wild-----hunted or not.

Don Olsen

375 Ramble Inn Road

Fort Shaw , Mt. 59443

406-439-5270

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows

**From:** [G Mose](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release Program  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 16, 2022 7:30:07 AM

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Dear FWP,

As a bird hunter in Montana for nearly forty years, my dogs and I have extensively sought out pheasants from Froid and Plentywood to Ninepipe near Ronan, Baker to Sweet Grass Hills, the 'Golden Triangle' and many places in between.

I've used all the publications and tools presented by FWP including block management, open public lands of both state and federal jurisdictions, upland game bird enhancement program, and some private landowners access.

The least productive (other than some block management units that were harvested without leaving any cover remaining) were the units where pheasants were allegedly released.

I did see a LOT of raptors at these locations and submit they and the landowner who allowed the releases were the the greatest benefactors of the program.

Based on my experiences, I think the money spent on the pheasant release program is better invested in habitat restoration projects.

Sincerely  
Gary Moses,  
Kalispell



**From:** [James Steenberg](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release program  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 9, 2022 7:16:56 AM

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As an avid pheasant hunter I feel that this release program will be an unfortunate waste of money. Similar programs in the past have failed miserably. Regardless, this program is moving forward and therefore an effort must be made for the best possible results. Pen-raised pheasants must be of an age that they have a chance to survive more than a day or two once released. That includes being of an age to survive in the wild. They must be released into an appropriate habitat that gives them the greatest chance of survival. Since one of the stated purposes of the program is to improve & increase hunting opportunities they should be released on land that is accessible to the public. Announcing in advance when and where birds are to be released typically results in a premature slaughter of the released birds as they have no experience on how to survive in the wild. This does nothing to enhance the hunting experience or improve the pheasant population.

**From:** [Diane Simmons](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release Program  
**Date:** Saturday, February 12, 2022 4:45:15 PM  
**Attachments:** [Dear FWP.pdf](#)

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**From:** [John Gashwiler](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release program  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 6:51:02 AM

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As a long time pheasant hunter with three German shorthairs that live in Missoula Montana I support this program 100%!

My only ask is to have some released at Ninepipes on the Flathead reservation. We have some state land in and around that area that would be great to release a few birds

Also. Why I'm emailing you. Maybe some more food plots around Ninepipes like wheat for the birds?

Lack of food and predators has kept the population down for years. I've been hunting that area for 35 years. When wheat has been around and present the birds flourish

--

John Gashwiler  
Zip Beverage  
406-360-3988

**From:** [Randall Knowles](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#); [Charter Joyce Spectrum](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release Program  
**Date:** Saturday, January 29, 2022 11:03:45 AM

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There is NO scientific or experienced based evidence that releasing Pen Raised pheasants augment, increases, or even replicates the experience of hunting a wild raised pheasant. This exercise in futility does NOT offer youth a realistic experience. Pen raised pheasants, based on my conversations with Preserve owners, is about 3 days.

Habitat is the key to more pheasants on the ground. These dollars are better spent on habitat development than on Pen Raised pheasants.

Randy

*"FWP has administered a pheasant release program since 1987, which has involved releasing pen-raised pheasants on private lands for population augmentation and increased hunting opportunity. In March of 2021, following legislative action and funding, a new pheasant release program was established to support recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R<sup>3</sup>) efforts in Montana. This new component of the program aims to engage youth in the sport of hunting, promote hunter success and provide additional hunting opportunities for hunters of all ages."*

**NEWest Email** – Reply to: [RGKmontana@gmail.com](mailto:RGKmontana@gmail.com) – Randall Gene Knowles,  
**Distinguished Toastmaster & Chevalier:** 3017 Ninth Avenue South, Great Falls, MT 59405-3421 voice, cell, & text **406-799-1547**

**From:** [randy.pearson](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release Program  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 3:54:14 PM

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The Pheasant Release Program authorized by the 2021 legislature was a legislative boondoggle fostered on the Montana sportsman. Virtually all sporting and wildlife groups in the state opposed this legislation. Knowledgeable conservationists and biologists know that most of these pen-raised birds rapidly fall prey to predators. Studies show that perhaps two to four percent of the released birds will make it through the winter. Most of these birds are killed by predators within two weeks of their release. Funds for this ridiculous project come directly from sportsman's dollars that would be better spent on habitat improvement. Only a hand-full of youths showed up at the youth hunt at Freezeout lake. The birds were so young, that despite being released right in front of the kids, only about 12 to 15 birds were shot. Some of the kids even sluiced the birds on the ground because they would not fly. I heard of similar poor youth attendance at other WMA's for the youth hunt. Legislators used youth involvement as a justification for funding this prison project. These birds cost the state \$20 apiece. Virtually all of them were killed before they could serve any sportsman or youth benefit. All the false press releases in the world cannot put enough lipstick on this sad waste of sportsman dollars to make it look pretty. I know Fish & Game officials and biologists. They are caught in the cross-fire. Privately, they all hate this program. Publicly, they must be cautious and tow the party line.

**From:** [Eric Tonn](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release Program  
**Date:** Friday, February 25, 2022 6:18:01 PM

---

I am in favor of the State increasing the release of farm raised Pheasant to supplement Upland bird hunting experience for all. I have lived in States that have done this exact thing to great success. This is purely for hunting enjoyment and getting new hunters interested in the sport. This is a Great program. Fully support the proposal.

Sent from my T-Mobile 5G Device  
Get [Outlook for Android \[aka.ms\]](#)

**From:** [Jim Stauffer](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release program  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 12:34:06 PM

---

As a bird hunter, I would prefer that we use license dollars for habitat purchase/ improvement rather than prop up an artificial pheasant population. Thank you  
Jim Stauffer

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Craig Roberts](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release Proposal Comment  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 11:16:58 AM  
**Attachments:** [Pheasant Release Proposal Comment Feb 28^J 2022.docx](#)

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Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [Paul McKenzie](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release Proposal  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 7:02:27 AM

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I think this is a great program that will go a long way in hunter recruitment and retention. I suggest that properties with good public access get the majority of the birds and that birds are placed throughout the season, not all at one time. Seeding the youth hunt is great. If possible, I would extend the program to private lands enrolled in BMA or Open Fields programs if appropriate. I also support the proposal to raise the birds at the state prison.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Paul McKenzie  
Columbia Falls, MT

**From:** [Tim Peterson](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release proposal  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 2:10:28 AM

---

I am in full support of the Pheasant release plan. Montana BHA does not speak for all it's members. Pen raised birds can work to increase hunter recruitment, while habitat enhancement projects can also increase the long term Pheasant populations.

Thanks for the work you do  
Tim Peterson

**From:** [Harvey E. Nyberg](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release  
**Date:** Saturday, February 26, 2022 12:03:36 PM

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I support alternative A: No Action, that is no stocking of pen-reared pheasants.

I remember when FWP stopped stocking pen-reared birds from the Warm Springs pheasant farm back in, I believe, the early 1980's. At that time, the department had determined that the cost per bird in the bag was way too high. The most cost effective way to have a program like that is to kill them, dress them out and hand them out at a check station.

In addition, the threat of disease transmission from pen-reared birds to wild pheasants and Hungarian Partridge, or worse yet native game birds like sharp-tailed grouse or sage grouse and, in some places where ranges overlap, even blue or dusky grouse is too great.

This project is both a waste of money and over-promising and under-delivering.

Therefore, the only reasonable, cost-effective and ecologically sound decision is to not stock pen-reared birds.

Harvey Nyberg  
Lewistown

**From:** [Bruce Sterling](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 11:39:58 AM

---

As a sportsman, hunter and upland game bird hunter I write to you to oppose the release of pen-raised pheasants into the State of Montana. Pen-raised birds have the potential to pass disease to wild pheasants and possibly other bird species. Pen-raised pheasants have a notorious low survival rate of 4-8% as noted in research studies conducted in the State of Idaho. As a sportsman, I would rather see my license dollars spent on purchasing habitat and habitat improvements. Creating more and better locations for our youth hunters to participate in upland bird hunting will benefit retention of youth hunters far longer than releasing pen-raised pheasants! Please stick to wild pheasants and select the no-action alternative.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Bruce Sterling  
Thompson Falls, MT

**From:** [Jennifer Bain](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release  
**Date:** Friday, February 25, 2022 7:32:04 PM

---

I am in favor of the state releasing pen raised pheasant. However I think they should be released several weeks ahead of opening day. Several years ago a rancher east of Valier told me of a release of young birds on the adjacent BLM property. The birds were released in an area of scant cover and no water. As you can imagine they didn't live long. Hopefully birds will be leasd in more hospitable conditions this time around

Sincerely  
Jennifer Bain

**From:** [Kriglm](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2022 10:09:47 AM

---

I was hoping that there would be pheasant releases in Region 2 in the Deer Lodge valley. We would love to have more opportunities for upland bird hunting.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [David Hilliard](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:40:38 AM

---

To whom it may concern,

I appose the plan to release pen raised pheasants. I believe the money would be better spent on improving habitat and educational outreach.

Thank you,

David Hilliard  
406-240-8463  
59803

**From:** [1vepr54r](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 12:20:16 PM

---

I approve of this program,thank you  
Michael Wenger II

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone



**From:** [Dave & Teresa Sturm](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 11:20:59 AM

---

Releasing live pheasants at Montana WMA"s in my opinion is a waste of money that could have those dollars invested in upland bird habitat. I vote NO to releasing pheasants to encourage young hunters.

Thanks,  
Teresa Sturm

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

**From:** [sharptailmontana](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 12:44:06 PM

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While I applaud efforts to increase youth involvement in upland hunting...this program is not the vehicle that is needed. The one million dollars would be better spent by increasing Upland Gamebird Enhancement Programs ability to lease CRP contract ground and thereby enhancing breeding and brood cover for WILD pheasants.

Tom Condon  
Glendive, Montana

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

**From:** [Jack Weiss](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Cc:** [charvey@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:charvey@pheasantsforever.org); [Tom Carpenter](#); [Barner Kyle](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 10:21:52 AM

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The release of pen raised pheasants has been proven to be an expensive failure, These birds generally have a life expectancy after release in weeks at best.

If your goal is to provide shooting for youth hunters have; at it.

If you want to provide shooting for the general public; you are wasting our money. Pen raised birds cannot compete with wild pheasants in suitable pheasant habitat. Increase the block management program for those hunters afraid to knock on landowners doors.

If our goal is more wild pheasants in Montana, we need to increase the habitat where there are pheasants. Sadly we are decreasing habitat. Look at the acreage in CRP. It is at the lowest level since the 1980's. Get those acres back.

Sincerely  
Jack Weiss  
Bozeman  
4064809744

**From:** [Ron Hvizdak](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 9:45:35 AM

---

I think the pheasant release program is a big waste of money. It was proven long ago that releasing pheasants did not contribute to an increase in pheasant populations. Pheasant populations are determined more by habitat and environmental factors. Releasing pheasants may make some people feel good about what they are doing, but it provides no benefit other than some dumb pheasants getting shot. FWP would be far better off spending the money improving habitat on both public and private lands rather than waste it on raising and releasing birds. I thought that management technique went away years ago when it was deemed financially unsound. Montana hunters and taxpayers deserve way better.

Ron Hvizdak

Eureka, Mt

406-889-3791

[hviz@interbel.net](mailto:hviz@interbel.net)

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows

**From:** [Matthew Newsted](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 9:08:59 AM

---

I support the expansion of the pheasant release program.

Thank you,  
Dr. Matt Newsted MD

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [kriss](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release  
**Date:** Sunday, January 30, 2022 4:59:16 PM

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Raising and releasing pheasants is absolutely wrong. Releasing pheasants simply makes a video game out of bird hunting. Very few birds will survive to reproduce. Birds reproduce in appropriate habitat. Funding should be spent on habitat programs. All the release program does is move us closer to "ranching for wildlife".

Richard J. Douglass, Ph.D.

611 So Crystal St.

Butte, Montana

59701

406 782 9060

406 490 9644

[samjd@montana.com](mailto:samjd@montana.com)

**From:** [Malcolm Jaap](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PHEASANT RELEASE. IT IS MY OPINION THAT HABITAT IS THE FIRST AND ONLY PLACE THE MT FISH AND GAME SHOULD BE SPENDING OUR DOLLARS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, Malcolm Jaap  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 12:48:46 PM

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Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:Mail[go.microsoft.com]) for Windows

**From:** [Anne Jolliff](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 12:17:53 PM

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The idea of getting more youth into the outdoors is a concept I am fiercely involved with. As a mother of three girls, my husband and I take them with us at every possible opportunity. If they are not able to come with, they get a post-hunt tutorial on how to care for any game we may bring home. I am also a teacher at Jefferson High School - as an English teacher I created an elective class dedicated to reading literature pertaining to the outdoors and taking them out with experts when possible to experience what we read.

Because the underlying motivation for the pheasant release is R3 and involving youth and the outdoors, my voice should be valued on this topic.

I do not think this is a wise decision on the part of FWP. While I understand creating more opportunity, it may inadvertently create more opportunities for coyote hunts rather than pheasants. Many of the pen-raised pheasants will die from exposure, stupidity, and predation. I DO love to take our kids and GWP out for pheasants - but is a pen-raised pheasant going to flush or squat when our dog finds it? Is it fair chase at that point? What is this REALLY accomplishing? I applaud the attempt, but am not sure this is the best way to go about doing it. Do I know of better options to mitigate this? No, I am not a biologist nor a professional. I am a hunter, mother, and teacher who finds this being labeled as an R3 initiative questionable as there are better, more ethical ways of involving kids in our outdoors heritage.

Thank you,  
Anne Jolliff (MT City, MT)



**From:** [Brett Edstrom](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 10:17:24 AM

---

Put that money into habitat, this is not a good idea.  
Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows

**From:** [David Brandt](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] pheasant release  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 8:05:02 PM

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That sounds good. I suppose the places where they plant the pheasants will be available sometime in 2022. I wonder what the closes place to Eureka would be ?

Thanks , used to hunt some pheasants down at Nine Pipes before that got all screwed up !

Sincerely yours

David M. Brandt

**From:** [Kathy](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant releases  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:33:23 AM

---

Dear Ms O'Neill,

I am against the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants in Montana.

This action will not enhance pheasant populations and actually may be detrimental to wild populations.

It's the same thing that happened with stocking of rivers with hatchery trout. That stocking actually depressed wild trout numbers.

Stocking pen raised birds certainly goes against the fair chase hunting tradition that we value in Montana.

I support Alternative A: No Action

Thank you,

Kathy Knudsen

**From:** [Christopher Hyle](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant releases  
**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2022 5:20:29 PM

---

I have read the EIS and fully support Alternative B the proposed action.

Christopher M. Hyle

109 Star Lane

Butte, MT 59701

1(406) 494-3892

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows

**From:** [Cohan, Robert B](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Releases  
**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2022 12:03:50 PM

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Deb....I don't see any releases in the Whitehall and Three Forks valley. Both have great habitat along the rivers and were one of the few places I could hunt pheasant as a kid in Montana in the 70's.....

*Robert B. Cohan CSP*

*Sr. Staff Engineer ESH*

*Lockheed Martin Denver*

*303-564-8277*

***Giving up freedoms is "easy".***

***Getting freedoms back is "hard"!***

**From:** [Tom Deveny](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant releases  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 3:47:04 PM

---

Dear Ms O'Neill,

Please do not waste any more money on this. Please sort it out and do what you know is right for our wildlife. Game farming should not be something you even should have to consider. Support habitat.

In addition disease risk should make it unthinkable to pen raise pheasants.

Thanks.

Tom

**From:** [greg mladenka](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant Stocking EA Comment  
**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2022 12:13:15 PM

---

Greetings - Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposal to greatly increase pheasant stocking on State of Montana lands. I am opposed to pheasant stocking for several reasons. First, it does not meet ethical standards for fair-chase. These birds are farmed birds and are nothing more than a put-and-take shooting opportunity for those unwilling to put in the time and effort required for hunting wild birds. Secondly, farmed birds can harbor disease. As stated in your EA -"Salmonella pullorum, Salmonella typhoid, Salmonella enteritidis, Mycoplasma gallisepticum, Mycoplasma synoviae, Mycoplasma meleagridis, and Avian Influenza" are diseases to be concerned with. Your EA further states "Before the release, the overall condition of the birds will be assessed by department staff to assure a general healthy condition. Any visibly sick birds will be rejected for release". Who is "department staff" and what are these individual's qualifications for assessing these birds? At minimum, these birds should be thoroughly tested by the department prior to release to assure they're not diseased. Visual assessment doesn't cut it. You risk infecting wild birds just to provide shooting opportunities using farmed birds. Table 5B should be checked as "potentially significant impact". You don't know it will be minor and even though it's stated in the EA that no known transmission of disease between farmed birds and wild birds have been observed, it's really pretty hard to see that until it's too late - especially if you're not really looking for it.

A couple of minor points regarding several other tables. Table 6B states there will be no increased noise impacts. How silly - have you been to a location packed with hunters after a pheasant release? Really, there'll be an increase in noise. Likewise, just be honest in your tables - Table 10B says no increase in energy usage. If the goal is to bring more folks out to shoot these farmed birds, how are they going to get there? I'm not saying noise and fuel use are a big deal, but it appears someone was so busy checking "no impact" boxes that they really didn't think it through. Likewise, Table 13D states no impact that this might set a precedent - when do you start stocking farmed deer to provide more R3 opportunities? It may sound far-fetched now, but I do believe this is a slippery slope. At least acknowledge this.

Finally, as a hunter-conservationist, I'm disappointed that my home state, Idaho also has chosen to promote this unsavory practice. Now, I am further disappointed that a neighboring state that I was considering for hunting wild pheasants is doing the same thing, except on even a grander scale. I won't consider hunting pheasants in Montana further. While R3 has its attributes, using it as an excuse to stock farmed birds on public lands simply for the purpose of shooting opportunities is disgusting. I urge you to reconsider this program.

Thank you for your time.

Greg Mladenka  
156 South 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Pocatello, ID 83201



**From:** [Rich Johnson](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant stocking EA  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 2:55:55 PM

---

I am a MT resident and have hunted pheasants in MT for forty years I have read the EA and am apposed to the stocking of pheasants it is waste of money please select the no action option.

Richard L Johnson  
Lewistown, MT

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Scott Lindell](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant stocking plan  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 7:00:02 AM

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Good morning Deb. I'm Scott Lindell, a Billings resident for over 30 years. I started Pheasants Forever here in 1992. I have been involved with pheasants for over 60 years. I operated a shooting preserve in Yellowstone County. I travel to South Dakota each year to participate in there pheasant activities. 30 years ago we were totally against pheasant stocking. The key is habit! Shelter belts, standing corn, nesting cover and water are vital. It's rare to drive around Billings anymore and see a pheasant. I strongly believe in the youth program and as a founder of Pheasants Forever in Mt., only stock birds where the habit is suitable year round and stock hens and roosters in the spring so they can reproduce and build a resident population. You can end up with 30% roosters after hunting season and be fine for breeding. I would love to be involved and help the program. Stocking the birds in the spring make them wild in the fall to give youth and their mentors the prime hunting experience. I also believe it will help the prisoners develop a passion for something they can be involved in. Thank you, Scott Lindell

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Roy Regel](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant stocking  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 9:14:55 AM

---

Please use the funds for more habitat, rather than pheasant stocking just before hunting season.  
Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows

**From:** [Kent Gilge](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant stocking  
**Date:** Sunday, January 30, 2022 8:06:57 AM

---

Pheasant stocking is, an always has been, a ridiculous waste of sportsmen dollars. The example set for our youth is contrary to true hunting ethics.

If more opportunity is desired, allowing a hen in the bag limit would go a long way without harming the population, as you well know.

Kent Gilge

4145 70 th Ave W

Havre, MT 59501

-

**From:** [Van Pittack](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant stocking  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 4:40:13 PM

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I think it is great program

**From:** [Jock Conyngham](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant stocking  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 4:41:52 PM

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Please count me as firmly opposed to pen-raised pheasant releases in Montana as proposed. This is an invitation to poor hunter ethics, disease introduction and transmission to wild birds, and poor financial management. The funds are far better spent on habitat improvement and access—the real keys to hunter recruitment.

Thank you,  
Jock Conyngham  
Evaro, MT  
406-726-5002

**From:** [Tim](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 2:41:42 PM

---

Lived in Montana most my life and have never found the stocking of pheasants to be of any long term benefit. Please consider more worthwhile projects for our hard earned money. Thanks for all you do.

Tim Brooker  
Plains mt

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Al Eiden](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasants Forever comments on Programmatic Pheasant Release EA  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 2:37:51 PM  
**Attachments:** [PF comment letter for MT phasant release EA.pdf](#)

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Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Programmatic Pheasant Release EA.

Attached is a letter with Pheasants Forever's comments. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me directly using the contact information in my signature line.

Thanks again.

Al

**Al Eiden** | Director of Field Operations- West Region  
**Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever**  
1783 Buerkle Circle | Saint Paul, MN 55110  
C. 602-513-6360  
[aeiden@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:aeiden@pheasantsforever.org)



[\[pheasantsforever.org\]](http://pheasantsforever.org)



[\[quailforever.org\]](http://quailforever.org)



[\[pheasantsforever.org\]](http://pheasantsforever.org)



**From:** [Jim Hoschouer](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasants release FWP  
**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2022 9:04:56 AM

---

Hello my comment below. I think we have tremendous documentation currently that science and research by Pheasants Forever and states with good habits do not AUGMENT populations that release pen raised birds. The term Augment needs to be dropped from this plan! That's idiotic!

The millions of forthcoming dollars will be a long term waste of money. That money placed into habitat improvements and further acquisitions for public hunting WILL HAVE LASTING value for the public

How will you know if this releases  
Actually improve R3 participation??  
Jim Hoschouer  
Gallatin valley pheasants forever  
406-579-0851

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [larry naves](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] pheasants releases  
**Date:** Friday, February 18, 2022 11:38:29 AM

---

I am a strong advocate of pheasant releases. I had the opportunity to hunt on several private properties where birds were released resulting in some great hunting. Importantly, we hunted those properties 3 and 4 years after the releases and the pheasant populations were still dramatically higher than other similar properties in the area. The hens that lived to reproduce in subsequent years made a significant positive impact on our hunting experiences.

Furthermore, even if the only impact of releases is birds available for hunters to harvest the year of release there is a significant benefit and hunters are going to spend more time in the field. If you have new hunters in the field they are far more likely to stay with hunting if they have opportunities to shoot a bird.

Last season my actual cost per pheasant harvested was over \$100 per rooster harvested. I had friends who spent over \$350 per rooster on a South Dakota hunt. Anyone who says they are spending less than \$25 per rooster harvested have to be driving another persons vehicle and burning their fuel, hunting with somebody elses shotgun, ammo, dog, etc. Last year I had over \$30 per rooster harvested just in dog food for my Labrador.

To be really effective substantial numbers of birds need to be released so I think the 50,000 figure is very reasonable. Nature is full of examples where their survival as a species is based on having enough numbers to withstand the effects of predation. If there are excess birds for the location they are going to spread out to surrounding habitat.

After last years drought there aren't going to be many hens left to reproduce in marginal to fair habitat areas. Some of the spots I hunted last fall their was little vegetation over an inch tall. And there were few if any pheasants and almost no young of the year. It takes live hens in the spring to hatch new broods. Released birds would help these areas to recover even if only a fraction of the released hens survive until the next spring.

**From:** [Kent Bender](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:03:59 PM

---

Not necessary and a total waste of our money.  
Thanks, Kent

**From:** [Bill Story](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 9:08:09 AM

---

Keep em wild, don't waste our money on pen raised pheasant.  
Bill Story

**From:** [Michael Shepard](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasants  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 22, 2022 5:16:56 PM

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No pen raised birds ....been proven not to work before..a waste of money...justmore repub bios working in new laws...sad for wild non medicated birds

**From:** [Scott DeSena](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 11:07:55 AM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill,

My name is Scott Desena and I live in Butte, Mt. Im writing in to oppose releasing pen raised pheasants here in Montana. The use of license dollars would be better off going towards protecting and improving current habitat for our wild birds. The low success rate of pen raised pheasants seems to me a waste of money. I support alternative A: no action in the proposed annual release.

Sincerely,  
Scott Desena

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Dan](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 7:21:25 AM

---

Good Morning,

From what I understand these birds don't do well in the wild and we could probably spend the money more wisely. Possibly increase the public access land agreement program?

Thanks for your time,

--

Dan

**From:** [Robert Wood](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasants?  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:24:28 AM

---

Hello there,

Id like to comment on the program to release Pheasants by using sportsmen funding.

1). Pheasants are a non native species. If you really wished to do something for Montana, and the recruitment of hunters, you would raise wild Sage and Sharptailed grouse and release them. Western Montana has none of these species in many places they use to thrive in.

2). If you do use Pheasants, I'd recommend that you us that money to capture wild Pheasants from Lee Metcalf Refuge or the National Bison range and release them. You'd get way more bang for dollars spent.

3). This program is a million dollar waste of hunters dollars and should be abandoned. Your experts know this and so should anyone involved. Politicians should reframe from Biology.

Thanks for you consideration.

Robert Wood



**From:** [Gary Whalen](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pheasant release  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 2:43:42 PM

---

I think that's a wonderful idea, I'm an avid bird hunter and have a 10 yr old grandson to start hunting. Please do this, birds have not been good for several years. Thanks, Gary whalen

**From:** [Bert Lindler](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please Do Not Raise Pheasants for Release  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 12:34:38 PM

---

Dear Program Official,

I am an upland bird hunter who values wild birds and the habitats that support them.

I'm happy to take a young person hunting. I think they'll learn more if they accompany an experienced hunter hunting wild birds in suitable habitat than if they hunt released birds in areas that won't support wild birds.

I fear that captive birds will carry diseases that will spread to wild birds when the captive birds are released.

Please do not pursue this venture. Pheasants won't be better off. Upland bird hunters won't be better off. Prisoners won't be better off--other activities can help them learn valuable job skills.

Thanks,

Bert Lindler

2523 Klondike Court

Missoula Montana 59808

**From:** [Kyle Marvinney](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 11:56:47 AM

---

Dear Ms. O'Neill;

I am writing to comment on the proposed programmatic pheasant releases and express support for Alternative A, no action. Based on what is in the EA and the cited background science, this program seems like a waste of money and effort. If the goal is youth and new hunter participation and experience, then the money should be invested in education and land access opportunities, not in releasing pen-raised birds a few days before a hunt so that they may be killed. In education, emphasis should be placed on the importance of preserving and maintaining habitat in order to keep game species on the landscape at viable population levels. Releasing pen-raised birds does not line up with this ideal and sends a poor message to young and new hunters: that the state will simply release a bunch of animals for the purpose of hunting.

Further, there is no guarantee that these animals will remain in a location that is accessible to the public. It is in the EA that the birds will disperse and end up on adjacent land which may well have no public access, so again, with that in mind, what does this actually accomplish? The money would be better used on accessibility (Block management programs and other conservation lands can't get enough funding, in my opinion) and habitat restoration. Releasing hatchery birds is simply a bandaid and for a non-native species with poor survival at that. I oppose the proposed pheasant release and support Alternative A, No Action. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Kyle Marvinney

**From:** [Guy D Bateman](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 10:13:01 AM

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I only support Alternative A: No Action in response to the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants. Pen-raised birds are NOT hardy, will not enhance the population of wild pheasants, and will do little to enhance hunting experiences. Our license dollars (and tax dollars) are better spent improving numbers of wild pheasants and improving public access to wild birds.

Thank you.

--

Guy Dean Bateman, Ph.D.  
PO Box 17931  
Missoula, MT 59808  
406-250-9425

**From:** [Dan Hoffman](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:25:48 AM

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FWP,

I am writing to express opposition to the use of sportsman's license dollars to purchase pen-raised pheasants to release. I support Alternative A - No Action. I object to the purchase and release of pen-raised birds for the following reasons:

- Studies in Montana have shown that pen-raised pheasants have very low survival rates and most die before they are harvested by hunters.
- I believe this money could be better spent improving habitat than by stocking birds and this would provide more opportunities for Montana hunters and better opportunities for hunter recruitment.
- Pen-raised birds lack the wild instincts that makes hunting wild birds challenging and rewarding. The challenge and feeling of accomplishment that comes with hunting wild birds is what will recruit new hunters, not hunting pen-raised birds.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Dan Hoffman  
Missoula, MT

**From:** [Montana Chapter](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 22, 2022 12:42:05 PM  
**Attachments:** [Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments - Montana BHA.pdf](#)

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Ms. O'Neill,

Please find attached the comments of the Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers regarding the proposed Programmatic Pheasant Release EA.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Respectfully,

**Montana Chapter**  
**Backcountry Hunters & Anglers**  
[www.backcountryhunters.org](http://www.backcountryhunters.org) [[backcountryhunters.org](http://backcountryhunters.org)]  
*The Voice for Our Wild Public Lands, Waters, and Wildlife*

**From:** [Mike](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 5:09:16 PM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill,

I am writing in support of Alternative A: No Action in the Proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants. I opposed HB 637 when it was proposed and submitted comments to the legislature. This bill wastes precious license dollars (my money) to purchase pen-raised ring-necked pheasants and is a poor attempt to recruit new hunters.

Biologically, I object to stocking pen-raised birds, which have a very low survival rate. Studies, many cited in this EA, concluded that pen-raised birds fail to bolstering populations and few survive long enough to be effectively utilized by hunters. Montana FWP's own 2004 review of upland game bird biology and habitat relationships as part of the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program states, "Stocked birds contribute little to harvest or population growth in pheasant populations. I also understand that FWP is mandated to implement the intent of HB 637 of up to one million dollars and 50,000 pheasants.

In attempt to minimize the waste of FWP's time and funding, but to implement HB 637, I recommend the following requirements if Alternative B is selected –

- Release only 2,094 birds on the 7 WMA's (except the Beckman WMA which is in Fergus County as is now excluded in this EA as a control county) in 2022 immediately prior to the Youth Hunt.
- Require the youth to sign in prior to hunting and upon departure, report any harvested birds or any other information requested. This will also teach the young on how to comply with regulations and provide data for future wildlife management decisions.
- Band all released birds so it can be determined if harvested birds were wild or stocked.
- Require FWP to fully monitor this program, determine it's benefits or failures, and with the results, modify or repeal HB 637 in the next legislature.

Lastly, the public participation efforts were unsatisfactory. I didn't know this EA was available for public comment until today (2/23) and then only because I'm a member of an organization that emailed it to me. If it was sent to the Lewistown News Argus, they didn't print it. If it was sent to Region 4 to distribute to their emailing list, I didn't receive it (and I'm the chairman of Region 4's CAC).

I hope you will read and consider my comments.

Mike Getman

Lewistown, MT

Mhg4556@gmail.com

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:Mail[go.microsoft.com]) for Windows

**From:** [garry king](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#); [craigroberts@midrivers.com](mailto:craigroberts@midrivers.com); [glenn elision](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Programmatic Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 6:24:13 AM

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Deb O'Neill

I am an avid bird hunter, a member and supporter of Pheasants Forever, landowner with 780 acres of private land dedicated to bird hunting and bird habitat, have a state lease of 320 acres again dedicated to bird habitat open to all hunters each fall. I have planted over 85000 seedling trees in 2001. They now provide close to 100 acres of winter cover for the birds. Food plots are planted each year for the birds to nest and feed ( 50 acres). Hunters harvest between 250 and 300 roosters each fall. I , as a hunter and land owner, have never seen or heard of a pheasant stocking program that ever produced any successful results. The birds planted are ill equipped to survive more than a brief few weeks after release. This program would be a waste of valuable dollars with no beneficial results. If hunters are allowed to shoot hens as well as roosters, this would send the wrong message, and this practice would carry over to destroy our wild bird population.

Thank you for your consideration, Garry King Denton, Mt.



**From:** [Patrick Costello](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Programmatic Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Friday, February 25, 2022 2:03:08 PM

---

Hello,

As a Montana hunter I oppose the programmatic release of pen-raised pheasants.

While I appreciate the efforts of MTFWP to provide more opportunity for hunters, I would prefer that a non-native species exist only in wild populations that evolve on the landscape vs. pen-raised birds that do not have a high survival rate once released.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and have a good day,

Patrick Costello  
220 S. 18th Ave, Apt. C  
Bozeman, MT

**From:** [Dennis Beams](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Programmatic Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 5:54:57 PM

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Deb, it was a pleasure to meet you last year at the Kalispell Pheasants Forever training day for ladies. I was very encouraged when you told us about raising pheasants at the state penitentiary to support the pheasant release program.

I understand the science about the lack of survivability of pen raised birds but survivability isn't the point of the program. The point is to introduce our youth to pheasant hunting in an environment where they can have some early success. If you want a kid to get excited about fishing you take the kid to a stocked pond so he or she can have success before putting a fly rod in their hands and sending them out to fish the wild rivers. The same holds true for pheasant hunting.

I support the release program and its focus on youth and encourage continuation of the program.

Thanks for your consideration.

Dennis S. Beams

**From:** [Josh Elliott](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 4:56:58 PM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill:

I followed the pheasant stocking bill through the legislature and made my opinions known then. I understand that your job is to execute the will of our legislature and that this is likely not the place to argue, once again, that the entire concept is flawed for many reasons. I am a life member of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and I know that they have written a letter detailing these reasons, all of which I agree with. The EA effectively acknowledges these same points at 11c and 13e. I am not convinced there is anything you or FWP can do about our legislature's misguided plan, but if there is anything you can do at this stage to avoid wasting \$1 million tax dollars of hard working Montanans, please do it. I urge you to select the "no action" alternative to avoid this egregious waste of money. We have a cornucopia of hunting opportunities in Montana without this program.

Thank you,  
Josh Elliott  
Missoula, MT

**From:** [Alan Scott](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Proposed Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 10:00:05 AM

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I support this proposal to release birds for the youth hunts in this state. Even though the soundness from a biological standpoint is questionable, I believe the benefit of a youth having a reasonably good chance of harvesting a pheasant outweighs the probable overall negligent effect on the long term health of pheasants.

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone  
Get [Outlook for Android \[aka.ms\]](#)

**From:** [Don Thomas](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Proposed pheasant release  
**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2022 7:42:24 AM

---

As a longtime central Montana resident with over 50 years of experience hunting upland game here, I am writing to OPPOSE the proposal to fund the release of pen-reared pheasants, ostensibly to foster hunter recruitment. This program would be a waste of money, as numerous studies confirm an extremely limited survival for released pheasants. Lack of game is not the problem with hunter recruitment in Montana—it is lack of places to hunt due to increasing outfitter leasing and purchase of prime habitat by out of state interests. Our limited resources are better used addressing those problems than by feeding tame pheasants to coyotes. Don Thomas, Lewistown

Don Thomas

1898 Timberline Road

Lewistown, MT 59457

[www.donthomasbooks.com](http://www.donthomasbooks.com) [[donthomasbooks.com](http://donthomasbooks.com)]

[thomasdon@me.com](mailto:thomasdon@me.com)

**From:** [Shelley Murphy](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment for Annual Release of Pen Raised Birds  
**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2022 8:02:44 PM

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Hello

I'd like to submit comment for the annual release of pen raised ringneck pheasants.

I feel that FWP should put more effort into habitat versus spending money on releasing pen raised birds. Pen raised birds are mostly feeding the predator population. They do not know how to live in the wild and therefore, mostly end up feeding the predators and birds of prey, therefore encouraging easy prey targets for the predators and birds of prey, therefore jeopardizing the wild bird population even further.

I realize that FWP is looking at releasing pen raised birds from the dollar aspect, partnering with your recent proposal to extend our Upland Game Bird season, however this is not right for Montana. Unless you are going to release hundreds of thousands of birds similar to South Dakota, then your efforts should be focused on habitat and developing that so the wild birds have food plots and plenty of cover throughout the state. Encourage our landowners to farm for the birds and THAT will help increase your revenue from hunters.

I strongly encourage you to vote this proposal down.

Thank you.

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows

**From:** [Jeff Reed](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Pheasant Draft EA in R3  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 4:55:59 PM

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Absolutely not to Draft EA of annual release of pen-raised pheasants.

[https://fwp.mt.gov/public-notices/news/2022/jan/0127-draft-ea-annual-release-of-pen-raised-ring-necked-pheasants?fbclid=IwAR1dI3eD14qok6WnHJcPARWkNfd7Maw-Xt\\_lifdvZPVuk\\_-XR0aLDoyGKZM](https://fwp.mt.gov/public-notices/news/2022/jan/0127-draft-ea-annual-release-of-pen-raised-ring-necked-pheasants?fbclid=IwAR1dI3eD14qok6WnHJcPARWkNfd7Maw-Xt_lifdvZPVuk_-XR0aLDoyGKZM)

I don't want my license dollars spent on pen-raised pheasant program. Spend it on habitat and take the prisoners to see habitat untethered.

Thanks for listening to public comment.

Jeff



**Dr Jeff Reed**

Owner

m 1.425.246.0025

[jeff@reedfly.com](mailto:jeff@reedfly.com)

[www.reedfly.com](http://www.reedfly.com) [[reedfly.com](http://reedfly.com)]

[Book Jeff's Calendar \[bit.ly\]](#)

**From:** [Kari Eneas](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Cc:** [Whisper Means](#); [Richard Janssen](#); [John Harrison](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Ring-Necked Pheasant Release Draft EA  
**Date:** Thursday, February 24, 2022 10:46:23 AM  
**Attachments:** [2.24.2022 RNPH EA Comment\\_Eneas.pdf](#)

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Good morning Deb O'Neill,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on the RNPH release draft EA. Please see attached for my comment submission.

Thank you, and have a great day,

**Kari Eneas**

M.S., Certified Wildlife Biologist®

**Wildlife Program Manager**

**Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes**

**Wildlife Management Program**

P.O. Box 278, Pablo, MT 59855

Office: (406)-883-2888 ext. 7217

Cell: (406)-261-6774

<https://www.facebook.com/CSKTWildlife> [facebook.com]



**From:** [Derrick Gratwohl](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment RE: ANNUAL RELEASE OF PEN-RAISED RING-NECKED PHEASANTS DRAFT EA  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 8:34:15 AM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill,

I'm writing today to share with you my support of Alternative A: No Action in the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants.

This program is not a good use of state funds and has minimal impact on R3 efforts for hunters. The legislature should not be mandating these types of programs to Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (Comment 13e and Part III). We need to focus on science based management of these public assets. Further, having these birds raised at the state prison contributes to the expansion of our industrialized prison system in the United States that incentivizes incarceration to provide the state with a source of low wage labor.

In short, I strongly oppose the release of pen-raised pheasants and believe these dollars are much better spent elsewhere in the FWP budget. Thank you for your time and consideration.

--

Derrick Gratwohl  
(406) 697-0555  
[dtgratwohl@gmail.com](mailto:dtgratwohl@gmail.com)

**From:** [Greg Munther](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Raising colored leghorn chickens ....aka Pen raised Pheasant  
**Date:** Friday, February 25, 2022 6:00:31 PM

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It is one thing for the Legislature to become biologists and mandate this ill advised, expensive and wasteful program.

It is another equally disturbing action to call for public comment on this program while the bids for contract components of this program are to be closed on or before these public comments are due.

How can the public conclude that their public comments are important or even read when this bidding is going on /closing comments are due? All FWP staff connected to this fiasco should be embarrassed or even better, divorce themselves from this program.

Greg Munther  
Missoula

**From:** [Dick & Colleen Hoffman](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Raising pheasants at Deer Lodge for release within the state  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 1:48:16 PM

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I think this is a very good idea. It will not only give the folks there some creative work for the benefit of themselves but also for many a bird hunter in Montana. It's always good for a day in the field to have a few extra birds to be in the mix with the wild flock. The bird hunting at the Nine pipes area has been really struggling the last two or three years and this might give it the boost it needs. Releasing a few hens into the wild won't hurt if they are also made available. Being creative like this will only help in the recruitment of interest from young hunters to enhancement for the older hunting crowd. Lets make this one work.

Dick Hoffman, Florence, Mt

**From:** [Walker](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RE: ANNUAL RELEASE OF PEN-RAISED RING-NECKED PHEASANTS DRAFT EA  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 9:27:36 PM  
**Attachments:** [HHA 2022 Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments.pdf](#)

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Hello,

Please find attached comments written on behalf of Hellgate Hunters & Anglers on the domestic pheasant release EA.

Thank you,

Walker Conyngham  
President  
Hellgate Hunters & Anglers

**From:** [Frank Hecker](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RE: Funding the release of pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Thursday, February 24, 2022 9:30:52 AM

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Dear Ms O'Neill'

I am writing in response to the proposed annual release of pen raised pheasants in HB 637.

While the intentions of this bill may be positive I feel they are poorly thought out and over all, a waste of funds.

I am an avid bird hunter of over 50 years experience running my own dogs on public land hunts in 3 - 4 states

annually. I am a member and volunteer with Pheasants Forever, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers and Ducks

Unlimited. I have used pen raised birds to train new puppies for years and that is about the extent of their value. Pen

raised birds lack the knowledge and instincts imparted by being raised in the wild. Hence, they are poorly equipped

survive in the wild and the majority of any released birds would be decimated within a few days of release by foxes,

coyotes and raptors. Any surviving beyond that point will most likely starve to death. On top of the very high

mortality rate due to the aforementioned causes, pen raised birds offer a poor hunting experience. When pressed by a

dog or hunters the majority tend sit tight and don't run or flush. I've had to kick them only to result in a weak half

hearted flush and over half the time when training my puppies, the dogs bring me a live bird that they have caught.

I feel that any funds proposed for the release of pen raised birds would be much better used in habitat improvement /

preservation, expansion of block management hunting properties with desirable bird habitat, or in collaboration with

Pheasants Forever for the growth of Upland Bird Projects. Any of these avenues would result in better wild bird

numbers, expanded hunting opportunities and for the dollars invested, a longer lasting resource.

Regards, Frank Hecker

Helena, MT

**From:** [Tony Reinhardt](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Pheasant release proposal  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 4:39:56 PM

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I am a Montana resident, hunter and angler who is most passionate about upland bird hunting. Several studies make it abundantly clear that pen raised pheasants do not survive long in the wild, do not reproduce well, and have almost no effect in increasing the population of pheasants on the landscape for more than a couple of weeks. The funds for this program would serve a much better purpose if they were used to enhance habitat or expand public access.

Recruiting young hunters into the sport is a worthy goal, but this seems to be an artificial way of attempting that. We don't let youth hunters shoot deer under corn feeders. Planting pen raised birds solely to be shot isn't hunting, and it is not an authentic outdoor experience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tight Lines,

Tony Reinhardt  
Montana Trout Outfitters  
Wild on the Fly Adventure Travel  
6108 Raelene Ct.  
Missoula, MT 59803  
406-544-3516  
<http://mttroutguides.com/> [[mttroutguides.com](http://mttroutguides.com/)]

**From:** [Tom Carpenter](#)  
**To:** [Jack Weiss](#); [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Cc:** [Chad Harvey](#); [Barner Kyle](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RE: Pheasant Release  
**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2022 3:06:21 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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This is a timely topic, as a few weeks ago I assigned a writer to hound dog this precise subject on a national scale for the Summer Issue of PF Journal.

Chad, you may even hear from the writer for your take. I know we have to be cognizant of our game department partners, but we also owe it to members to give them sound investigative and factual looks at topics like this.

I am pretty excited for it.

Chad holler at me via phone if you wish to discuss.

Jack thanks for bringing this up! We old hound dogs think alike!

**Tom Carpenter** | Editor

**Pheasants Forever** | 1783 Buerkle Circle | Saint Paul, MN 55110

p. (651) 209-4940 | f. (651) 773-5500 | [tcarpenter@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:tcarpenter@pheasantsforever.org)

[www.PheasantsForever.org](http://www.PheasantsForever.org) [[pheasantsforever.org](http://pheasantsforever.org)] ♦ [PF Blog \[pheasantblog.org\]](http://PF Blog [pheasantblog.org]) ♦ [Fan Page \[facebook.com\]](#)



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**From:** Jack Weiss <[weiss126.j@gmail.com](mailto:weiss126.j@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Friday, January 28, 2022 11:22 AM

**To:** [doneill@mt.gov](mailto:doneill@mt.gov)

**Cc:** Chad Harvey <[charvey@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:charvey@pheasantsforever.org)>; Tom Carpenter <[tcarpenter@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:tcarpenter@pheasantsforever.org)>; Barner Kyle <[bigskybirddog@yahoo.com](mailto:bigskybirddog@yahoo.com)>

**Subject:** Pheasant Release

The release of pen raised pheasants has been proven to be an expensive failure, These birds generally have a life expectancy after release in weeks at best.

If your goal is to provide shooting for youth hunters have; at it.

If you want to provide shooting for the general public; you are wasting our money. Pen raised birds cannot compete with wild pheasants in suitable pheasant habitat. Increase the block management program for those hunters afraid to knock on landowners doors.

If our goal is more wild pheasants in Montana, we need to increase the habitat where there are pheasants. Sadly we are decreasing habitat. Look at the acreage in CRP. It is at the lowest level since the 1980's. Get those acres back.

Sincerely

Jack Weiss

Bozeman

4064809744

**From:** [Scott Lindell](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Pheasant stocking plan  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 7:31:33 AM

---

“Prisoners for Pheasants” definitely sounds like a great fund rai platform.

Sent from my iPhone

> On Feb 3, 2022, at 7:18 AM, Scott Lindell <[scottlindell@icloud.com](mailto:scottlindell@icloud.com)> wrote:

>

> PHEASANTS

>

> Sent from my iPhone

>

>> On Feb 3, 2022, at 7:17 AM, Scott Lindell <[scottlindell@icloud.com](mailto:scottlindell@icloud.com)> wrote:

>>

>> Let's make it a goal Deb, to have 1 million peasants on state lands in 10 years!

>>

>> Sent from my iPhone

>>

>>>> On Feb 3, 2022, at 7:14 AM, Scott Lindell <[scottlindell@icloud.com](mailto:scottlindell@icloud.com)> wrote:

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>>>> Standing corn can also mean standing food plots. The pheasants need year round food and can also be used for cover in inclement conditions. Montana has gone away from habitat and has gone to overdevelopment and over grazing. 50,000 birds released into the proper state lands could grow to 100,000 by the following year vs. 0 if just done haphazardly during the hunting season or placed on state lands that lack habitat. Thank you for your time Deb!

>>>>

>>>> Sent from my iPhone

>>>>

>>>>> On Feb 3, 2022, at 7:06 AM, Scott Lindell <[scottlindell@icloud.com](mailto:scottlindell@icloud.com)> wrote:

>>>>>

>>>>> I mean HABITAT. State lands that can reproduce pheasants on their own after they're stocked. Let the pheasants be flight conditioned by stocking them in the spring. That way they'll be totally mature if they have to go through a harsh winter.

>>>>>

>>>>> Sent from my iPhone

>>>>>

>>>>>> On Feb 3, 2022, at 6:59 AM, Scott Lindell <[scottlindell@icloud.com](mailto:scottlindell@icloud.com)> wrote:

>>>>>>

>>>>>> Good morning Deb. I'm Scott Lindell, a Billings resident for over 30 years. I started Pheasants Forever here in 1992. I have been involved with pheasants for over 60 years. I operated a shooting preserve in Yellowstone County. I travel to South Dakota each year to participate in there pheasant activities. 30 years ago we were totally against pheasant stocking. The key is habit! Shelter belts, standing corn, nesting cover and water are vital. It's rare to drive around Billings anymore and see a pheasant. I strongly believe in the youth program and as a founder of Pheasants Forever in Mt., only stock birds where the habit is suitable year round and stock hens and roosters in the spring so they can reproduce and build a resident population. You can end up with 30% roosters after hunting season and be fine for breeding. I would love to be involved and help the program. Stocking the birds in the spring make them wild in the fall to give youth and their mentors the prime hunting experience. I also believe it will help the prisoners develop a passion for something they can be involved in. Thank you, Scott Lindell

>>>>>>

>>>>>> Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [Scott Lindell](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Pheasant stocking plan  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 7:18:45 AM

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## PHEASANTS

Sent from my iPhone

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**From:** [Scott Lindell](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Pheasant stocking plan  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 7:18:03 AM

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Let's make it a goal Deb, to have 1 million pheasants on state lands in 10 years!

Sent from my iPhone

> On Feb 3, 2022, at 7:14 AM, Scott Lindell <[scottlindell@icloud.com](mailto:scottlindell@icloud.com)> wrote:

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>>> Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Scott Lindell](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Pheasant stocking plan  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 7:14:54 AM

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**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Pheasant stocking plan  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 7:06:46 AM

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**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Pheasant stocking plan  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 7:32:03 AM

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Fundraising

Sent from my iPhone

> On Feb 3, 2022, at 7:30 AM, Scott Lindell <[scottlindell@icloud.com](mailto:scottlindell@icloud.com)> wrote:

>

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>> PHEASANTS

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>>>>>>>> Sent from my iPhone

>>>>>>>>

>>>>>>>>>> On Feb 3, 2022, at 6:59 AM, Scott Lindell <[scottlindell@icloud.com](mailto:scottlindell@icloud.com)> wrote:

>>>>>>>>>>

>>>>>>>>>>>> Good morning Deb. I'm Scott Lindell, a Billings resident for over 30 years. I started Pheasants Forever here in 1992. I have been involved with pheasants for over 60 years. I operated a shooting preserve in Yellowstone County. I travel to South Dakota each year to participate in there pheasant activities. 30 years ago we were totally against pheasant stocking. The key is habit! Shelter belts, standing corn, nesting cover and water are vital. It's rare to drive around Billings anymore and see a pheasant. I strongly believe in the youth program and as a founder of Pheasants Forever in Mt., only stock birds where the habit is suitable year round and stock hens and roosters in the spring so they can reproduce and build a resident population. You can end up with 30% roosters after hunting season and be fine for breeding. I would love to be involved and help the program. Stocking the birds in the spring make them wild in the fall to give youth and their mentors the prime hunting experience. I also believe it will help

the prisoners develop a passion for something they can be involved in. Thank you, Scott Lindell

>>>>>

>>>>> Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Jeff Bartos](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RE: Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 4:43:40 PM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill,

I am writing to support Alternative A: No Action in the Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants proposal. It is a waste of my license dollars and Pittmann-Roberts funds, as pen-raised birds have an extremely low survival rate. Both current and historical research clearly indicate that the most effective way of boosting pheasant populations is through providing and expanding quality pheasant habitat. As a volunteer hunter education instructor, I feel the proposed release is shortsighted in its attempt to bolster hunting recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) efforts as it was argued that it would be in HB 637; it would be a far better use to direct the same funds for R3 to mentorship or improved access programs. As a conservationist and hunter whose license fees fund MTFWP and many of these programs, it is a financial waste to pursue pen-raised pheasant releases, especially considering the opaque nature of the bid award to the Warm Springs Prison, which is effectively funnelling my license dollars to the Department of Corrections and not to needed conservation projects. It is also a financial waste to funnel license fees to this program when current and historical biological assessments concur that habitat is key to expanding populations. I truly question the value of pursuing pen-raised pheasants from an ethical standpoint, and feel that the entire proposal is a case of special interests and politics setting biological and conservation policy instead of science. I can provide citations as needed for the above points.

Please chose Alternative A: No Action when deciding on this proposal.

Dr. Jeff Bartos  
Helena, Montana

**From:** [C.M](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RE: Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 2:42:14 PM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill:

Good afternoon. My family and I are members of the Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and would like to comment on the proposed pheasant stocking plans.

After reading through the proposal, I believe taxpayer dollars could be better spent on providing high quality habitat for these birds.

My family and I support Alternative A: No Action in the proposed Annual Release of Pen-raised Ring-necked Pheasants.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

**Carolina Morgan**  
*Missoula, MT 59803*



**From:** [Ken Sinay](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RE: Programmatic Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 4:47:19 PM

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I oppose spending money on the release of pen raised birds. All monies are more appropriately spent on habitat or access. However, habitat and habitat restoration should be the priority.

Ken Sinay  
POB 42  
Bozeman, MT 59771  
406-539-7359

**From:** [Bill Klatt](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Release pen raised Pheasant  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 8:19:06 AM

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No. Not for this waste of money!  
You feeding the hawks.

Bill klatt  
Denton, mt

**From:** [Dave Salvi](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Release of pen raised birds  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 4:19:44 PM

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Dear Ms. O'NEILL:

Joining all upland bird hunters who have an interest in ethical and quality hunting experiences, I oppose the planned release of 50,000 tame pheasants onto Montana public land.

I can hardly believe such an idiotic proposal even was made, let alone has gone this far. I will spare you making the point-by-point argument against this plan; I am sure it would just repeat what everyone else has said. The only comment that I have is a suggestion: If the legislature and/or FWP or anyone else wants to advance the R3 agenda, the best way is to devote resources to creating, improving and maintaining quality upland bird habitat.

Thank you.

Dave Salvi  
Lewistown

**From:** [Will Larson](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Release of Pen Raised Pheasants  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2022 7:47:06 PM

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I firmly support releasing pen raised pheasants for increased opportunity. Upland hunting is far too popular, particularly in the region of a montana that I hunt, to sustain enough pheasants to hunt successfully on a consistent basis. I would say 70%+ of the birds I see in late season are hens, and I see very few mature roosters that make it to the end of the season. In my opinion, the low survival rate of pen raised birds is a negligible factor because while unfortunate, it's the best way to create more upland bird opportunities for the public.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [William Madden](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Release of pen raised pheasants  
**Date:** Sunday, February 6, 2022 9:35:23 AM

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I am a longtime, bird hunter and member of Pheasants Forever and am writing in opposition to the proposed, increased release of pen raised pheasants on state land. Studies have documented that the survival rate of pen raised birds released into the wild is poor, affording little recreational opportunity for anyone. This is, essentially, a predator feeding program that adversely affects the environment in a number of ways and needs to be recognized as such. It is a waste of money that would be far better spent if directed toward habitat improvement that would help wild birds procreate and survive. As for increasing youth hunting opportunities, that is bogus. If there were suitable habitat and public access, the birds would be there for youth and others. Apparently, the Department feels constrained to make a decision that is not in the public interest as a result of recent legislation passed by the state Legislature that mandates the Department take the proposed action. Politicians are not scientists or game biologists. That mandate is unenforceable. It should be ignored or, at the very least, warrants a full blown Environmental Impact Statement that looks more closely at the adverse impacts on wild bird populations caused by introduction of a pen raised species and considers whether the legislature's mandate violates the Montana Constitution's proscription against the legislative branch interfering with powers delegated to the executive branch as well as its guarantee of a clean and healthful environment. (Mont. Const. Art. II, Sec. 3 and Art III, Sec.1).

William Madden

**From:** [Paul Vang](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Release of pen-raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 21, 2022 3:53:48 PM

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Thanks for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

I am a life-long pheasant hunting enthusiast, and I just turned 82 during the last pheasant season, that amounts to a lot of hunts.

During a long career with the Federal government I resided in several states with pheasant hunting: Iowa, North Dakota and Montana, plus I grew up on a farm in southern Minnesota where we had pheasants.

I will concede that the thought of FWP releasing a bunch of pheasants on WMAs has some appeal. Seeing lots of pheasants is fun, as is hunting them.

On the other hand, over the years one of the things I have learned about pheasants is that if you want pheasants on the land, your best bang for the buck is habitat.

The least bang for the buck is releasing pen-raised birds.

Neighborhood predators are pretty happy when a truck comes in and releases a bunch of pen-raised pheasants. These birds are dumb, and in nature, dumb critters rank down at the bottom of the food chain. Foxes, raptors, owls and anything else that likes pheasant dinners quickly separates the birds least likely to survive the first week or two.

Of course, a few lucky hunters may have some easy shooting at the survivors.

Still, the return, in terms of hunter-harvested pheasants per money spent is lousy, and most birds that survive the season are not genetically programmed to survive long enough to successfully reproduce.

If FWP has a million bucks to spend on pheasants, I'd urge that it be spent on habitat, whether it's planting shrubs and grasses, or controlled burns or the other many things that can be done to improve upland bird habitat. I'm a member of Pheasants Forever and the PF magazine usually has an abundance of stories on successful habitat improvement.

As it was said in Field of Dreams, "Build it and they will come," the same applies to habitat. Investments in habitat will attract wildlife and wild pheasants will find their way to the property and thrive.

So, in summary, I'll suggest a concession that a release of pen-raised pheasants on WMAs near population center prior to the Youth Pheasant Hunt has merit. However, I maintain that as a strategy of improving upland bird populations, don't waste our money on pen-raised birds. Put the money into habitat.

Again, thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Paul F. Vang

2828 Goodwin St.  
Butte MT 59701

[pfvang@me.com](mailto:pfvang@me.com)

Ph: 406-494-5736

**From:** [Tom & Beth Keegan](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] release of pen-reared pheasants EA  
**Date:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 9:44:26 PM

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Dear Ms. O'Neill,

I apologize if Ms. O'Neill is an incorrect greeting - Deb O'Neill was the only similar name that came up on a search of the MTFWP personnel directory.

I'm writing in response to the news release regarding release of pen-raised pheasants per legislative mandate. I'll try to be brief. I'm writing as an avid hunter, as well as a mostly retired professional wildlife scientist.

I imagine you are well-versed in the many negative consequences of releasing pen-raised pheasants, so I'll bypass those specific issues. In general, release of pen-raised game birds has clearly and repeatedly proven to be a decidedly inefficient use of funds. However, I recognize the political reality, however misguided, and I was in the same situation when I served as Upland Game Manager in Washington State several years ago (i.e., forced to manage a legislatively mandated pheasant release program).

Although I certainly recognize the importance of the R<sup>3</sup> direction, I'm also concerned about providing opportunities that do not reflect reality with regard to normal hunting opportunity and perpetuate the myth that wildlife management should rely on artificial propagation rather than appropriate habitat conservation and management. Funds spent on artificial propagation and release programs would yield far greater long-term benefit if appropriately directed to habitat improvement or acquisition. I believe my views are well-supported by the primary pheasant NGO (Pheasants Forever).

Given the circumstances (releasing pen-raised pheasants must occur), I would offer the following comments:

1. Under no circumstances should FWP condone or support the misconception that pen-raised pheasants will in any way augment or bolster wild pheasant populations. I am not aware of any research that would support any assertion to the contrary, and most, if not all, assessments demonstrate the exact opposite effect.
2. Releases should occur as far away as possible from established wild pheasant populations. Frankly, I would treat suitable pheasant habitat as a negative factor for identifying proposed release locations. Instead I recommend ranking release areas based primarily on distance from areas occupied by wild pheasants and proximity to areas likely to be used by targeted user groups. I would go as far as selecting release sites via a GIS analysis showing overlap of those 2 criteria.
3. Releases of pen-raised birds should occur as close as possible (in time) to targeted harvest opportunities. I.e., the morning of or evening before hunting commences to maximize return (birds harvested).

I hope you find my comments useful.

Best wishes in implementation of the required program.

Sincerely,



Thomas W. Keegan, Ph.D.  
58256 Old Freight Road  
St. Ignatius, MT 59865  
208-756-7543 (cell)  
keegan@montana.com

**From:** [John Backs](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Release of raised pheasants  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 11:21:09 AM

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I think it is terrible that we are spending huge amounts of money to release pheasants in MT. Especially since we have good populations of wild pheasants in many areas. Quit wasting money on nonsense like this. John Backs St. Ignatius, MT

**From:** [thomasmfrance@gmail.com](mailto:thomasmfrance@gmail.com)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] revised comment letter  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 6:10:49 PM  
**Attachments:** [france comments.pheasant farm EA.pdf](#)

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Deb – I found a typo in the letter I sent you earlier. I fixed it and converted the document to a PDF. If it's not too much trouble could you pull the earlier version and substitute this one. Thanks.  
Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:Mail[go.microsoft.com]) for Windows

**From:** [Fritz and Thora Prellwitz](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#); [Rep. Mike Lang](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Ring-necked Pheasant Release EA Comments  
**Date:** Saturday, February 19, 2022 12:32:36 PM

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Deb O'Neill:

I am writing concerning your EA to release pen-raised Ring-necked pheasants on State Lands. I am a Certified Wildlife Biologist and have been since 1981. I have B.S. and M.S. degrees in Wildlife Management. I am a Life Member of Pheasants Forever and have been for at least 10 years. I am a hunter and a Hunter Education Instructor for 42 years. I worked for Federal agencies for 38 years and now am a Biological Contractor. I am also a landowner with two small hay farms. Both have pheasants. I am most concerned about my farm a little over a mile southeast of Wagner, MT, and west of Malta in the Milk River Valley which appears dark blue on your map. I do not want any pen raised pheasants released anywhere near my land which has a healthy populations of wild pheasants.

I was first exposed to these programs in Wisconsin in the 1960s when the Wisconsin DNR was forced to administer this type of program using a hatchery at Poynette, WI, which was active for many years and studied in detail before being greatly reduced in scale. I believe that politics has caused them to utilize the hatchery again at times when they knew it wouldn't work. This is what they found out and what I observed first hand while living and hunting there.

- Released birds were very unhealthy and prone to damage during confinement in cages for transport. Pheasants can get very nasty when forced into crowded confinement. Birds that I saw included many with an eye pecked-out, head and neck feathers pulled-out, tail feathers missing, and abnormalities in size due to eating commercial poultry foods. We called them "Poynette Leghorns" because they resembled frying chickens in the meat counter at the grocery store. My mother did not like cooking them.
- They were not "street smart" when it came to being released into red fox habitat and most ended up being fox food within a day or two.
- Because everyone knew the foxes were going to get them "hunters" would follow the hatchery trucks around and many times the technicians opening the cages would get peppered with birdshot. It was a very unethical and unsafe hunt.

Your EA mentions no observed problems with poultry diseases and bird flu being passed to domestic poultry flocks. You could be correct if your experience is with small flocks of a dozen or so birds used for egg production for consumption on the farm. Phillips County has, however, a new chicken/egg production facility for 10,000 birds starting up near Loring, MT, after construction for over a year with state-of-the-art facilities. The risk of a pheasant disease getting into that flock would be extremely risky and costly for FWP. We all know that the risk of transmission goes up quickly as the confined population gets larger. Intraspecific strife increases greatly with population density and that lowers resistance to disease transmission.

Last, I am concerned about your goal of increasing youth hunting opportunities. Do we really want to provide "easy" hunting to youth and give them the impression that that is what hunting is all about? Do we want to provide an unethical hunt for inexperienced pheasants released right in front of the gun? Rich people have shooting preserves for that. Hunting license revenue and appropriations do not need to go to something like that.

I grew up in the land of Aldo Leopold. I have been to his famous hunting cabin and slept in it a few nights during graduate school research. I practically memorized "Sand County Almanac" and "Game

Management” which he wrote. I worked with the Hamerstoms who were his students. My graduate school advisor was Fred and Fran’s student. He always changed Order galliformes to Order trashiformes for pheasants because of the competition with Greater prairie chickens.

Thank you for considering my comments. My advice to you is that anytime a Republican legislature tells you to do something that you say “No, N-O, No”.

/s/ Dwain M. “Fritz” Prellwitz, CWB

Malta, MT

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:Mail[go.microsoft.com]) for Windows

**From:** [Dale Becker](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Stocking of pen-raised pheasants  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 1:12:15 PM

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As a retired professional Wildlife Biologist and Manager, I am writing to strongly oppose the proposal by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to spend taxpayer and sportspersons dollars on pen-rearing and stocking pheasants. Montana, like most other states, saw the folly in this ill-thought put-and-take process years ago. One does not need to know too much about nature to realize that turning captive-raised birds free into wild habitat results in a steep survival curve for those birds. They are not aware of the habitat they will find themselves in, the dangers to their survival or how to maintain in that new environment. As studies have shown, survival is very low, and so the expense of it, as indicated by the cost per bird actually harvested is ridiculously high.

Anyone who has spent much time analyzing pheasant populations and habitats realizes that the effects of predation and inadequate habitat can be highly impacting to pheasants. On the Flathead Indian Reservation, where I worked as a Tribal Wildlife Program Manager for the past 32 years, the quality and abundance of farm agricultural crops has decreased, and a switch from farmed croplands to grazing lands has increased. Simultaneously, strong mammalian predator populations, including striped skunks, red foxes and raccoons, increased. In addition, housing development increases also brought increases in my observations of foraging domestic and feral housecats and dogs, known predators of ground-nesting birds. Even though state, federal and tribal wildlife managers were increasing purchases of wildlife habitat lands, these substantial populations of mammalian predators undoubtedly keep pheasant production lower than hoped for. While some hunters were concerned with the numbers of wintering hawks and owls in the area, the species of raptors present were largely feeding primarily upon small mammals.

The proposed action is also a slap in the face for efforts to try to instill in young hunters a sense of fair chase. If they are fed an idea that they can kill more game simply by dumping captive-reared gamebirds out in front of them for target practice, what kind of hunter ethics does that practice instill in them. The answer is pretty shabby hunting ethics. What will be the next brainstorm? Put-and-take elk and deer or bighorn sheep hunting? Or legalizing game farms for rich and lazy hunters? In conclusion, I strongly oppose the proposal to pen-raise and put-and-take hunt pheasants or any other species of game animal. I think that this proposal cheapens and demeans the spirit of sportsmanship and fair chase that we Montanans have always taken pride in. In addition, the economics of it equals a poor and inefficient use of tax dollars and sportspersons dollars.

Sincerely,

Dale Becker

159 Fieldstone Drive

Kalispell, Montana 59901

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:go.microsoft.com) for Windows

**From:** [scott jens](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Stocking pheasants in suitable state lands in Montana, I've hunted pheasants for over 46 years now, this season was extremely hard to find  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 8, 2022 5:45:06 PM

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[Sent find any. I hunt with a good dog, and came home many times, without even firing a shot, hunting in areas where I would see 15 to 20 birds per day. We definitely need to stock Pheasand . I hunt around the Billings area. Yahoo Mail on Android \[go.onelink.me\]](#)

**From:** [Hunter Rush](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Upland birds  
**Date:** Monday, February 28, 2022 8:26:27 PM

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I'm a young hunter from the Flathead valley and love the idea of releasing more birds. I think the valley has lots of potential to be an amazing upland destination.

Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [sawilson1@q.com](mailto:sawilson1@q.com)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Waste of time  
**Date:** Friday, January 28, 2022 4:41:04 PM

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And birds, we we're Involved in this program in the Bitterroot many years ago and they didn't do well, it seemed as though every rough leg was eating one on a fence post, if it couldn't find a preserve that has lots of birds you'll do much better with wild raised birds they only have a lifespan 18 months anyway so it takes a lot of birds and a lot a good habitat to make it work just my thought Steve Wilson Region 2 the Bitterroot

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [FWP Wildlife](#)  
**To:** [O'Neill, Deb](#)  
**Subject:** FW: [EXTERNAL] tame pheasants  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 10:29:10 AM

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Hi Deb,  
I believe these comments are supposed to go to you.  
Thanks,  
Kammi

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**From:** D & J Lodmell <[djravid@aol.com](mailto:djravid@aol.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 1, 2022 10:28 AM  
**To:** FWP Wildlife <[fwpwld@mt.gov](mailto:fwpwld@mt.gov)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] tame pheasants

Good Morning -

I'd appreciate an explanation from Montana FWP as to the rationale for releasing thousands of tame, pen raised pheasants on state owned lands prior to the start of upland bird season.

Most, if not all, upland bird hunters know that 75%+ of WILD pheasants do not survive the harsh winters of Montana. Unless MWP knows data that I am unaware of, most likely all tame pheasants will not survive a Montana winter, let alone killing by predators.

I understand the release of tame pheasants for youth hunts, but thousands of birds scattered across the state makes no sense.

Does FWP check tame birds for various infections that would spread disease and decimate wild birds?

The ongoing draught and loss of habitat in eastern Montana is a major problem for wild pheasant survival, let alone tame birds.

Lastly, and most importantly, hunting tame birds is similar to shooting fish in a barrel.

Thanks for considering my concern.

Don Lodmell

[djavid@aol.com](mailto:djravid@aol.com)

406-363-4359

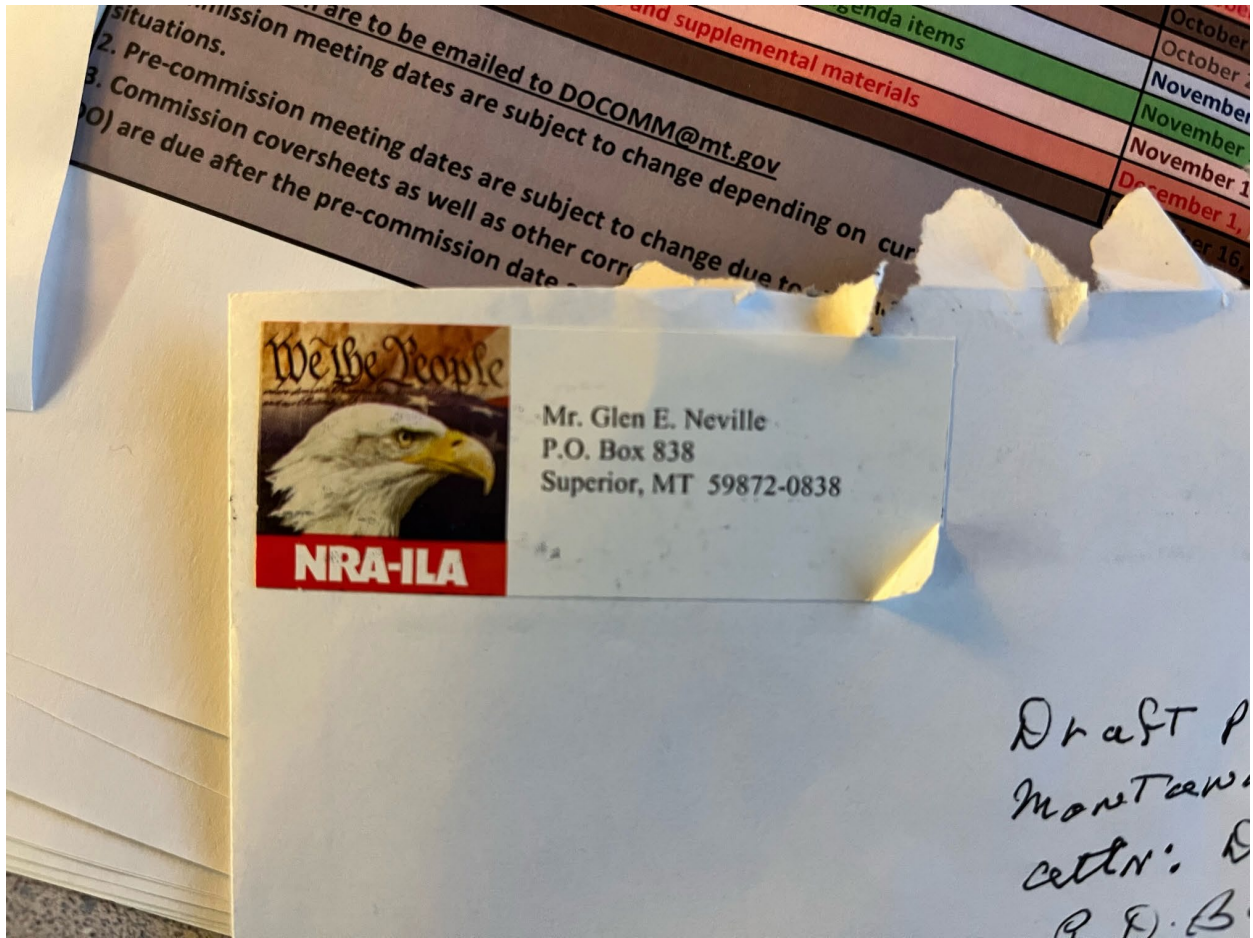
PO Box 998

Hamilton, MT 59840

From: [Chad Cox](#)  
To: [Shane Linnica](#)  
Subject: [Hard copy of comment](#)  
Date: Saturday, March 5, 2022 1:29:43 PM

Hi Linnica-

I forgot to send this to you. It's the only mailed comment I received.



for potential agenda items	September 1, 2022
mission meeting review of Submitted agenda items	September 8, 2022
on meeting	September 15, 2022

FWP MT. GOV.

Mr. & Mrs. Glen Neville  
P.O. Box 838  
Superior, mt 59812

Dear Friends,  
We think the Pheasant Release EA..  
is great - keep up the great work.  
Oh and by the way we really do  
NOT need wolves in mt. sence they  
came - the deer & elk pophation has  
dropped way to low - in Mineral Co.  
we used to see herds of elk in the count  
of hundreds now we are lucky to see  
2 or 3 up to 15 elk and 1 to 3 deer - its  
sad plus the hidated disease they are  
spreading is down right a sin →

for potential agenda items	September 29, 2022
mission meeting review of Submitted agenda items	October 6, 2022
on meeting	October 20, 2022
for all coversheets and	October 27, 2022
eting	Nov

We hope and look forward to  
 the soon Retrieval of the land so  
 all this death etc and,  
 May God Bless  
 Ann & Elizabeth Neille

Deb O'Neill  
 Special Projects Director  
 Director's Office  
 Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
 Office: 406-444-3755  
 Cell: 207-231-3881  
 Sent from my iPhone