

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

By

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**TO THE SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
FOR THE CLIMATE CHANGE AND WILDLIFE HEARING**

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Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony regarding global warming and wildlife. More importantly, thank you for boldly taking on this vital, often controversial issue, and seeking solutions to the greatest challenge of our time.

My name is David Stalling, and I live in Missoula, Montana. I am not a scientist or a wildlife biologist. However, I am an avid hunter, fisherman, backpacker, hiker, mountain biker, backcountry skier and snowboarder who deeply cherishes the wildlife and wildlands surrounding my home. That is what brought me to Montana when I was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps in 1986, and it's what keeps me here. It's my passion and love for wildlife and wild places—inspired by my hunting and fishing—that keeps me fighting for the conservation and protection of fish and wildlife habitat and the wild places that sustains them. Currently, I work as a grassroots organizer for Trout Unlimited, a national nonprofit dedicated to the protection of coldwater fisheries and watersheds. Prior to that, I worked for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, another nonprofit dedicated to the protection of critical habitat for elk and other wildlife. I have also served two terms as President of the Montana Wildlife Federation, Montana's oldest and largest hunting, fishing and conservation organization, and often volunteer for the National Wildlife Federation. In addition, I write about wildlife, conservation and natural history for a variety of national magazines, helping people develop a better understanding of science and policy in regards to wildlife and wild places.

The scientific evidence regarding climate change, and the consequences of human-caused release of global warming pollution, is conclusive and overwhelming, with even stronger evidence seeming to come forth every week. Those of us who are close to the land, and spend time among wildlife in wild places, are seeing much of this evidence first hand.

Two summers ago, I hiked from my front porch in Missoula to Waterton, Alberta. During this eight-week, 800-mile backpack trip, mostly off trail, I only crossed three roads, traveling through the Rattlesnake, Mission Mountains, Bob Marshall, Great Bear and Scapegoat Wilderness Areas, and Glacier National Park. This is some of the wildest,

most unique and precious country left in the United States, providing the last strongholds for rare, threatened and endangered species such as grizzly bears, wolves, mountain lions, lynx, wolverines and pure strains of Westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout. With strong populations of elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, moose and other wildlife, these places also provide some of the best hunting and fishing left in the nation.

But even here, in such remote, wild places, I witnessed evidence of what scientists and wildlife biologists have been warning us about for years. Snowpacks, so crucial in the arid West for supplying water to our rivers and streams, are rapidly declining. Diminished water flows makes for shallower, warmer streams, with less oxygen, making it more difficult for coldwater fish such as trout to survive. Increasingly, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks are implementing summer closures of rivers to fishing to protect trout overly-stressed from hot, dry conditions. On my journey, I also saw large chunks of forest impacted by increased occurrence of mountain pine beetle, which scientists are linking to trees being less resistant to insect and disease because of drier, more stressful conditions, and was particularly concerned by the rapid death of most white bark pines, which provides an important food source for grizzlies and other wildlife. I also walked through large expanses of charred forests burned by recent wildfires. Our western forests evolved with, and are adapted well to fire. However, drier conditions, combined with an increase in dead trees from beetle infestations, are resulting in more frequent, more damaging fires than what historically and naturally occurred, with serious implications for wildlife. Towards the end of my adventure, while hiking through Glacier National Park, I could visible notice a profound decline in the size of glaciers I have visited in past trips. Many scientists are predicting the glaciers in the park will be gone within 10 years.

I work with and speak to hunters, anglers, outfitters, guides, ranchers, county commissioners, tribal leaders and others throughout Montana and the West, and I hear similar reports and concerns from them about changes on the landscape, and its impacts to water, fish, wildlife and our western way of life. What I hear from fellow hunters and anglers is consistent with a recent survey commissioned by the National Wildlife Federation, examining the attitude of hunters and anglers regarding Global Warming; We hunters and anglers are witnessing the effects of global warming and believe immediate action is necessary to address it. Eighty five percent of us believe we have a moral responsibility to confront global warming, and eighty percent of us believe our nation should be a world leader in addressing this issue. I am definitely among the 75 percent of hunters and anglers who agree that Congress should pass legislation that sets a clear national goal for reducing global warming pollution with mandatory timelines.

Others can speak more authoritatively about the importance of these wild places, wildlife, and associated hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities to the economy of Montana and the West. And it's true. In Montana alone, more than one million people enjoy our state's abundant wildlife each year, contributing more than \$880 million to our state's economy. But more importantly, our nation's wildlife and wild lands—along with related hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational pursuits—provide unique cultural, social and even spiritual values not only for us Montanans, but for all Americans. This is

why great American leaders such as Theodore Roosevelt fought so long and hard to protect what remained, in his day, of our nation's wildlife and wild places. Today, our wildlife and wildlands face threats that Roosevelt probably could never have fathomed. But I am confident he would not have shied away from the challenge. Neither should we.

This is not, nor should be, a partisan issue. In Montana, I know Republicans, Democrats and Independents who all share a concern about global warming, and a desire to see something done about it. Thank you to those Senators and Congressmen who are boldly taking steps to confront this issue. For those who are still not on board: I urge you to take a closer look at the scientific evidence and consensus, to listen to us citizens who are witnessing the impacts first hand, set aside partisan politics and various industrial and corporate pressures, and tackle this issue with the sense of urgency and immediacy required. We do, indeed, have a moral obligation to do what we can and as quickly as possible.

I urge you to take immediate steps to curtail green house gas emissions; develop more conservative, responsible energy policies that include alternative and renewable sources of energy, more efficient ways of using energy, and reduce our need to burn fossil fuels. Even with immediate, yet important reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, changes will continue with negative impacts to fish, wildlife and wild places. Therefore, I also urge you to include, in legislation regarding climate change, funding specifically dedicated to help states protect and restore fish and wildlife habitat through the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration account of the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act.

As for my part, I will continue to do my best to help persuade and rally citizens to support your worthy efforts. I know that a majority of my fellow hunters and anglers in Montana, and elsewhere in our country, are already sending a message loud and clear: The time for action is now.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity.