

Montana House Conservation Hotlist Week 7: February 15, 2021

Please Support:

SB 59, Revise laws related to integrated least-cost resource planning, Senator Mary McNally (D-Billings) House Energy, Executive Action, Support. SB 59 would allow utilities to submit Resource Procurement Plans every two years instead of the current legal requirement to do so every three years. This bill helps MDU coordinate its resource planning with other states. *Contact Conor Ploeger, MEIC, at 443-2520 or cploeger@meic.org.*

HB 353 - Authorize replacement hunting license when harvested game unfit for consumption, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby) House Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Hearing 2/16, Support. Hunters would be able to get a replacement license when a big game animal is unfit for consumption due to chronic wasting disease under this bill. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432 or ngevock@mtwf.org*

HB 376 - Revise laws to bring electric and telephone coops in compliance with federal law, Rep. Jonathan Windy Boy (D-Box Elder) House FRET, Hearing 2/15, Support. SB 376 would require electricity and telephone cooperatives to consult with Tribal governments when locating equipment on Tribal lands. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

HB 387 - Revise small energy generation facility requirements and transition costs, Rep. Ed Staffman (D-Bozeman) House FRET, Hearing 2/17, Support. This bill would save consumers money and reduce carbon pollution. Specifically, the bill would prevent utilities in Montana from contracting with power production facilities that emit more than 1.2 metric tons of carbon dioxide for each megawatt hour. These facilities are incredibly expensive for NorthWestern to purchase power from, and emit a disproportionate amount of carbon pollution relative to other sources. The bill also provides planning regarding transition for these facilities. *Contact Derf Johnson, MEIC, at 406-581-4634 or djohnson@meic.org.*

HB 389 – Revise renewable energy laws, Rep. Tom Welch (R-Dillon), House FRET, hearing 02/17. Double the tax on renewable energy projects that are between 50 to 80 megawatts in size. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, (406) 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

Please Oppose:

HB 359 - Revising net metering rates, Rep. Larry Brewster (R-Billings) House FRET, Hearing 2/19, Support. This is an anti-solar bill that punishes rooftop solar customers and will cost Montana jobs. The bill reduces the bill credits that solar customers receive by approx. 70%, which will extend payback times by up to decades. It would apply to the more than 3,000 Montanans who already own rooftop solar and small wind. This includes households, schools, libraries, fire stations, small businesses, and farmers and ranchers. The bill will stunt private investment and economic growth, punishing the dozens of small businesses who install these systems in our state. The Montana Public Service Commission took a detailed look at the cost and benefits of rooftop solar credits to all Montanans just 15 months ago and ruled unanimously (5-0) that reducing the credit value was not justified. *Contact Andrew Valainis, Montana Renewable Energy Association, at 406-214-9405 andrew@montanarenewables.org*

HB 245 - Revising electricity supply resource procurement approval, Rep. Larry Brewster (R-Billings), House FRET, Executive Action, Oppose. HB 245 is an anti-consumer bill that would make it easier for NorthWestern Energy to overcharge customers. The bill increases the burden on the Public Service Commission when it decides whether NorthWestern Energy can charge customers for expensive electricity generating resources such as pricey new gas plants (or five). The bill shortens the timeframe for the PSC to make that decision. These fundamental shifts put consumers in the crosshairs of higher electricity rates in order to benefit NorthWestern's

shareholders. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546; or ahedges@meic.org or Makenna Sellers, NPRC, at 406-850-4491 or makenna@northernplains.org.

HB 273 - Eliminate restrictions on nuclear facility development, Rep. Derek Skees (R-Kalispell), Second Reading, Oppose. HB 273 will repeal laws pertaining to the Major Facility Siting Act. Under the Act, voters have to approve or reject a proposed nuclear facility and HB 273 will repeal that language. This severely weakens the public's say in whether or not Montana pursues nuclear energy. Contact Conor Ploeger, MEIC, at 443-2520 or cploeger@meic.org.

HB 281 - Revise Laws related to e-bikes, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Thompson Falls), House Floor, 2.15.2021, Oppose. This bill defines e-bikes as non-motorized vehicles, and creates three management classes for them based on their power and distance potential. This bill creates management issues for local governments by allowing certain classes of e-bikes anywhere that bicycles are able to go. The bill drives a wedge between the biking community and other backcountry trail users. The proposed definition is also in opposition to the currently proposed Forest Service definition of e-bikes. Contact Whitner Chase, MCV, at 407-235-8203 or wchase@mtvoters.org

SB 115 - Establish acquisitions requiring land board consideration, Senator Keith Regier (R-Kalispell) House Fish Wildlife and Parks, Executive Action, Oppose. This bill would require that conservation easement paid for by hunters under the Habitat Montana program go to the state Land Board for approval. It adds bureaucracy, creates uncertainty for ranch families who want to protect their ranches and provide public access, and will result in far fewer easements extending public access. Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432 or ngevock@mtwf.org

HB 320 - Prohibit sales of federal land transferred to Montana, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby) House Natural Resources, Hearing 02/08, Oppose. - Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432 or ngevock@mtwf.org

SB 53, Revise permitting laws for rock products mining, Senator Jeff Welborn (R-Dillon) Senate Natural Resources, Second Reading, Oppose. This bill would exempt the permitting of decorative rock quarries from having to conduct an environmental review under the Montana Environmental Policy Act. Rock quarries are permitted under the Hardrock Mining Reclamation Act, and are often evaluated under a "checklist" environmental assessment to assure that the environmental consequences of the proposal are fully considered. Contact Derf Johnson, MEIC, at 406-443-2520 or djohnson@meic.org

HB 302 - Require county approval to relocate bison, Rep. Josh Kassmier (R-Fort Benton) House Agriculture, Hearing, Oppose. This bill would require approval by a board of county commissioners prior to wild bison or wild buffalo being released into any county. The bill allows the prohibition of bison in a county based on a county growth policy and would be the first time a growth policy has regulatory power. Contact Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon, at 406-210-9449 or aseaman@mtaudubon.org

HB 318 - Clarify definition of bison, Rep. Kenneth Holmlund (R-Miles City) House Agriculture, Hearing, Oppose. This bill changes the definition of "wild bison" or "wild buffalo" to include "has not been reduced to captivity", "never has been subject to a per capita fee under 15-24-921, and "has never been owned by a person." The changes may mean that even Yellowstone National Park bison held captive for quarantine would be treated as livestock. Contact Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon, at 406-210-9449 or aseaman@mtaudubon.org

HB 346 - Revising property tax laws related to solar panel systems, Rep. Tom Welch (R-Dillon) House Energy, Hearing 02/17, Oppose. This would double the tax on renewable energy projects that are between 50 to 80 megawatts in size. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org

HB 170 - Revise laws to include renewable hydrogen, Rep. Tom Welch (R-Dillon), House Taxation, Executive Action, Oppose. HB 170 would dramatically lower the tax rate for any facility that uses “green hydrogen.” Green hydrogen means that the hydrogen was formed using renewable energy technology. HB 170 gives the extremely low property tax rate of 1.5% of market value to any gas-fired power plant that uses as little as 8% hydrogen meaning that a plant that burns 92% gas would qualify for the 1.5% tax rate. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

The Weekly Hotlist is published as an educational service to lawmakers and citizens by the Conservation Working Group, composed of the organizations listed below. Contact Jake Brown, Montana Conservation Voters at 406-855-7821 or Whitner Chase, Montana Conservation Voters at 407-235-8203.

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