

Montana House Conservation Hotlist Week 8: February 22, 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) Second Reading, 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*

Please Oppose:

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) Third Reading, 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) 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, Executive Action, 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), Second Reading, 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 170 - Revise laws to include renewable hydrogen, Rep. Tom Welch (R-Dillon), Second Reading, 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*

HB 468 - Allowing hound hunting and chase seasons for black bears, Rep. Paul Fielder (R-Thompson Falls), House Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Hearing 2/23, Oppose. HB 468 would allow hound hunting and a chase season for black bears. This bill would result in about a month when black bears are out of hibernation when they're not hunted or harassed. We have a successful black bear hunting season and it's a bill for one small group of people who want a special season. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432, ngevock@mtwf.org; or Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon, at 406-210-9449 or aseaman@mtaudubon.org*

HB 419 - Generally revise laws to create Superfund oversight committees, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby), House Natural Resources, Hearing 2/26, Oppose. This bill would give a very small local committee made up of 4 local officials and one state agency person the power to veto cleanup requirements and spending at all Superfund sites in the state including at Libby. Superfund sites are the most toxic sites in the country. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

HB 481 - Protect critical infrastructure, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby), House Judiciary, Hearing 2/24, Oppose. The bill would severely increase penalties for trespassing on or tampering with energy infrastructure property, despite existing laws that cover trespassing and vandalism. HB 481 would have huge repercussions for farmers and ranchers with energy infrastructure on their land; if, for instance, a rancher backed into an exposed pipeline with a tractor, they could be liable for felony charges and extremely high fines. It could also threaten to bankrupt organizations deemed "guilty by association" for acts of vandalism that they did not cause. The bill intimidates Montanans from using their first amendment rights to peaceful protest with vague language and harsh reprimands. *Contact Makenna Sellers, NPRC, at 406-850-4491 or makenna@northernplains.org*

HB 395 - Prohibit the creation of new zoning districts during a state of emergency, Rep. Julie Dooling (R-Helena), Local Government, Hearing 2/23, Oppose. This bill would prohibit any zoning from occurring during a state of emergency. The bill is retroactive, and so it would apply to any zoning that has occurred since January of 2020, including major zoning initiatives for cities and counties all across Montana, such as in Lewis and Clark and Cascade County. *Contact Derf Johnson, MEIC, at 406-443-2520 or djohnson@meic.org*

HB 470 - Allow for a citizen initiated planning board and additional zoning criteria, Rep. Marty Malone (R-Pray), House Local Government, Hearing 2/25, Oppose. HB470 makes zoning more difficult in Montana by limiting the ability of county commissioners to form and regulate planning boards. HB470 mandates a referendum upon petition of 15% of the registered voters in the district to eliminate all or part of an adopted zoning plan. This disenfranchises electors outside of a zoning district who have a stake in those decisions, and bypasses the will of counties and local governments. *Contact Jared Sousa, MT Smart Growth Coalition, at 253-320-0691 or jared@flatheadcitizens.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.

** Clark Fork Coalition * Environment Montana * Montana Audubon * Montana Conservation Voters * Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC) * Montana Public Interest Research Group (MontPIRG) * Montana Wilderness Association * Montana Wildlife Federation * Northern Plains Resource Council * Montana Smart Growth Coalition **