

Montana House Conservation Hotlist Week 9: March 1, 2021

Please Support:

HB 353 - Authorize replacement hunting license when harvested game unfit for consumption, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby) Senate Fish and Game, Hearing 3/9, 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:

HB 302 - Require county approval to relocate bison, Rep. Josh Kassmier (R-Fort Benton) Second Reading, 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 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), Second Reading, 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 481 - Protect critical infrastructure, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby), Third Reading, Oppose. The bill would severely increase penalties for trespassing on or tampering with energy infrastructure property, despite existing laws that cover trespassing and vandalization. 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 418 - Establish the public lands access act, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby), Second Reading, Oppose. Introduced at the request of Sen. Steve Daines, this bill would allow the state to take steps toward opening up roads on federal public land by designating historical rights-of-way as public "highways." These "hoax highways" are not roads in any real sense – they're overgrown cowpaths, forgotten two-tracks, and long-disused paths, some dating as far back as 1866. They don't lead to schools, hospitals, or workplaces, and they often run through Wilderness or other protected areas. These roads would also place a large financial burden on counties, and this bill could be used to force access through private lands. *Contact Noah Marion, MWA, at 406-624-9622 or nmarion@wildmontana.org*

HB 576 - Repeal the renewable portfolio standard, Rep. Jerry Schillinger (R-Circle), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. This bill would repeal the renewable portfolio standard, which has been a significant driver of economic and renewable energy development in Montana since 2005. *Contact Conor Ploeger, MEIC, at 443-2520 or cploeger@meic.org.*

HB 475 - Revise renewable portfolio standard to include hydropower, Rep. Derek Skees (R-Kalispell), Third Reading, Oppose. This bill would add nuclear power, a nonrenewable power source, into the definition of what is considered renewable energy under the renewable portfolio standard. The bill would also include pre-2005 hydropower infrastructure in this definition, which was purposefully left out of the renewable portfolio standard to encourage innovation in new energy development. *Contact Whitner Chase, MCV, at 407-235-8203 or wchase@mtvoters.org.*

HB 498 - Clarify jurisdiction of board of oil and gas conservation, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. HB 498 would make it more difficult for local governments to place reasonable sideboards and conditions on oil and gas development that occurs within a zoning district. Under citizen-initiated zoning, citizens are able to create bottom-up decisions regarding the future of their communities. This could take away the ability for local communities to place reasonable restrictions on oil and gas development, such as water quality protections, best practices for fire prevention, etc. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org.*

HB 527 - Require draft proposals before initiating a county zoning/planning board, Rep. Fiona Nave (R-Columbus), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. HB 527 had NO proponents and was opposed by the MT Assn of Realtors, Montana Assn of Counties, MEIC, & Citizens in Stillwater County. HB 527 would functionally eliminate citizen-initiated zoning (CIZ) districts for the entire state. These CIZ's have been used to protect property rights well over 100 times across to the state from Ravalli County (that has 41 CIZ districts) to Richland County and many, many places in between. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org.*

HB 599 - Generally revise opencut laws, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby), Second Reading, Oppose. HB599 is a radical re-write of gravel pit laws to cut the public out of the permitting process in most instances. The bill eliminates dozens of requirements for gravel pit operators, prohibits DEQ from: limiting the hours of operation of pits; requiring range or wildlife "fire prevention and control" measures; and consideration of acid mine drainage or sedimentation on adjoining lands or waterways. Finally, it completely excludes notification and involvement of neighboring landowners in most gravel pit permitting process. *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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