

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist Week 9: March 1, 2021

Please Support:

SB 180 - Establish an interim committee on soil health, Senator Pat Flowers (D-Bozeman), Second Reading 3/01, Support. SB 180 would create a state-appointed task force to explore how Montana can promote and support farming and ranching methods that improve the health of our soils, which will increase yields and profitability on Montana's vast agricultural lands. This task force will take the form of a subcommittee housed within the Montana Environmental Quality Council. Knowledgeable experts can coordinate research, share information, and provide resources to any producers who voluntarily want to take measures to improve their soil health. *Contact Makenna Sellers, NPRC, at 406-850-4491 or makenna@northernplains.org*

SB 292 - Establishing a utility energy conservation standard, Senator Christopher Pope (D-Bozeman), Second Reading 3/01, Support. SB 292 provides encouragement to Montana's regulated utilities to more quickly invest in cost-effective conservation. SB 292 establishes a very modest Conservation Resource Standard, the greater of 0.5% of load or the target identified 3rd-party Conservation Potential Assessment. The utility is also provided up to 40% of the economic benefit by exceeding their annual target. Cost-effective conservation is the cheapest and most reliable resource and therefore benefits all utility customer, participants and non-participants. *Contact Conor Ploeger, MEIC, at 443-2520 or cploeger@meic.org*

Please Oppose:

SB 143 - Generally revise laws re Class B-10 and Class B-11 elk and deer licenses, Senator Jason Ellsworth (R-Hamilton), Senate Finance and Claims, Oppose. This bill would create outfitter-sponsored licenses for the majority of non-resident big game hunting licenses. It would lead to more leasing of private lands to public hunters, limit opportunity for do-it-yourself hunters and further impede wildlife management. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432 or ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 284 - Generally revise county gravel pit permitting, Senator Russ Tempel (R-Chester), Senate Natural Resources, Third Reading, Oppose. This bill would remove the requirement for mitigation through the state sage-grouse conservation program for gravel pits permitted by a county. Though the creation of gravel pits can have a number of long-term habitat impacts, this exemption chips away at a strong state conservation program that requires the participation of all stakeholders. *Contact Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon, at 406-210-9449 or aseaman@mtaudubon.org*

SB 267 - Authorize reimbursement for wolf trapping and hunting, Senator Bob Brown (R-Thompson Falls), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. This bill allows wolf hunters and trappers to be reimbursed for costs incurred while hunting and trapping wolves. It allows the reimbursement of receipts for the costs and amounts to a bounty on wolves. No other wildlife harvest community expects or requests such fringe benefits. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432, ngevock@mtwf.org;*

SB 314 - Revise laws related to wolf harvest, Senator Bob Brown (R-Thompson Falls), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. SB 314 would take extreme measures including baiting, night hunting and no bag limits in an extreme attempt to drive wolf numbers down to a bare minimum number. It's unneeded when we have a sound wolf season and already have the tools with the Fish and Wildlife Commission to manage the population. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432, ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 306 - Revise structure of fish and game commission, Senator Mike Lang (R-Malta), Senate Fish and Game, Executive Action, Oppose. would require that four of the seven Fish and Wildlife Commissioners are landowners engaged in agricultural production. This bill makes it

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clear that sportsmen and sportswomen's concerns will be shut out in key decisions on wildlife management. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432, ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 237 - Revise community renewable energy project requirements, Senator Doug Kary (R-Billings), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. SB 237 would eliminate the penalty imposed on NorthWestern Energy's shareholders to pay a \$2.5 million penalty to state and tribal low-income energy assistance programs. Montana Dakota Utility has complied with the CREPS requirement in the renewable energy standard law but NWE has not.

Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org

SJ 3 - Resolution to remove Hidden Pasture Creek from WSA, Senator Jeffrey Welborn (R-Dillon) The EQC spent considerable time and taxpayer money in the last interim focusing on collaborative approaches to managing WSAs, and the current legislature needs to honor that effort. The public deserves meaningful chances to provide input, and these chances need to come BEFORE management recommendations are made, not after.

In 2017 and 2018, Sen. Daines and then-Representative Greg Gianforte introduced bills to strip protections from WSAs across Montana. These bills failed because they were top-down approaches that ignored the proper way to find lasting solutions and common ground - through collaboration. This resolution (and previous release resolutions from the legislature) have not led to progress on the issue, they simply inflame tensions further. *Contact Noah Marion, MWA, at 406-624-9622 or nmarion@wildmontana.org*

SB 164 - Revise non-degradation standards for nitrates, Senator Carl Glimm (R-Kila), Senate Natural Resources, Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. This bill would increase the standards for allowable pollution of nitrates to 10 milligrams per liter. Nitrates are commonly associated with sewage. This is the maximum pollution allowed under the Clean Water Act, and will likely lead to violations of narrative water quality standards for fishable, swimmable, and drinkable rivers and streams. *Contact Derf Johnson, MEIC, at 406-581-4634 or djohnson@meic.org*

SB 337 - Revising laws related to grizzly bear relocation, Senator Mike Lang (R-Malta), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. This bill states that bears found outside the established recovery zones cannot be translocated by the state, and therefore would be killed. It would raise major concerns with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and preclude every delisting grizzly bears because of issues with adequate management protocols to ensure grizzly mortality isn't too high. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432 or ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 358 - Repeal numeric nutrient standards for water quality, Senator John Esp (R-Big Timber), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. This bill would eliminate numeric nutrient standards that are currently established and enforced by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality through administrative rules. This bill would result in more nutrients in our rivers and streams. Nutrient pollution has major impacts to human health and aquatic ecosystems. *Contact Derf Johnson, MEIC, at 406-581-4634 or djohnson@meic.org*

SJ 18 - Resolution on state management of grizzly bears, Senator Bruce Gillespie (R-Etheridge), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. This resolution calls for Congressional delisting of grizzly bears before the federal government has released a rule to do so in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, and for reviews of the Cabinet-Yaak and Bitterroot grizzly populations that are low, and non-existent. *Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, at 533-9432, ngevock@mtwf.org*

SB 328 - Revise coal bonding laws, Senator Duane Ankney (R-Colstrip), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. SB 328 would change how the Montana Department of Environmental Quality releases bonds for reclaimed coal mines. The bill would allow for bonds to be released for partially reclaimed lands as well as for reclaimed mines which are still contributing to water quality problems. This will result in poor reclamation at coal mines and poses a risk for taxpayers having to pick up the costs associated with full reclamation. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

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SB 352 - Clarify objections to water rights, Senator John Esp (R-Big Timber), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. SB 352 would eliminate the ability for individuals and organizations to participate in the water rights adjudication process unless they are a water rights holder (and can demonstrate standing through adverse impact). This bill would result in the water rights adjudication process being limited to only issues concerning water users and would eliminate any consideration or evaluation of other issues, such as the public's interest in limiting impacts to the water quantity and quality of rivers and streams. *Contact Derf Johnson, MEIC, at 406-581-4634 or djohnson@meic.org.*

SB 257 - Prevent local governments from imposing carbon penalties, fees, or taxes, Senator Jason Small (R-Busby), Second Reading 3/01, Oppose. This vaguely written bill is intended to stop local governments from adopting carbon taxes, which none of them are trying to do. But the language is so broad that it could prevent local governments from adopting any regulation that even tangentially impacts carbon emissions including transportation plans, design standards, noise limitations, development patterns, etc. It is opposed by Missoula, Helena, and Bozeman who are developing clean energy plans. *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

** Clark Fork Coalition * Environment Montana * Montana Audubon * Montana Conservation Voters * Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC) * Montana Public Interest Research Group (MontPIRG) * Montana*

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