

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist Week 11: March 15, 2021

Please Support:

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*

HJ 6 - Provide for study of natural resources trust fund, Rep. Dave Fern (D-Whitefish). House Taxation, Hearing 3/16, Support. HJ 6 would create an interim study for how to fund important programs that currently get funded through coal taxes. As funding decreases due to declining coal revenue programs such as state parks, long-range building, cultural trust, state library, and more. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org.*

Please Oppose:

SB 323 - Generally revise Montana Administrative Procedure Act, Sen. Chris Friedel (R-Billings), Senate Finance and Claims, Hearing 3/16, Oppose. This bill would prohibit state agencies from adopting any rule if it may cost more than \$1 million to businesses. \$1 million is a very low threshold for rules that have widespread impact, impact hunting on private lands, or that require installation of pollution control equipment. Only the legislature would have the authority to adopt such rules, putting the executive branch, that is in charge of adopting rules, at the mercy of the legislative branch. This would increase political pressure and prevent agencies from implementing important programs including those that are required under federal law, such as the clean air act, the clean water act, solid and hazardous waste laws and so much more. SB 323 applies to all government rules including those at the Departments of Public Health and Human Services, Revenue, Business & Labor, Commerce, Fish Wildlife & Parks, Environmental Quality and others. *Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, at 461-9546 or ahedges@meic.org*

HB 259 - Revise property and zoning laws, Rep. Sue Vinton (R-Billings), Senate Local Government, Oppose. HB 259 preempts local control of housing and zoning, restricting the ability of local governments to make decisions for their communities and address affordable housing in ways that work for individual communities. *Contact Jared Sousa, Montana Smart Growth Coalition, 253-320-0691 or jared@flatheadcitizens.org.*

HB 281 - Revise Laws related to e-bikes, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby), Second Reading, 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*

HB 318 - Clarify definition of bison, Rep. Kenneth Holmlund (R-Miles City), Senate Agriculture, 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 498 - Clarify jurisdiction of board of oil and gas conservation, Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Libby), Senate Natural Resources, Hearing 3/17, Oppose. HB 498 would make it more difficult for local governments to place reasonable sideboards and conditions on oil and gas

Senate Conservation Hotlist, 03/15/2021

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), Senate Local Government, Hearing 3/17, 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 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), Senate Natural Resources, Hearing 3/15, 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

** 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 **