

## Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist Week 17: April 24, 2023

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### PLEASE SUPPORT:

**HJ 15- Resolution requesting interim study on shared use paths, Rep. Dave Fern (D-Whitefish), Awaiting Committee assignment in Senate, Support.** Expanding on previous interim studies of existing bicycle and pedestrian paths, HJ 15 would provide an interdisciplinary cost-benefit analysis of new shared-use paths across Montana, identify potential funding sources and roadblocks for development, and engage the public and relevant stakeholders about current needs. For more information contact Amy Seaman, MT Audubon, 406-210-9449/ [aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org).

**SJ 32- Interim study on hunter pressure and overcrowding, Sen. Edie McClafferty (D-Butte), Hearing Scheduled in Senate Fish and Game for 4.25, Support.** This study calls for an interim committee to take a look at the issues driving the crowding of hunters in areas, looking at potential licensing and season date changes, and other proposals to address the issue. For more information contact Amy Seaman, MT Audubon, 406-210-9449/ [aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org) or Jocelyn Leroux, MCV, 406-426-1180/ [jocelyn@mtvoters.org](mailto:jocelyn@mtvoters.org).

**HB 5- Long Range Building Appropriations, Rep. Mike Hopkins (R-Missoula) Awaiting Executive Action in Senate Finance and Claims, Support.** This bill contains funding authorization for Fish, Wildlife, & Parks capital projects, including Habitat Montana, Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program, Migratory Bird Program, Bighorn Sheep Auction Funds and Fishing Access Site Acquisition. Funding for these programs comes from sportsmen and women's license dollars and is earmarked specifically for these programs. Not authorizing them simply means the funds stay in the bank. The funds support conservation and enhancement of critical wildlife habitat, and provide great hunting and fishing access opportunities. For more information contact Amy Seaman, MT Audubon, 406-210-9449/ [aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org).

**HB 521- Revising laws related to conservation licenses on state lands, Rep. Denley Loge (R-St. Regis), Awaiting Executive Action in Senate Finance and Claims, Support.** This bill would establish a state conservation license that would be required for all users of state lands. This license would capture users that are not currently paying for a wildlife conservation license that is attached to a hunting or fishing license and would provide funding for both FWP and DNRC to provide maintenance at Fishing Access Sites and on other heavily used state lands. For more information contact Jocelyn Leroux, MCV, at 406-426-1180/ [jocelyn@mtvoters.org](mailto:jocelyn@mtvoters.org).

**HB 821- Appropriate money to Dept. of Ag for weed control, Rep Marty Malone (R-Pray), Hearing scheduled in Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation for 4.25, Support.** HB 821 proposes a one-time-only, \$500,000 in funding for noxious weed treatment in Yellowstone, Musselshell, and Stillwater Counties to mitigate the likely spread of noxious and invasive weeds following the spring 2022 flooding of the Yellowstone River. The funds will target the removal of 3 invasive woody species: buckthorn, salt cedar, and Russian olive. For more information contact Amy Seaman, MT Audubon, 406-210-9449/ [aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.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.*

*For questions, please contact Molly Bell with MCV at 406-698-9440 or Jocelyn Leroux with MCV at 406-426-1180*

Clark Fork Coalition \* Montana Audubon \* Montana Conservation Voters \* Montana Environmental Information Center  
Montana Renewable Energy Association \* Northern Plains Resource Council

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### PLEASE OPPOSE:

**HB 55- An act establishing a tax on electric vehicle charging stations, Rep. Denley Loge (R-St. Regis), Passed Senate Local Government as amended 4.19, Oppose.** HB 55 would add a \$0.03 per kWh tax on electric vehicles (EVs) charging at public stations in 2026. The stated goal is to capture revenue from out-of-state EV drivers who don't pay gas tax, but Montanans will be required to pay the tax too. Montana EV drivers will already pay for their fair share of gas tax through new registration fees under HB 60—meaning Montana EV drivers will effectively be paying twice the gas tax as gas vehicles. There is a provision in the bill that reduces registration fees by 30% in 2028 to account for the double tax, but there is no reason to wait two years to fix bad policy that unnecessarily discourages the adoption of electric vehicles. For more information, contact Ian Lund, MEIC, 406-333-1858/[ilund@meic.org](mailto:ilund@meic.org).

**HB 669- Revise laws related to allocation of marijuana tax revenues, Rep. Bill Mercer (R-Billings), Awaiting Executive Action in Senate Finance and Claims, Oppose.** HB 669 would zero-out all marijuana revenue that was dedicated to conservation and outdoor recreation programs by Montana voters and by the previous Legislature. Over the next two years alone, HB 669 would rob over \$50 million from state parks, trails and recreation, the Habitat Montana Program, and nongame wildlife management. It would also permanently block these programs from ever tapping those funds again. For more information please contact Jocelyn Leroux, MCV, 406- 794-0016/[jocelyn@mtvoters.org](mailto:jocelyn@mtvoters.org) and Noah Marion, Wild Montana, 406- 624-9622/[nmarion@wildmontana.org](mailto:nmarion@wildmontana.org).

**HB 971-Revise Environmental Policy Act, Rep. Kassmier (R-Fort Benton), Scheduled for 3rd Reading in House on 4.24, likely to have a Senate hearing this week, Oppose.** This bill was amended on the House floor, but even as amended it would be detrimental. HB 971 would prohibit the MT Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) from considering climate change when it analyzes environmental impacts and accepts public comment on projects under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). MEPA is often referred to as a “look before you leap” law because it requires state agencies to consider – and the public to comment on – the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of proposed projects prior to approval of such things as air, water and mining permits. For more information contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546/[ahedges@MEIC.org](mailto:ahedges@MEIC.org) or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 901-651-5930/[caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org)

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