

Montana House Conservation Hotlist: Week of March 3, 2025

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 372	✓	
HB 450	✓	
HB 477	✓	
HB 649	✓	
HB 660	✓	
HB 760	✓	
HB 762	✓	
HB 763	✓	
HB 811	✓	
HJ 8	✓	
HJ 15	✓	
HB 379		X
HB 389		X
HB 424		X
HB 506		X
HB 522		X
HB 554		X
HB 587		X
HB 616		X
HB 623		X
HB 630		X
HB 664		X
HB 685		X
HB 696		X
HB 703		X
HB 714		X
HB 751		X
HJ 12		X
HJ 17		X

PLEASE SUPPORT:

HB 372—Revise license fees used for funding of upland game bird enhancement program (UGBEP), Rep. Tom France (D-Missoula), Passed House Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Support. HB 372 would increase funds allocated to the UGBEP, primarily through increasing non-resident game bird and combination license fees. The UGBEP funds critical habitat enhancement projects for wildlife, and promotes collaboration between landowners and FWP. This bill has been amended to address concerns with the fiscal note. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, peter@mtaudubon.org.

HB 450—Generally revise bird dog training licensing laws, Rep. Eric Albus (R-Glasgow), Scheduled for Third Reading, 3/3, Support. HB 450 aims to enhance data collection on the effects of bird dog training on wild bird populations. This bill requires bird dog trainers to report how many dogs they are training under a license and provides rulemaking authority for the commission to regulate the number of licenses issued. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, peter@mtaudubon.org.

HB 477—Phase out polystyrene single use food containers, Rep. Marilyn Marler (D-Missoula), Passed House Natural Resources (12-2), Support. HB 477 would phase out the use of styrofoam containers through statewide uniform regulation. Styrofoam poisons our ecosystems and chokes our municipal waste systems. Montana would benefit from HB 477 through increased compostable food container manufacturing, industrial composting businesses, use of agricultural by-products and inputs, and a cleaner waste stream. Contact: Ben Catton, MEIC, 307-920-1843, bcatton@meic.org, or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, natalie@mtvoters.org.

HB 649—Establish a farm to food bank program, Rep. Shelly Fyant (D-Arlee), Passed House Agriculture, Support. HB 649 would create a farm to food bank program, using grant funding to build reliable markets for local producers to provide fresh produce, dairy, and meat to lower-income households. Successful local food systems are integral to climate solutions by supporting small-scale farming and reducing emissions from transporting food over long distances. Contact: Ben Catton, MEIC, 307-920-1843, bcatton@meic.org, or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org.

HB 660—Require Rules to Limit Greenhouse Gases, Rep. Debo Powers (D-Polebridge), Awaiting E.A., House Natural Resources, Support. HB 660 would require the Montana DEQ to adopt regulations limiting greenhouse gases to protect public health, safety, welfare and the environment. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HB 760—Establish solar consumer protection laws, Rep. George Nikolakakos (R-Great Falls), Hearing, House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, 3/3, 3pm, Support. HB 760 keeps bad actors out of Montana related to solar sales. It codifies consumers' right to cancel a door-to-door solar contract within three business days of signing. Contact: Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org, or Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org.

HB 762—Require the department of fish, wildlife, and parks to publish a report on river usage, Rep. Josh Seckinger (D-Bozeman), Passed House Fish, Wildlife & Parks (16-4), Support. HB 762 is a study bill that requires FWP to publish a report on river usage in several major river systems in Montana. This bill aims to gather comprehensive data to inform policy makers and the public. Contact: Peter Dudley, Montana Audubon, 406-443-3949, peter@mtaudubon.org.

Montana House Conservation Hotlist: Week of March 3, 2025

PLEASE SUPPORT:

HB 763—Generally revise laws related to the block management program, Rep. Josh Seckinger (D-Bozeman), Passed House Fish, Wildlife & Parks (18-2), Support. HB 763 clarifies and simplifies how access-only Block Management agreements are handled. The bill will help unlock more public land hunting by making it easier for willing landowners to participate in Block Management to provide public access to hunt our public lands. Contact: Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com.

HB 811—Increase generation capacity for customer-generated electricity, Rep. Jamie Isaly (D-Livingston), Hearing, House Energy, Technology, and Federal Relations, 3/3, 3pm, Support. HB 811 offers business opportunities and cost savings by increasing Montana's net metering capacity limit from 50 kW to 100kW. Contact: Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org, or Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org.

HJ 8—Requesting an interim study of electric vehicle fees and taxation, Rep. Becky Edwards (D-Bozeman), Passed House Transportation, Support. HJ 8 directs an interim committee to examine the current vehicle fee and taxation methods for electric and internal combustion engine light passenger vehicles. Findings from this study resolution would be presented next legislature. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org, or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, natalie@mtvoters.org.

HJ 15—Resolution supporting increased transmission capacity in Montana, Sen. Greg Kmetz (R-Miles City), Passed House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, Support. HJ 15 opens the dialogue with utility stakeholders and government officials on Montana's critical need to expand electric transmission capacity, emphasizing that affordable, reliable electricity depends on robust transmission infrastructure. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org, Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org.

PLEASE OPPOSE:

HB 379—Revising laws related to state land leases for commercial purposes and the sale of state land, Rep. Larry Brewster (R-Billings), Passed House State Administration, Oppose. This bill loosens restrictions on the sale of state school trust land. It removes the current mandatory public auction process, resulting in less public oversight during the sale of public lands. Contact: Kearnstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearnstyn@mtvoters.org or Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HB 389—Provide for setbacks for wind turbine generators, Rep. Brandon Ler (R-Savage), Failed in Committee (7-7), House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, Oppose. This bill would kill Montana wind power generation through untenable setbacks (up to 1.5 miles)—which is 4 to 12 times more restrictive than typical wind regulations. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org, or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org.

HB 424—Revise taxes for class 17 data center property, Rep. Katie Zolnikov (R-Billings), Passed House Taxation, Oppose. HB 424 would give an 85% property tax reduction to the Hardin Generating Station, decreasing state and local revenue. It would give the 20 year old coal plant a lower property tax rate than homeowners. HB 424 was amended to encourage the development of new power generation for data centers but the amendment lowers the property tax rate for the Hardin plant from 6% to 0.9%. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HB 506—Constitutional amendment revising selection of supreme court justices, Rep. Brad Barker (R-Red Lodge), Awaiting E.A., House Judiciary, Oppose. HB 506 would adopt an appointment process for Supreme Court justices whereby the president of the Senate, the speaker of the House, the minority leaders of each chamber, and two current or former attorneys send a list of names to the governor for selection. The selected individual is subject to Senate confirmation. An appointment process would eliminate the ability for Montanans to directly elect their Supreme Court justices and to continue holding them accountable through subsequent elections. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org, or Kearnstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearnstyn@mtvoters.org.

HB 522—Provide pesticide warning label laws, Rep. Jerry Schillinger (R-Circle), Passed House Agriculture, Oppose. HB 522 would grant insurmountable liability immunity to multinational corporations that manufacture pesticides as long as the labels on their products are approved by the EPA under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act and the product is registered with the EPA and the DoA. Manufacturers with a misleading label could not be held responsible for damages if they met these criteria. Instead, the financial burden of related health and environmental damages would fall on Montana taxpayers, insurance providers, and families. Contact: Ben Catton, MEIC, 307-920-1843, bcotton@meic.org.

Montana House Conservation Hotlist: Week of March 3, 2025

PLEASE OPPOSE:

HB 554—Remove FWP requirement to regulate wolves as furbearers or game animals, Rep. Brandon Ler (R-Savage), Scheduled for 3rd Reading, 3/3, Oppose. Wolves were classified as a species in need of management after reintroduction, with the intention that the department would reclassify the species as a furbearer or game animal. This bill runs counter to the department's intention to classify wolves as furbearers with HB 101, and maintains that wolves should be managed unlike any other species in Montana. Contact: Peter Dudley, MT Audubon, 406-443-3949, peter@mtaudubon.org.

HB 587—Revise mine reclamation laws, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Awaiting E.A., House Natural Resources, Oppose. HB 587 would redefine the term "material damage" under the Montana Surface and Underground Mine Reclamation Act (MSUMRA) and deviate from the federal definition. Under the proposed change, material damage would have to be demonstrated through an expensive and time-consuming statistical analysis "measured to a significant degree of confidence." This definition will lead to water quality impacts outside of coal mines, and a more difficult process for citizens and adjacent landowners to hold coal mining companies and the DEQ accountable. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org or Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org.

HB 616—Allow data modeling for mine bond release, Rep. Steve Gist (R-Cascade), Passed House Natural Resources, Oppose. HB 616 would allow for the coal company to provide its own predictive modeling to determine whether coal mines have achieved reclamation objectives and should receive bond release. While this bill may offer an additional tool for assessing reclamation, it does not provide the public with ready access to the modeling information to assure that the model and its assumptions are accurate and not subject to manipulation. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org, or Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org.

HB 623—Revise laws related to nuclear energy, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Passed House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, Oppose. HB 623 would authorize the storage of radioactive nuclear waste on-site of any future nuclear energy facility developed in Montana. There exists no national repository for radioactive nuclear waste, which can remain harmful to humans for tens of thousands of years. Therefore, "temporary" storage could mean that dangerous waste remains on-site in Montana communities for hundreds if not thousands of years, posing tremendous risk to public health and the environment. Nuclear remains the most expensive energy source available and continues to fail to live up to its big promises. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org.

HB 630—Require legislative approval of greenhouse gas rules, Rep. Curtis Schomer (R-Billings), Awaiting Hearing, House Natural Resources, Oppose. HB 630 would prevent the DEQ from implementing any regulation limiting greenhouse gases without first approval of the legislature in the next legislative session. DEQ regularly writes air pollution rules to protect public health and safety, but this bill would prevent DEQ from doing so for greenhouse gases until the legislature agrees with the rule, thereby denying Montanans of their constitutional right to a healthy climate. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org, or Gusty Catherin-Sauer, NPRC, 406-248-1154, gusty@northernplains.org.

HB 664—Repeal numeric nutrient standards, Rep. Bill Mercer (R-Billings), Passed House Natural Resources, Oppose. HB 664 would repeal Montana's water quality standards for nutrients and replace those with less protective narrative standards. The last attempt to replace the numeric standards with narrative standards led to a years-long saga that left us with a vague and indefensible rules package that was eventually withdrawn because it was so problematic. HB 664 pushes for standards less rooted in quantifiable, scientific data that would leave our fresh waters at risk. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org, or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org.

HB 685—Feasibility allowance for nondegradation policy, Rep. Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Awaiting E.A., House Natural Resources, Oppose. HB 685 would change Montana's non-degradation policy, which is meant to "maintain and protect" Montana's water quality. The bill would shift from what should be a "pollution prevention" approach to one of "pollution allowance," through a "feasibility allowance" – an undefined term. Additionally, the most problematic section of the bill would remove the careful balancing of interests in Montana's non-degradation policy, by eliminating the consideration of pollution and its impacts on the environment and society, and only considering the benefits of economic development. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org, or Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org.

Montana House Conservation Hotlist: Week of March 3, 2025

PLEASE OPPOSE:

HB 696—Approve the siting of uranium conversion and enrichment facilities, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Passed House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, Oppose. HB 696 would give legislative approval for the siting of hazardous uranium conversion and enrichment facilities in Montana to process any uranium mined in Montana, the US, or anywhere in the world. This would promote the development of a harmful uranium extraction industry in Montana while positioning the state as a regional default for hazardous uranium processing, inviting the transportation of these radioactive materials throughout the state on our public roadways with risk of accidents and contamination. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org.

HB 703—Exempt GHG emissions analysis for appliances, vehicles, engines, Rep. Curtis Shomer (R-Billings), Awaiting E.A., House Natural Resources, Oppose. HB 703 reinserts language in MEPA that is being stricken in three other bills as a result of the Held v. Montana court decision. The bill prevents DEQ from considering any pollution from outside of Montana's borders when reviewing impacts to natural resources. The court found that to be illegal but this bill reinserts the language. Currently, HB 270, HB 285 and SB 221 all strike this language from MEPA. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HB 714—Revise laws for divisions of land exempt from subdivision review, Rep. Larry Brewster (R-Billings), Passed House Local Government, Oppose. HB 714 prohibits local governments from denying family transfers unless an intent to evade subdivision review is proven with documented evidence, even when substantial evidence suggests evasion. Since proving intent with hard evidence is unlikely, the bill effectively removes the long-standing ability of governing bodies to evaluate exemptions using evasion criteria and rebuttable presumptions. This will remove the only measure available to curb abuse of family transfer exemptions. Contact: Laura Collins, MEIC, 406-443-2520 ext. 010, lcollins@meic.org.

HB 751—Partisan election of supreme court candidates, Rep. Lukas Schubert (R-Kalispell), Awaiting E.A., House Judiciary, Oppose. HB 751 would require Montana judges and justices to identify a party when they are running for a judicial position. If they don't identify a party, candidates will be identified as "undisclosed." This bill would inject extreme partisanship into our judiciary, which should only apply the facts and the law, not partisan considerations. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org, or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org.

HJ 12—Resolution regarding electric vehicles, Rep. Randyn Gregg (R-White Sulphur Springs), Passed House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, Oppose. HJ 12 would thank the U.S. President for taking actions to eliminate EPA vehicle tailpipe pollution standards that are mischaracterized as an "Electric Vehicle mandate," further mischaracterizing the current state, performance, and suitability of EV technology in Montana. The standards were projected to result in nearly \$100 billion in annual net benefits to society. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org.

HJ 17—Resolution regarding energy, Rep. Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Awaiting E.A., House Energy, Technology, & Federal Relations, Oppose. HJ 17 calls on Congress and the President to weaken or eliminate the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Nuclear Regulatory Commission regulations, mining laws, and laws to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and toxic air pollution from Colstrip. It calls on the President to use the Emergencies Power Act, the Defense Production Act and more to bypass safeguards for protecting the public as well as protections for clean air, clean water and our public lands. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, 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.

For questions, please contact Kearstyn Cook with MCV at 406-426-2422 or Natalie Wright with MCV at 406-426-2645.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers * Montana Audubon * Montana Conservation Voters * Montana Environmental Information Center * Montana Renewable Energy Association * MontPIRG * Northern Plains Resource Council * Wild Montana