

Montana House Conservation Hotlist: Week of March 31, 2025

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 762	✓	
HB 848	✓	
HJ 37	✓	
HJ 39	✓	
SB 63	✓	
SB 188	✓	
SB 224	✓	
SJ 11	✓	
SJ 12	✓	
HB 658		X
HB 838		X
HB 877		X
HB 889		X
HB 911		X
HB 915		X
HJ 24		X
SB 42		X
SB 221		X
SB 262		X

PLEASE SUPPORT:

HB 762—Require the department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks to publish a report on river usage, Rep. Josh Seckinger (D-Bozeman), Third Reading, 3/31, 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.

HB 848—Provide funding for regional rail authorities, Rep. Denise Baum (D-Billings), Passed House Transportation, Support. HB 848 would establish a big sky rail revenue account for the purpose of funding the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA). BSPRA seeks to lead the expansion and enhancement of passenger rail service throughout Montana, particularly through the reestablishment of passenger rail service across southern Montana. This would be a major improvement to efficient and accessible transportation in the state. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org.

HJ 37—Joint Resolution requesting an interim study of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, Rep. Ed Stafman (D-Bozeman), Awaiting Hearing, House Business & Labor, Support. HJ 37 would study the presence of PFAS in Montana, including potential sources of PFAS, sampling and testing methods to identify the presence of PFAS, and routes of human and ecological exposure. PFAS chemicals persist in our environment indefinitely, bioaccumulate in our bodies, and cause cancer and other diseases. Contact: Ben Catton, MEIC, 307-920-1843, bcatton@meic.org.

HJ 39—Joint resolution protecting public lands, Rep. Josh Seckinger (D-Bozeman), Hearing, House Natural Resources, 4/4, Support. HJ 39 expresses strong support for maintaining national public lands in Montana under federal stewardship, highlighting their significant recreational, economic, and environmental value to the state. It opposes efforts to sell, transfer, or dispose of federal lands. Contact: Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com, or Kearstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearstyn@mtvoters.org.

SB 63—Revise law related to the use of motion-tracking devices while hunting, Sen. Pat Flowers (D-Bozeman), Awaiting F.A., House Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Support. SB 63 extends the prohibition on motion-tracking technology to cover a calendar day, closing a loophole to protect fair chase hunting in Montana. This bill also prohibits a person from relaying motion-tracking information to another person as an aid to hunting. Contact: Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com.

SB 188—Revising solar energy policy laws, Sen. Chris Pope (D-Bozeman), Awaiting F.A., House Energy, Support. SB 188 enables households and businesses to use shares in an electric generating solar system. Participating customers could individually purchase shares of the larger solar array, and each month receive a credit on their power bill equal to the shares of the energy generated. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org, or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org.

SB 224—Create Indigenous Peoples' Day, Sen. Shane Morigeau (D-Missoula), Passed House State Administration (18-1), Support. SB 224 establishes Indigenous Peoples' Day (the second Monday in October) as a legal holiday in Montana. Contact: Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org, Shannon James, MEIC, 406-690-7757, sjames@meic.org, or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, natalie@mtvoters.org.

SJ 11—Interim study on farmer's markets and food systems, Sen. Bruce Gillespie (R-Ethridge), Hearing, House Agriculture, 4/1, Support. SJ 11 would create an interim committee to study the impacts of farmer's markets on Montana's food systems to identify barriers to their success and opportunities to support them. Contact: Ben Catton, MEIC, 307-920-1843, bcatton@meic.org, or Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org.

SJ 12—Interim study on energy transmission, Sen. Gregg Hunter (R-Glasgow), Awaiting Hearing, House Energy, Support. SJ 12 requests an interim study to examine the impacts from electric transmission line congestion for pathways entering and exiting the state. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

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PLEASE OPPOSE:

HB 658—Revise Local Board of Health Sanitation Powers and Rules, Rep. Jedediah Hinkle (R-Belgrade), Hearing, Senate Local Government, 4/2, Oppose. HB 658 forces local public health officials to apply uniform state standards, despite Montana's diverse soil types and hydrogeology. Montana's increasing density of septic systems has a direct impact on ground and surface water, but HB 658 eliminates the ability of communities to address unique water quality issues in sensitive groundwater areas. Contact: Laura Collins, MEIC, 406-443-2520, lcollins@meic.org.

HB 838—Allow supreme court justices to use partisan affiliation, Rep. Brandon Ler (R-Savage), Passed House Judiciary, Oppose. HB 838 would allow Montana Supreme Court candidates to identify a party when they are running for election and to publicly announce their political party endorsements. This is another bill that would inject an extreme amount of partisanship into our judicial system, which should only apply the facts and the law. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org, or Kearnstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearnstyn@mtvoters.org.

HB 877—Establish the Montana Data Center Act, Rep. John Fitzpatrick (R-Anaconda), Hearing, House Energy, 3/31, Oppose. HB 877 would remove PSC oversight when NorthWestern Energy enters into an agreement with a data center to provide power. This will result in higher electric bills, because PSC oversight prevents NorthWestern from increasing existing residential and small business customers' electric rates to subsidize the cost of power for data centers. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org

HB 889—Revise local growth policy and county zoning laws Rep. Jedediah Hinkle (R-Belgrade), Hearing, House Local Government, 4/1, Oppose. HB 889 prohibits counties from protecting the environment, open space, or (undefined) "sensitive lands." At minimum, this eliminates any basic growth planning and environmental/agricultural protection for rural and open areas. Contact: Laura Collins, MEIC, (406) 443-2520, lcollins@meic.org.

HB 911—Revise the meaning of the term "public utility," Rep. John Fitzpatrick (R-Anaconda), Hearing, House Energy, 3/31, Oppose. HB 911 would redefine what constitutes a public utility and allow a utility to create a separate entity to serve large customers loads. This bill fails to require the PSC to verify that the public utility isn't charging ratepayers to fund infrastructure investments, upgrades, and maintenance costs for non-regulated customers. There should be a well-defined firewall between the regulated portion of the utility and the portion of the utility that provides power to large customers. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org

HB 915—Revise taxation of certain wind generation facilities, Rep. Jerry Schillinger (R-Circle), Awaiting Hearing, House Taxation, Oppose. HB 915 would revise the property tax designation for wind generation facilities from class 14 to class 13 property, doubling the property tax rate for these resources from 3% to 6% and artificially driving up the cost of wind energy in Montana. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HJ 24—Joint house resolution supporting Utah in their land lawsuit against the United States, Rep. Tom Millett (R-Marion), Passed House Energy, Oppose. HJ 24 supports Utah's lawsuit to seize control of over 18.5 million acres of BLM land. This sends a dangerous message that Montana wants over 8 million acres of BLM land turned over to the state, which cannot afford to maintain them. Contact: Kearnstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearnstyn@mtvoters.org.

SB 42—Provide for the partisan election of judges and justices, Sen. Daniel Emrich (R-Great Falls), Passed House Judiciary, Oppose. SB 42 would force Montana judges and justices to identify a party when they run for a judicial position. This bill would inject an extreme amount of partisanship into our judicial system, which should only apply the facts and the law, and not include partisan considerations. This bill is a significant threat to the impartial judiciary, the rule of law, and the ability for Montana citizens to pursue justice in our court system. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org, or Kearnstyn Cook, MCV, 406-426-2422, kearnstyn@mtvoters.org.

SB 221—Generally Revise the Montana Environmental Policy Act, Sen. Wylie Galt (R-Martinsdale), Passed House Natural Resources, Oppose. SB 221 would dramatically limit environmental reviews under MEPA by narrowly defining what is considered a fossil fuel activity that requires greenhouse gas emissions analysis. This bill prohibits consideration of downstream impacts from any fossil fuel operations, meaning that the burning of coal or oil and gas and the transport of fossil fuels via pipeline, truck or rail would not require consideration of greenhouse gas emissions. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org, Caroline Canarios, NPRC, 406-248-1154, caroline@northernplains.org, or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, natalie@mtvoters.org.

SB 262—Exempt subdivision, water/sewer plans from environmental review, Sen. Forrest Mandeville (R-Columbus), Passed House Local Government, Oppose. SB 262 would exempt DEQ from having to conduct an environmental analysis under MEPA when reviewing water treatment plans for subdivisions. MEPA is necessary for cataloguing and considering the cumulative impacts associated with the impact of subdivisions on water quality. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@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 Kearnstyn 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