

Montana Senate Conservation Hotlist: Week of April 7, 2025

	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
HB 264	✓	
HB 271	✓	
HB 372	✓	
HB 477	✓	
HB 760	✓	
HB 762	✓	
HB 763	✓	
HB 808	✓	
HJ 15	✓	
SJ 21	✓	
HB 122		X
HB 490		X
HB 554		X
HB 587		X
HB 623		X
HB 658		X
HB 664		X
HB 685		X
HB 696		X
HB 703		X
HB 714		X
HB 889		X
HJ 12		X
HJ 17		X

PLEASE SUPPORT:

HB 264—Generally revise wildlife location data subject to public information requests, Rep. Jonathan Karlen (D-Missoula), Third Reading, 4/7, Support. HB 264 would establish a prohibition on sharing wildlife location data and telemetry frequencies. It also provides an exception to allow the department to share location data with research partners and other government agencies through data-sharing agreements. Contact: Matt Leow, MT Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 406-370-3183, matt@tenaciouscampaigns.com.

HB 271—Provide that there is a limited executive privilege to the public records act, Rep. Ed Stafman (D-Bozeman), Awaiting E.A., Senate Judiciary, Support. HB 271 would both confirm that the Governor is subject to Montana's right to know laws, and assure that the public has continued access to documents and information generated by the governor's office. Contact: Derf Johnson, MEIC, 406-581-4634, djohnson@meic.org.

HB 372—Revise license fees used for funding of upland game bird enhancement program (UGBEP), Rep. Tom France (D-Missoula), Hearing, Senate Fish & Game, 4/8, 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. 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), Hearing, Senate Natural Resources, 4/7, Support. HB 477 would phase out the use of styrofoam containers through statewide uniform regulation. 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, bcotton@meic.org, or Natalie Wright, MCV, 406-426-2645, natalie@mtvoters.org.

HB 760—Establish solar consumer protection laws, Rep. George Nikolakakos (R-Great Falls), Awaiting E.A., Senate Energy, 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.

HB 762—Require the department of fish, wildlife, and parks to publish a report on river usage, Rep. Josh Seckinger (D-Bozeman), Hearing, Senate Fish & Game, 4/8, Support. HB 762 requires FWP to publish a report on all river usage in several major river systems in Montana, thereby gathering comprehensive data to inform policy makers and the public. Contact: Peter Dudley, Montana Audubon, 406-443-3949, peter@mtaudubon.org.

HB 763—Generally revise laws related to the block management program, Rep. Josh Seckinger (D-Bozeman), Awaiting E.A., Senate Fish & Game, 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 808—Creating the Montana brownfields program, Rep. Paul Tuss (D-Havre), Hearing, Senate Natural Resources, 4/9, Support. This bill is intended to identify and clean up brownfields and broaden the definition to include gas stations and other sites to build on the current parameters (as of now that is just petroleum

brownfields). Contact: Gusty Catherin-Sauer, NPRC, 406-869-1911, gusty@northernplains.org

HJ 15—Resolution supporting increased transmission capacity in Montana, Sen. Greg Kmetz (R-Miles City), Passed Senate Energy, Support. HJ 15 shows legislative support for Montana's need to expand electric transmission capacity, emphasizing that affordable, reliable electricity needs. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfzmaurice@meic.org, or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org.

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SJ 21—Interim study on interstate power grid development, Sen. Daniel Zolnikov (R-Billings), Passed Senate Energy Support. SJ 21 would establish an interim study to evaluate potential benefits, legal considerations, and implementation strategies for entering into an interstate transmission development compact for streamlining interstate electric transmission development for the benefit of Montana's energy system reliability and affordability. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org, or Makenna Sellers, MREA, 406-850-4491, makenna@montanarenewables.org.

PLEASE OPPOSE:

HB 122—Revise right-of-way laws, Rep. Larry Brewster (R-Billings), Passed Senate Energy Oppose. HB 122 gives gas utilities default authorization to install pipeline infrastructure in the public right-of-ways (ROWs) of Montana's roads, streets, and highways. Gas utilities already can and do use public ROWs for this infrastructure by negotiating franchise agreements on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis. This bill threatens to override jurisdictional control and oversight for this process, allowing utilities to cut corners for installing future pipeline infrastructure that's environmentally damaging and threatens public safety. Contact: Gusty Catherin-Sauer, NPRC, 406-869-1911, gusty@northernplains.org, or Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org.

HB 490—Revise Civil Liability Laws for utilities causing wildfires, Rep. Amy Regier (R-Kalispell), Awaiting E.A., Senate Judiciary, Oppose. HB 490 would shield utilities from liability when they cause wildfires. Although amendments to this bill improved it, the standard of care provision is ambiguous and unimplementable. The fire mitigation plan also does not require the utility to mitigate its impact to the climate, which is creating more severe wildfires, and the approving authorities created to oversee the plan do not have wildfire expertise. Contact: Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406-461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HB 554—Remove FWP requirement to regulate wolves as furbearers or game animals, Rep. Brandon Ler (R-Savage), Awaiting E.A., Senate Fish & Game, Oppose. Wolves were classified as a species in need of management after ESA delisting, with the intention that the department would reclassify the species as a furbearer or game animal at some point in the future. HB 554 removes language allowing FWP to make that determination and removes a barrier to classifying wolves as predators. 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., Senate 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 623—Revise laws related to nuclear energy, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Third Reading, 4/7, 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. Contact: Nick Fitzmaurice, MEIC, 406-534-9307, nfitzmaurice@meic.org.

HB 658—Revise Local Board of Health Sanitation Powers and Rules, Rep. Jedediah Hinkle (R-Belgrade), Awaiting E.A., Senate Local Government, 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 664—Repeal numeric nutrient standards, Rep. Bill Mercer (R-Billings), Awaiting E.A., Senate Natural Resources, Oppose. HB 664 would repeal Montana's water quality standards for nutrients and replace those with yet-to-be-determined and 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.

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HB 685—Feasibility allowance for nondegradation policy, Rep. Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls), Awaiting E.A., Senate 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 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.

HB 696—Approve the siting of uranium conversion and enrichment facilities, Rep. Gary Parry (R-Colstrip), Passed Senate Energy, 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 and rail system with risk of accidents and contamination. Local communities should have a say in these siting decisions. 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), Hearing, Senate Natural Resources, 4/7, 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), Awaiting E.A., Senate Local Government, Oppose. HB 714 prohibits local governments from denying family transfers unless an intent to evade subdivision review is proven with documented evidence, effectively removing the ability to deny family transfers, even when substantial evidence suggests evasion. HB 714 creates a massive expansion of the definition "immediate family" to include grandparents, grandchildren, and siblings. It is not unreasonable to assume that 20 to 30 lots could be created through a single family transfer application. Contact: Laura Collins, MEIC, 406-443-2520, lcollins@meic.org.

HB 889—Revise local growth policy and county zoning laws, Rep. Jedediah Hinkle (R-Belgrade), Awaiting Hearing, Senate Local Government, Oppose. HB 889 prohibits counties from protecting undefined "sensitive lands." At minimum, this restricts basic comprehensive growth planning and even with the amendment could still limit environmental/agricultural protection for rural and open areas. Contact: Laura Collins, MEIC, 406-443-2520, lcollins@meic.org.

HJ 12—Resolution regarding electric vehicles, Rep. Randyn Gregg (R-White Sulphur Springs), Awaiting E.A., Senate Energy, 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., Senate Energy, 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