

Montana House Conservation Hotlist Week 8: February 23rd, 2015

Please Support:

HJ 19, Resolution against efforts to claim, take over, litigate, or sell federal lands, Rep. Lieser (D-Whitefish), House Natural Resources, awaiting executive action, Support. Reaffirms the State of Montana's opposition to taking over, selling off, or litigating for control of federal public lands within Montana. Emphasizes the State's support for those lands and the recreational, economic, and wildlife habitat benefits the lands provide. Contact Neal Ullman, Montana Conservation Voters, 431.0171, neal@mtvoters.org.

HB 140, Update laws related to hunting and fishing licenses, Rep. Welborn (R-Dillon), House Floor, 2nd Reading, Support. This bill will streamline Fish, Wildlife, and Parks license fees and licensing structure. The basics of the bill are a \$3 increase to the resident fishing license and an \$8 resident base hunting license increase. This bill is important because license fees are a critical component of the FWP budget and their ability to execute the many programs and jobs the department is responsible for managing. Contact Mark Aagenes, Montana Trout Unlimited, 544.9265, mark@montanatu.org.

HB 310, Establish an oil and gas trust fund, Rep. Jacobson (D-Great Falls), House Floor, 2nd Reading, Support. This bill would authorize a constitutional referendum to be placed on the ballot that would, if approved by Montana voters, create an oil and gas trust fund. The trust fund is modeled after the successful coal tax trust fund, and recognizes the unpredictable, variable, and finite nature of oil and gas development by setting aside a small portion of the revenue that the state already receives from oil and gas for future generations. Contact Derf Johnson, Montana Environmental Information Center, 581.4634, djohnson@meic.org.

HB 434, Revise asbestos laws, Rep. Lieser (D-Whitefish), House Floor, 2nd Reading, Support. This bill will help make the DEQ asbestos control program more efficient. It shortens the timeframes for DEQ to approve smaller asbestos related removal projects and requires DEQ to do a comprehensive analysis of the program to guarantee compliance with federal law, protection of public health, and safe asbestos removal and disposal practices. Contact Anne Hedges, Montana Environmental Information Center, 461.9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HB 464, High-performance certification program for existing buildings, Rep. Zach Brown (D-Bozeman), House State Administration, awaiting executive action, Support. This bill establishes high performance building standards for existing state agency and Montana university system buildings. It allows state agencies/universities to annually transfer budgeted utility funds to a special revenue account to pay for high performance energy improvements in existing buildings. This bill will help save students and taxpayers money by helping lower utility bills and improve energy efficiency in state-owned buildings. Contact Kyla Maki, Montana Environmental Information Center, 443.2520, kmaki@meic.org.

Please Oppose:

HB 244, Fund litigation protecting Montana products in interstate commerce, Rep. Essmann (R-Billings), House Floor, 3rd Reading, Oppose. This bill is instigating litigation on coal exports by creating a \$1 million slush fund for Montana Attorney General Tim Fox to instigate litigation in Oregon and Washington in support of coal export terminals. This would double the Attorney General's entire litigation budget. Contact Anne Hedges, Montana Environmental Information Center, 461.9546, ahedges@meic.org.

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HB 421, Extend termination date of coal severance tax coal washing credit, Rep. Berry (R-Roundup), House Federal Relations, Energy Telecommunications, awaiting executive action, Oppose. This bill extends a tax credit to the Signal Peak mine in the Bull Mountains for using a process that already makes its coal more valuable. This bill would cost the state over \$1.5 million per year and would reduce local revenues by about \$400,000. Contact Anne Hedges, Montana Environmental Information Center, 461.9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HB 557, Revise laws regarding legal fences, Rep. Harris (R-Winnett), House Floor, 2nd Reading, Oppose. This bill would amend Montana's legal fence law that has not been revised since 1919. The bill was intended to add 3-strand electric fences to the list of legal fences and also to make the height of legal fences at least 44 inches. Previously the bill proposed that legal fences must be between 44-48 inches. Because the new amendment language is at least 44 inches, fences may become a greater threat to wildlife movement, mortality, and entrapment. Many standards are set at 42 inches. Contact Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon, 210.9449, aseaman@mtaudubon.org.

HB 583, Revise laws with respect to protecting property rights, Rep. Pinnoci (R-Sun River), House Judiciary Committee, House Floor, 2nd Reading Oppose. This bill promotes the idea that there is a UN-driven environmental conspiracy that promotes local sustainability in communities that *voluntarily* adopt sustainability policies that arose after the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. In Montana Bozeman, Missoula, and Helena have all adopted such policies. Contact Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, 431-9950, jjensen@meic.org.

SB 114, Require that all hydro facilities be classified as renewable, Sen. Barrett (R-Dillon), House Floor, 2nd Reading, Oppose. The Renewable Energy Standard (RES) requires regulated utilities to acquire 15% of their energy resources from clean renewable resources by 2015, which has already been met. This radical bill makes the RES meaningless, eliminating incentives for new, diverse and often community-based renewable energy development like wind because it would swamp the standard by counting the energy from dams. The RES originally included smaller hydro (energy from dams less than 15MW), but intentionally excluded large dams. Contact Kyla Maki, Montana Environmental Information Center, 443.2520, kmaki@meic.org.

The Weekly Hotlist is published as an educational service to lawmakers and citizens by the Conservation Working Group, comprised of the organizations listed below. Contact Neal Ullman, Montana Conservation Voters at 254-1593 ext 3.

Clark Fork Coalition * Community Food and Agriculture Coalition * Montana Audubon
Montana Conservation Voters * Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC)
Montana Public Interest Research Group (MontPIRG) * Montana Sierra Club * Montana Smart Growth Coalition
Montana Trout Unlimited * Northern Plains Resource Council