

Montana House Conservation Hotlist Week 8: February 20th, 2017

Please Support:

HB 491, Create designation of public lands day, Rep. Virginia Court (D-Billings), Hearing, House Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 2/23/17 at 3pm, Rm. 152, Support. Establishes March 1st as a day honoring our public lands on the same day Yellowstone Park was created. Montanans will be able to recognize the importance our public lands have on our economy, way of life, and outdoor heritage. This would be a day of observance and not a holiday. Contact Neal Ullman, Montana Conservation Voters, 431.0171, neal@mtvoters.org.

HB 504, Generally revise net metering laws, Rep. Bryce Bennett (D-Missoula), Hearing, House Energy, Technology and Federal Relations, 2/22/17 at 3pm, Rm. 472, Support. Also known as the Solar Jobs & Energy Freedom Act, this bill removes government barriers to homeowners and businesses making the energy decision that make sense for them. Removing these barriers will create new jobs and increased use of clean energy. With over 90% of Montanans supporting net metering, this bill removes government barriers for a new clean energy economy without creating new government bureaucracies or spending. Only those who want to install net metering systems will have to pay anything but at least they'll have the option to do so. Contact Andrew Valainis, Montana Renewable Energy Association, 214.9405, Andrew@montanarenewables.org.

HB 486, Prohibit pipelines from crossing under streams and lakes, Rep. George Kipp (D-Heart Butte), House Energy, Technology, and Federal Relations, Pending Executive Action, Support. This bill is designed to prevent leaks and spills from pipelines in Montana's waterways. The bill would improve the safety requirements for pipelines that cross navigable rivers and streams by requiring that pipelines over 10 inches in inside diameter cross above streams and rivers utilize casings that resist punctures and cracking. The bill also requires that pipelines at stream crossings utilize leak detection systems, threat identification procedures, and increased monitoring requirements. Contact Derf Johnson, Montana Environmental Information Center, 581.4634, djohnson@meic.org.

HJ 11, Joint resolution honoring public lands, Rep. Virginia Court (D-Billings), Hearing, House Natural Resources, 2/24/17 at 3pm, Rm. 172, Support. This resolution draws a clear line in the sand of Montanans' opposition to the transfer or sell-off of our public lands. The value our public lands bring to our "economy, recreation, heritage, and quality of life" should not be jeopardized and the resolution would let out-of-state special interests and Washington, DC know our public lands are not for sale. Contact Neal Ullman, Montana Conservation Voters, 431.0171, neal@mtvoters.org.

Please Oppose:

SB 86, Revising the tax for incremental oil wells, Sen. Tom Richmond (R-Billings), House Taxation, Pending Executive Action, Oppose. This bill would create a tax loophole for incremental oil wells, which are existing wells where oil recovery has been enhanced and expanded. SB 86 would increase the tax trigger for incremental wells from \$30 a barrel to \$54 a barrel, which means that a production tax on incremental wells would be lowered when the price for a barrel

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 * Montana Audubon * Montana Conservation Voters * Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC) * Montana Public Interest Research Group (MontPIRG) * Montana Smart Growth Coalition * Montana Trout Unlimited * Northern Plains Resource Council*

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of crude falls below \$54 in a calendar quarter. The oil industry already has this tax loophole in place for stripper wells (any well that produces more than 3 barrels but fewer than 15 barrels a day) as well as the oil and gas tax holiday (establishes a meager 0.5% production tax during the first 18 months of production). The state is in dire need of increased revenue, yet the legislature continues to grant tax breaks for an industry that extracts a finite resource. Contact Adam Haight, Northern Plains Resource Council, 661.345.1056, adam@northernplains.org.

SB 93, Provide notification at certain dwellings for oil and gas operation, Sen. Tom Richmond (R-Billings), House Energy, Technology and Federal Relations, Pending Executive Action, Oppose. This bill would weaken the notification rules passed by the Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation (BOGC) in December of 2016. SB 93 will reduce the notification distance for proposed oil and gas wells from a quarter mile (1,320 feet) to 990 feet. SB 93 will also eliminate notification requirements to schools and hospitals, which are included in the BOGC rules. The BOGC spent a year and a half vetting this rule, and Montanans deserve to have it in place and protecting property owners before it is undercut by the legislature. Contact Adam Haight, Northern Plains Resource Council, 661.345.1056, adam@northernplains.org.

HB 216, Require bonding for wind development, Rep. Jim Keane (D-Butte), House Energy, Technology, and Federal Relations, Pending Executive Action, Oppose. This bill places a bonding requirement on wind development which would be okay if other types of energy facilities were required to post bonds as well. However, singling out wind energy for bonding would create an uneven playing field and put wind at a disadvantage with natural gas and coal plants. Contact Derf Johnson, Montana Environmental Information Center, 581.4634, djohnson@meic.org.

HB 455, Review nondegradation rules for subdivisions, Rep. Forrest Mandeville (R-Columbus), House Local Government, Pending Executive Action, Oppose. This would require DEQ to rewrite nondegradation water quality rules for subdivisions. There are already extensive rules and statutes that govern this issue that are specific to trying to prevent degradation of high quality waters from pollution. The bill directs DEQ to write new rules that are based on a generic distance between a septic systems discharge to groundwater and surface water. This analysis should be based on science, as is currently the case. Contact Anne Hedges, Montana Environmental Information Center, 461.9546, ahedges@meic.org.

HJ 9, Resolution supporting the release of certain wilderness study areas, Rep. Kerry White (R-Bozeman), House Natural Resources, Pending Executive Action, Oppose. This resolution asks Congress to give up Wilderness Study Areas across Montana that might be designated as wilderness areas at some point in the future. The resolution implies that Montanans don't have access to these lands now but that is not the case. These sensitive areas are important wildlife habitats that may need a protection but, regardless, Montanans can still recreate on these lands and arbitrarily ending the study process is arbitrary and not based on science. Contact Nick Gevock, Montana Wildlife Federation, 533.9432, ngevock@mtwf.org.