

Montana House Conservation Hotlist Week 11: March 13th, 2017

Please Support:

SB 73, Revise laws related to livestock, Sen. Pat Connell (R-Hamilton), House Agriculture, Pending Executive Action, Support. This bill would remove the sunset from the livestock loss program. It would also provide funding for livestock loss prevention programs that keep grizzly bears and wolves out of trouble while protecting livestock. Contact Nick Gevock, Montana Wildlife Federation, 533.9432, ngevock@mtwf.org.

HR 2, House resolution supporting elimination of Montana intertie rate, Rep. Daniel Zolnikov (R-Billings), House Energy, Technology, and Federal Relations, Pending Executive Action, Support. This resolution calls on the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to eliminate an unjustified federal tax on energy produced in Montana. Currently, BPA charges an extra tax on Montana energy producers for using a short, 90-mile section of its 15,000-mile transmission system. Stretching from Townsend to Garrison, this section is critical for sending electricity to West Coast markets. The tax unfairly disadvantages Montana wind energy producers from selling to out-of-state markets. It also increases rates for in-state customers due to NorthWestern Energy's use of the line. The Public Service Commission unanimously signed a letter to BPA calling for the elimination of this tax. Contact Brian Fadie, Montana Environmental Information Center, 210.7591, bfadie@meic.org.

Please Oppose:

SB 48, Direct DEQ to assume dredge-and-fill permitting program, Sen. Chas Vincent (R-Libby), Hearing, House Natural Resources, 3/10/17 at 3pm, Rm. 172, Oppose. This bill would direct the Department of Environmental Quality to assume the federal dredge and fill permitting program, currently overseen by the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers. There is no compelling need for the State of Montana to assume jurisdiction over the Section 404 permitting program of the Federal Clean Water Act. It would come with no federal money and would require \$1.6 million per year of new state spending. Further, there is no evidence it would provide any better service to the public than that currently provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Contact Brian Ohs, Montana Trout Unlimited, 548.6341, brian@montanatu.org.

SB 78, Revise reimbursement of net metered generators, Sen. Keith Regier (R-Kalispell), House Energy, Technology, and Federal Relations, Pending Executive Action, Oppose. SB 78 directs the PSC to create a new rate class for net metering utility customers by July 1, 2018 and reduces the credit rate for net metering customers from the retail rate to an avoided cost rate. The Legislature is establishing avoided cost, which is a specific methodology of determining rates. This should be left to the PSC, who has the expertise to make such determinations. Additionally, by arbitrarily lowering the crediting rate for net metered customers this bill makes investing in and installing distributed renewable energy technologies impractical and will devastate distributed renewable energy businesses in Montana. Contact Andrew Valainis, Montana Renewable Energy Association, 214.9405, Andrew@montanarenewables.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 * 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*

Montana House Conservation Hotlist Week 11: March 13th, 2017

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.

SB 102, Establish a maximum length for qualifying facility contracts, Sen. Tom Richmond (R-Billings), House Energy, Technology, and Federal Relations, Pending Executive Action, Oppose. This bill would place a 20-year maximum on wind and solar projects trying to utilize a federal law that encourages alternative energy production. Clean energy project developers, as well as the Montana Bankers Association, testified in the Senate hearing they would need 20-year minimum contracts in order to finance projects. Contracts greater than 20 years are standard in the energy industry. NorthWestern Energy requested and received a 25-year revenue guarantee when it built its Spion Kop wind farm in 2012. Independent power producers should get equal treatment. Contact Brian Fadie, Montana Environmental Information Center, 210.7591, bfadie@meic.org.

SB 248, Revise laws regarding exempt wells and family transfer parcels, Sen. Mark Blasdel (R-Kalispell), House Natural Resources, Pending Executive Action, Oppose. Allows anyone using the family transfer exemption in the subdivision and platting act to also be guaranteed an exemption from obtaining a water right for a well that pumps up to 35 gallons per minute. The family transfer exemption is already a big exemption in the subdivision law, and this bill would compound the problem. Contact Anne Hedges, Montana Environmental Information Center, 461.9546, ahedges@meic.org.

SJ 6, Resolution urging Regulation Freedom amendment to U.S. constitution, Sen. Duane Ankney (R-Colstrip), House Energy, Technology, and Federal Relations, Pending Executive Action, Oppose. This resolution sends a letter to Montana's congressional delegation and President Trump urging adoption of a new amendment to the U.S. Constitution allowing a minority of Congress to object to proposed federal regulations and then vote on the proposed regulations. In addition to being duplicative to the Congressional Review Act that let Congress vote on overturning regulations, the ability of a small number of members of Congress to object to any federal regulation is deeply concerning. From food safety inspections, scheduling of dangerous drugs such as meth, or protections of our public lands, a fringe group of U.S. representatives or senators could jeopardize public health and safety. Contact Neal Ullman, Montana Conservation Voters, 431.0171, neal@mtvoters.org.