Montana House Conservation HOTLIST Week 10: March 11th, 2019

Please Support:

SB 191, Allow counties to establish a coal trust fund, Sen. Duane Ankney (R-Colstrip) H-Energy 3/13/19, Support. The bill would allow counties to set aside revenue from coal extraction to help cover eventual costs of transition. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, ahedgeps@meic.org OR Cody Ferguson, Northern Plains Resource Council, 509.845.9309, cody@northernplains.org

HB 517, Establish trapper education program, Rep. Bridget Smith (D-Wolf Point) H-Fish, Wildlife & Parks 3/12/19, Support. HB 517 mandates trapper education for all trappers. Currently, anyone can lay down a trap line. Initially supported by the trappers and FWP, both object to Bridget Smith's language requiring equal representation of consumptive and non-consumptive users on the Advisory Committee in Section 2 of the bill. Trappers and FWP will oppose if the language stays in, but will support if she amends to remove that requirement. Removal is acceptable, because the goal is an educated trapper. An educated trapper is more responsible towards wildlife and more respectful of other public land users. Contact Betsy Bradborg, Sierra Club, 406-437-1762, betsy@sbslink.com

HB 627, Conservation Licenses in Lieu of Timber Sales, Rep. Jim Hamilton (D-Bozeman), H-Natural Resources 3/11/19, Support. This bill would require the Department of Natural Resources & Conservation to offer a conservation license in lieu of timber harvest for each timber sale. Conservation licenses can be an effective way to increase the competitive bidding for each timber sale, and like timber harvest, provide financial revenue for state lands. Purchases must also bond for potential loss to the state. Finally, this bill allows DNRC rulemaking for this process. Contact Amy Seaman, MT Audubon, 406.210.9449, aseaman@mtaudubon.org

Please Oppose:

SB 48, Revise variances to water quality standard, Sen. Tom Richmond (R-Billings), S-Natural Resources-Nontabled, Oppose. SB 48 would allow DEQ to write rules and grant variances to polluters that are not complying with water quality standards. Although the bill was drastically amended in Senate Natural Resources, it’s still missing important side-boards that would guarantee the public has meaningful input into the rules or the issuance of the variances by DEQ. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, ahedgeps@meic.org or Andrew Gorder, Clark Fork Coalition, andrew@clarkfork.org. 542-0539 ext. 202

SB 68, Remove residency requirements for aerial hunting permits, Sen. Bruce Gillespie (R-Etheridge), H-Fish, Wildlife & Parks 3/14/19, Oppose. This bill removes the residency requirement for pilot participation in the state’s aerial predator control program. This program licenses between 16-24 pilots a year. This bill was amended to make sure animals not classified as predators, like grizzly bears and wolves are not affected. Contact Betsy Bradborg, Sierra Club, 406-437-1762, betsy@sbslink.com
SB 252, Revise Major Facility Siting Act Amendment Process, Sen. Duane Ankney (R-Colstrip), H-Energy 3/13/19, Oppose. This bill would allow the owners of the Colstrip plant to avoid going through a public process and obtain coal from a mine other than the neighboring Rosebud mine, thereby increasing costs, decreasing revenue to the state of Montana and its workers, and importing coal from Wyoming. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, ahedges@meic.org

SB 199, Prohibit PSC from altering certain contract lengths, Sen. Tom Richmond (R-Billings), H-Natural Resources 3/15/19, Oppose. This is another bait-and-switch NorthWestern Energy bill that would allow NorthWestern to overcharge its electricity customers for ownership of any power plant, including Colstrip. The bill is stated to be about contract lengths with small scale renewable developers but explicitly excludes them. It is really a ploy to force the Public Service Commission to pass along NorthWestern’s imprudent costs of any of its power plants, including but not limited to the Colstrip plant. Contact Brian Fadie, Montana Environmental Information Center, 406.210.7591, bfadie@meic.org.

HB 403, Generally revise coal tax laws, Rep. Barry Usher (R-Billings), H- Taxation, Oppose. HB 403 would indefinitely extend a temporary tax exemption for underground coal mines and cost state and local governments $3.4 million a year. Contact Anne Hedges, Montana Environmental Information Center, 461-9546, ahedges@meic.org.