**Montana Senate Conservation HOTLIST Week 11: March 18, 2019**

**Please Support:**

**SB 173, Revise laws related to electric vehicle charging stations**, Sen. Terry Gauthier (R-Helena),  S-Highways and Transportation, Support. This bill enacts a $25 fine and allows for towing of a non-electric vehicle if parked in an electric vehicle charging station parking spot. Charging stations are a significant investment for a business owner, often designed to help attract customers. Contact Brian Fadie, Montana Environmental Information Center, 406-210-7591, bfadie@meic.org.

**SB 245, Establish commercial property assessed clean energy program**, Sen. Mary McNally (D-Billings), Support. Montana businesses and organizations often face high utility bills due to old or inefficient structures in need of efficiency upgrades but the upfront cost of these upgrades can pose a financial challenge. SB 245 offers a Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program to overcome this financing gap, generating economic development and jobs and saving money in the long run. Using C-PACE, property owners can make energy and water efficiency upgrades to their properties using 100% upfront financing from private capital lenders who opt-into the program. C-PACE financing uses the same system we use to finance streetlights, sidewalks, parks – as an assessment on the annual property tax bill. The program allows finance terms for up to 20 years, so property owners are cash flow positive from the start. This program is voluntary –counties, capital lenders and contractors can choose whether or not they wish to participate. Contact Cody Ferguson, NPRC, 509.845.9309, cody@northernplains.org.

**HB 22, Revise electricity supply resource contract length**, Rep. Laurie Bishop (D-Livingston), S-Energy and Telecommunications, Hearing 3/19 Support. This bill sets contract lengths for small independent wind and solar projects (Qualifying Facilities, or “QFs”) at 20 years. NorthWestern Energy asked for and received revenue recovery periods - aka contract lengths - of considerably longer length for its own power plants (25, 30, 34, and 50 years). Granting 20 years for independent wind and solar projects is a step toward fairness. Contact Brian Fadie, Montana Environmental Information Center, 406.210.7591, bfadie@meic.org.

**Please Oppose:**

**SB 242, Create state park decal**, Sen. Roger Webb (R-Billings), S-Fish and Game, Hearing 3/19, Oppose. This bill would eliminate the current six-dollar optional light vehicle registration fee and instead establish a vehicle window decal to replace the optional light vehicle registration fee that would cost $35 for the first vehicle and $20 for any subsequent vehicle, effectively damaging our State Park’s budget. Contact Noah Marion, Montana Wilderness Association, 406.624.9622, nmarion@wildmontana.org or Whitney Tawney, Montana Conservation Voters, 202-412-4793, whitney@mtvoters.org

**SB 329, Allow for extension of state coal leases**, Sen. Tom Richmond (R-Billings), S-Natural Resources, Hearing 3/20, Oppose. SB 329 would require the state to extend the lease for the Otter Creek coal mine for another decade. The extension would deprive the state of the revenue that a new lease would require. A similar bill was vetoed by Gov. Bullock in 2017. Contact Cody Ferguson, NPRC, 509-845-9309.

**SB 331, Establish the Montana energy security act**, Sen. Tom Richmond (R-Billings), S-Energy and Telecommunications 3/19, Oppose. SB 331 may be a different bill number than Richmond's SB 278, but it's exactly the same concept. This bill gives NorthWestern Energy control over the amount of money its customers would be forced to pay for the Colstrip power plant. SB 331 bypasses the normal oversight of the Montana Public Service Commission and allows NorthWestern to pass on to customers all remediation and decommissioning costs for its existing and any new interest in the Colstrip plant, along with $40 million in
whatever costs NorthWestern desires for an increased ownership share of the plant. Contact Anne Hedges, Montana Environmental Information Center, 406.461.9546, ahedges@meic.org OR Jake Brown, Montana Conservation Voters, 406.855.7821, Jake@mtvoters.org.

HB 265, Revise laws related to approval of FWP easements, Rep. Kerry White (R-Bozeman), Oppose. This bill adds an unnecessary layer of government to conservation easements for fish and wildlife habitat conservation and public hunting access. It would require state Land Board approval for conservation easements under the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Habitat Montana program. It would nullify a 2018 state Supreme Court ruling that found easements were not intended to go through the Land Board, and are final, once approved by the state Fish and Wildlife Commission. Contact Nick Gevock, Montana Wildlife Federation, 406.533.9432, ngevock@mtwf.org.

HB 279, Allow for wolf trapper expense reimbursement, Rep. Bob Brown (R-Thompson Falls), S-Fish and Game 3/21, Oppose. HB 279 would allow an Idaho-based group to pay trappers for wolves killed. It amounts to a bounty on wolves, and would violate Montana’s long standing tradition of not paying people for the killing of game animals. Montana has a healthy ethical, fair chase hunting and trapping heritage and that includes gray wolves and bounties are unnecessary to meet our wildlife management objectives. Contact Nick Gevock, Montana Wildlife Federation, 406.533.9432, ngevock@mtwf.org.

HB 292, Extend coal board funding, Rep. Barry Usher (R-Billings), Oppose. This would extend the increased share of revenue going to the coal board to 2023. The money could be used by local governments to deal with the impacts caused by increased or decreased coal production. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, ahedges@meic.org

HB 332, Require county approval to relocate bison, Rep. Joshua Kassmier (R-Fort Benton), S-Agriculture, Livestock & Irrigation 3/26, Oppose. This bill would require approval by a board of county commissioners prior to wild bison or wild buffalo being released into a county. This erodes FWP authority over wildlife, and the bill is written so that prohibiting bison in a county could be enforced by a county growth policy. This would be the only instance when a growth policy has regulatory power. The bill also requires transferred bison to be certified as brucellosis free. Contact Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon, aseaman@mtaudubon.org

HB 441, Repeal timber conservation license in lieu of sale, Rep. Kerry White (R-Bozeman), S-Natural Resources 3/21, Oppose. This bill repeals section 77-5-208 of the Montana Code, the section that allows the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to offer conservation licenses in lieu of timber sales. Passed the House (70-29) This bill is being transmitted to the Senate. Contact Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon, 406-210-9449, aseaman@mtaudubon.org or Whitney Tawney, Montana Conservation Voters, 202-412-4793, whitney@mtvoters.org

HJ 28, Joint resolution requesting denial of American prairie reserve grazing permit, Rep. Dan Bartel (R-Lewistown), S-Agriculture, Hearing 3/21, Oppose. HJ 28 singles out the non-profit conservation group the American Prairie Reserve and calls for the BLM to deny its application to change its grazing leases to allow year-round grazing of its bison. Please OPPOSE this bad resolution that would set a precedent that the Legislature can single out individuals or organizations. Contact Nick Gevock, MWF, ngevock@mtwf.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 Alex Rich, Montana Conservation Voters at 406.254.1593 ext. 2.