

Montana Conservation Community
Legislative Hotlist, House of Representatives
Week 5: Feb. 10 – Feb. 16, 2009

Please Support:

HB 20, Create weatherization account using oil and gas production tax, Rep. Sue Dickenson (D-Great Falls). This bill would allocate 20% of oil and gas production tax money to a state weatherization account. The account will provide funds for the DPHHS home weatherization programs. Human Services, pending committee vote. Contact Matt Leow, Northern Plains Resource Council, 406.396.1766, matt@northernplains.org.

HB 254, Monitor and report on greenhouse gas emissions, Rep. Mike Phillips (D-Bozeman). This bill requires the state to monitor and report on greenhouse gas emissions and develop a proposal that would reduce those emissions in Montana. Natural Resources, 02/16/2009, 3pm, Rm 472. Contact Matt Leow, Northern Plains, 406.396.1766, or matt@northernplains.org.

HB 255, Increase Montana renewable energy portfolio standard, Rep. Mike Phillips (D-Bozeman). This bill would extend and gradually raise Montana's Renewable Energy Standard to require utilities to purchase 20% of their electricity from renewable sources by 2020 and 25% by 2025. It would also expand the definition of renewable resources to include compressed air. FRET, pending committee vote. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, or ahedges@meic.org.

HB 361, Energy improvement districts, Rep. Brady Wiseman (D-Bozeman). This bill authorizes cities and counties to establish Energy Improvement Districts in order to make loans to property owners for energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades. It creates jobs, reduces energy bills, and diminishes the environmental impact of energy consumption. Local Government, pending committee vote. Contact Linda Gryczan, 406.431.3635, or Ben Brouwer, AERO, 406.443.7272, bbrouwer@aeromt.org.

HB 313, Revise opencut mining laws, JP Pomnichowski (D-Bozeman). This bill allows a county to adopt a permitting program for gravel mine operations in that county. If a county adopts such a program, this bill requires an applicant for a gravel mine to receive the local permit prior to applying to DEQ for a permit from the State. Natural Resources, 02/09/2009, 3pm, Rm 472. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, or ahedges@meic.org.

HB 319, Require proof of other permit applications for opencut mining, Rep. Jill Cohenour, (D-East Helena). This bill requires an applicant for a gravel mine to include its applications for air quality and water quality permits with its mine permit application. This will help DEQ and the public have a better understanding of the overall impacts from the proposed project and help DEQ appropriately mitigate those impacts. Natural Resources, 02/11/2009, 3pm, Rm 472. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, or ahedges@meic.org.

Alternative Energy Resource Organization * Clark Fork Coalition * Montana Audubon * Montana Conservation Voters * MEIC * Montana Trout Unlimited * MontPIRG * Montana Sierra Club*
Montana Smart Growth Coalition * National Center for Appropriate Technology *
Natural Resources Defense Council* Northern Plains Resource Council *

Please Support, Continued

HB 359, Public notice and hearing for opencut applications, JP Pomnichowski (D-Bozeman). This bill requires the applicant for a gravel mining operation to notify those affected by the operation by publishing a notice in local newspapers, mailing notices to landowners within a mile radius, and posting notices prominently in the area. If DEQ receives objections it must hold a public hearing in the area. After the hearing the DEQ will notify the applicant if additional information is necessary to process the application. Once the applicant submits the necessary information DEQ has 30 days to process the application to determine if the newly submitted information is satisfactory. Natural Resources, 02/09/2009, 3pm, Rm 472. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, or ahedges@meic.org.

HB 413, Use coal tax to fund energy efficiency in public education facilities, Rep. Peterson (R-Billings). This bill allows the state to lend schools money from the coal tax to address increasing energy efficiency gaps. Taxation, 02/10/2009, 8am, Rm 172. Contact Matt Leow, Northern Plains, 406.396.1766, or matt@northernplains.org.

HB 415, Regulate micro-processing of biodiesel, Rep. Margaret McDonald (D-Billings). Agriculture, 02/10/2009, 3pm, Rm 472. Contact Matt Leow, Northern Plains, 406.396.1766, or matt@northernplains.org.

HB 422, Revise eminent domain law on necessity for railroads, Rep. Cohenour (D-East Helena). FRET, 02/16/2009, 3pm, Rm 172. Contact Jim Jensen, MEIC, 406.431.9950, or jjesnsen@meic.org.

HB 446, Revise opencut mining laws, JP Pomnichowski (D-Bozeman). This bill requires an application for a gravel mine to include minimum data on existing ground and surface water quality and a monitoring program for ground and surface water quality after the mine is operating. The application must contain the plan for controlling surface water runoff at the site. This bill also provides a clear legal avenue for adjacent landowners to file suit against a gravel mine operation to recover damages for contamination, diminution or interruption of their water supply caused by a gravel mine operation. Natural Resources, 02/11/2009, 3pm, Rm 472. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, or ahedges@meic.org.

HB 447, Revise opencut mining laws, JP Pomnichowski (D-Bozeman). This bill increases and clarifies that reclamation requirements at gravel mines. It requires the DEQ to inspect and review a gravel mine at least once every 5 years to make sure it is in compliance with its permit. At the time of the inspection at least 25% of the mine site must be under reclamation. It requires reclamation to occur at a gravel mine as soon as possible. It says that a permit for an expansion at an existing gravel mine can only increase the acreage of the mine by 50%. Natural Resources, 02/11/2009, 3pm, Rm 472. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, or ahedges@meic.org.

Please Oppose:

HB 79, Uniform provisions for state land transactions, Rep. Wayne Stahl (R-Saco). This bill prohibits a net gain in land ownership by the state. This would disallow Fish Wildlife and Parks from purchasing land under the Habitat Montana program, land for new parks, or projects like the purchase of Plum Creek property under the proposed Working Forests Initiative. Natural Resources, pending committee vote. Contact Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon, 406.431.9157 or jellis@mtaudubon.org.

HB 140, Increase sustained yield for forest health, Rep. Chas Vincent (R-Libby). This bill gives the DNRC authority to harvest more timber each year than it has determined sustainable. It allows the DNRC to exceed the annual sustained yield for timber harvest on state school trust lands by 10% as the timber is harvested through DNRC's contract timber harvest program. Last session, a provision passed allowing DNRC to increase the sustained yield by 5% through the contract timber harvest program. This raises that amount another 5%. Natural Resources, passed as amended. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, or ahedges@meic.org.

HB 278, Weaken Coal Mine Reclamation, Rep. Bill McChesney (D-Miles City). This bill revises the coal reclamation laws to allow for the release of the bond before all reclamation is completed. Water management and other support facilities, including soil stockpiles encompassing up to 20% of a strip mined area, could remain disturbed and avoid reclamation. Natural Resources, passed as amended. Contact Matt Leow, Northern Plains, 406.396.1766, or matt@northernplains.org.

HB 483, Revising laws governing board of environmental review related to energy projects, Llew Jones (R-Conrad). This bill makes the public post a bond to appeal an air or water quality permit. Unless someone appealing a permit has significant financial resources, they could not appeal an air or water permit issued by DEQ no matter how poor the permit. This will have a chilling effect on the public's right to protect itself, is likely unconstitutional, and provides an advantage to industries at the expense of the public. FRET, pending committee hearing. Contact Anne Hedges, MEIC, 406.461.9546, or ahedges@meic.org.

This hotlist is compiled by Montana Conservation Voters (contact Sarah Cobler, 581.2284 or sarah@mtvoters.org) as an educational service to lawmakers and citizens, weekly tracking key conservation-related legislative actions.

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