

Montana Audubon (Janet Ellis) • **Montana Conservation Voters** (Theresa Keaveny)
Montana Environmental Information Center (Jim Jensen) • **MontPIRG** (Matt Leow)
National Center for Appropriate Technology (Kathy Hadley) • **National Environmental Trust** (Anna Swanson) • **Natural Resources Defense Council** (Chuck Magraw) • **Northern Plains Resource Council** (Teresa Erickson) • **Montana Chapter of Sierra Club** (Paul Shively) • **Western Organization of Resource Councils** (Pat Sweeney)

November 15, 2007

Montana Principles for a New Energy Policy

Dear Senator Baucus and Senator Tester:

Global climate change is perhaps the most urgent, challenging issue of our time. Montanans endured the hottest July on record in 2007. Wildfires and smoke impacted thousands of citizens across the state this summer. The combined heat and dry conditions imperiled streams and rivers, several of which hit record low flows, resulting in restrictions on agricultural production and fish kills.

Today, you and your colleagues have a tremendous opportunity to take a critical first step in tackling global climate change and addressing the nation's need for a homegrown, clean and secure energy future. In charting the course for a new energy policy, the nearly 42,000 collective members of our Montana organizations ask you to help ensure that the 2007 Energy Bill makes much needed improvements in the way the nation produces and utilizes energy.

We thank you for your leadership on this issue to date. We believe the following principles are integral to the new Energy Bill and ask you to help pass a strong bill during this congressional session. We have no time to lose.

Promote a Clean Energy Future: Invest in renewable energy to create new industries and good jobs in Montana. There is no better place to promote renewable energy than right here at home, where abundant wind and biofuel crops provide the cornerstones of economic opportunity and a clean, secure energy future. A recent MSU study suggests a 15 million gallon plant using Montana-grown oilseed would **create 567 jobs and bring \$78 million to Montana annually**. Montana ranks 5th in the nation for its wind energy potential, which could generate more than one trillion kWh annually, the equivalent of the electricity needed to power the entire state more than 70 times over. The Judith Gap Wind Farm generates some of the cheapest power in the state, which is particularly important for low-income consumers.¹

Moreover, Montanans support renewable energy. Polling conducted by Montana Conservation Voters Education Fund in September, 2006 found that **sixty-eight percent of Montanans support developing renewable energy**, such as wind and biofuels, compared with twenty-eight percent who prefer building more coal-fired power plants, turning coal into diesel fuel, and "clean coal" technologies. The same poll found that **sixty percent support putting limits or caps on carbon dioxide emissions** from power plants and industry to reduce global warming pollution.

¹ Statistics provided by MontPIRG, *Campaign for a Clean Energy Future* factsheet, 2007.

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Reform energy policy: Energy policy must facilitate the transition to a carbon free economy by encouraging efficiency, innovation, competition and fairness. The country needs more aggressive energy efficiency policies for electricity and buildings, increased CAFE standards of 35 mpg by 2020, like those already passed by the Senate, and the renewable electricity standard included in the House energy bill. **Montana Lawmakers passed a 15% RES by 2015 in the 2005 Legislature**, paving the way for Montana solutions at the federal level.

Reform Oil and Gas Provisions: Oil and gas drilling is booming in the West. Tens of thousands of oil, gas, and coalbed methane wells exist and even more are planned. Millions of acres of land across the West, including thousands of acreage in Montana, are being disturbed by pipelines, roads, compressor stations, transmission lines, wastewater containment ponds and well pads – turning agricultural land into industrial sites. Irresponsible development of these resources brings substantial risks to Montana’s agricultural economy and environment. Energy development can and must be done right, without polluting our water or leaving landowners and taxpayers with the costs of cleanup. **Legislation passed by the House of Representatives is a step in the right direction.** The oil and gas provisions of this bill would, among other things, level the playing field for split estate landowners, protect water resources damaged by oil and gas drilling and strengthen oil and gas reclamation and bonding standards. We urge the Senate to pass an energy bill that contains these oil and gas provisions.

Congress must act quickly. We don’t have time to get it wrong. Energy investments made today will impact the nation and our children for decades. The people of the United States deserve an energy bill that both addresses the climate crisis and our energy security concerns by promoting energy efficiency and homegrown renewable resources. Our collective Montana groups stand ready to work with you and leaders in both Houses of Congress to achieve these critical objectives for a safe, fair and sustainable future.

Representatives of the groups signing this letter would appreciate the opportunity to meet with each of you, at your convenience, over the coming Thanksgiving recess. Amy Stix of Montana Conservation Voters (406-586-0109) is following up with your respective schedulers this week.

Thank you.