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As of: August 6, 2018 (10:21am)

LCw006

**** Joint Resolution No. ****

Introduced By *****

By Request of the *****

A Joint Resolution of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the State of Montana requesting an interim study of Montana's stream gauge network.

WHEREAS, information on the flow of rivers and streams is a vital asset that safeguards lives, protects property, informs recreationists, and ensures adequate water supplies for the future; and

WHEREAS, this information in Montana is gathered primarily from 227 stream gauges; and

WHEREAS, the federal government, through the U.S. Geological Survey, maintains and operates most of the stream gauge network;

WHEREAS, due to increased costs and changes in funding structure, the federal government must increasingly rely on other entities to fund the stream gauge network or decommission an increasing number of stream gauges;

WHEREAS, 26 other entities, including local and state governments and other organizations, provide funds to pay for the maintenance and operation of the stream gauge network;

WHEREAS, these entities and many others depend on data from the stream gauge network for a variety of purposes, including climate variability, drought mitigation, emergency planning, and water distribution.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to review the role of stream gauges in Montana's water supply system and suggest ways to ensure the network of stream gauges remains relevant and robust into the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the study consider:

(1) reports and analyses related to the operation, maintenance, and ownership of stream gauges;

(2) information and testimony about how entities use stream gauge data, including from entities such as:

(a) local, state, tribal, and federal government agencies protecting and allocating Montana's water resources;

(b) court-appointed water commissioners distributing water in a decree; and

(c) local water users, conservation districts, and other watershed groups developing and implementing plans and agreements to address drought, fish, habitat, water leasing, or other water supply objectives;

(3) input and suggestions from those entities to improve the stream gauge network;

(4) information about current and alternative funding models for stream gauge operation and maintenance;

(5) how other Western states maintain the stream gauge network in their respective states;

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(6) the adequacy of the stream gauge network to meet current and future water information needs, which may necessarily incorporate data related to snowpack, soil moisture, water quality, and other relevant measures; and

(7) alternative methods to gather similar data accurately measuring stream flows across Montana; and

(8) identify and assess organizations that may provide for future operation and maintenance of the stream gauge network.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2020.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 67th Legislature.

- END -

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