



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL 69th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

Willis Curdy
John Esp
Pat Flowers
Wylie Galt
Forrest Mandeville
Tony Tezak

HOUSE MEMBERS

Paul Fielder
Tom France
Steve Gist
Jedediah Hinkle
Shannon Maness
Joshua Seckinger

PUBLIC MEMBERS

Jim Keane
Mike Mershon
Jon Metropoulos
Richard Roth
Brian Yablonski

COMMITTEE STAFF

Joseph Carroll – Legal Staff
Jason Mohr – Legislative
Environmental Analyst
Jacelyn Sterling - Secretary

MINUTES LOG

July 29, 2025
Room 317 and Zoom
Helena, Montana

Please note: This document is a Minutes Log and provides annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of the meeting and the time at which the item was presented or discussed, a motion was made, or a vote was taken. The narrative presented here is provided only as a guide to the audio or video recording of the meeting. The official discussion, motion, or vote is available on the audio or video archive of this meeting. The Legislature does not prepare a transcript of the meeting activities. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion on the audio or video recording of this meeting.

Access to an electronic copy of these minutes and the audio or video recording is provided from the Legislative Branch home page at <https://leg.mt.gov>. From the home page, select the "Committees" drop down menu at the top, then select Administrative or Interim, and the appropriate committee. The written minutes log can be located by expanding the accordion menu for the date of the meeting. Links to the audio/video files can be located by selecting the Video/Audio button on the same page, then the "past/current recordings" button. From there, use the calendar to select the date of the meeting you wish to view/listen to. The written Minutes Log, along with links to the audio and video recordings, is listed by meeting date on the interim committee's web page. Each of the Exhibits is linked and can be viewed by clicking on the Exhibit of interest. All Exhibits are public information and may be printed. Please contact the Legislative Services Division at 406-444-3064 for more information.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Paul Fielder (R)
Sen. Willis Curdy (D)
Sen. John Esp (R)
Sen. Pat Flowers (D)
Rep. Tom France (D)
Sen. Wylie Galt (R)
Rep. Steve Gist (R)
Rep. Jedediah Hinkle (R)
Rep. Joshua Seckinger (D)
Sen. Forrest Mandeville (R)
Rep. Shannon Maness (R)
Mike Mershon, Public Member
Jon Metropoulos, Public Member
Richard Roth, Governor's Designated Representative
Jim Keane, Public Member
Brian Yablonski, Public Member

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Sen. Tony Tezak (R)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

STAFF PRESENT:

Joseph Carroll, Legal Staff

Jason Mohr, Legislative Environmental Analyst

Jacelyn Sterling, Secretary

AGENDA [\(Attachment 1\)](#)**VISITORS' LIST [\(Attachment 2\)](#)****CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

09:01:43 Acting Presiding Officer Willis Curdy called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS, PUBLIC AGENCIES AND STAFF

09:02:54 Sen. Wylie Galt
09:03:17 Jim Keane
09:03:25 Sen. Pat Flowers
09:03:43 Sen. John Esp
09:04:10 Sen. Forrest Mandeville
09:04:25 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
09:04:37 Rep. Tom France
09:05:06 Brian Yablonski
09:05:24 Jon Metropoulos
09:05:31 Richard Roth, Governor's Office
09:05:45 Joseph Carroll, Legal Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
09:05:54 Mike Mershon
09:06:13 Rep. Shannon Maness
09:06:25 Rep. Paul Fielder
09:06:40 Rep. Steve Gist
09:06:59 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
09:07:22 Acting Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
09:08:08 Ellie Brighton, Montana Stock Growers Association
09:09:12 Jeff Lukas, Trout Unlimited
09:09:30 Matt Vincent, Executive Director, Montana Mining Association
09:10:01 Trevor Graff, Government Affairs Director, Commissioner of Securities and Insurance
09:10:30 Ian Moore, Forestry Director, Big Sky Land Management; Eastern Chapter Director, Montana Logging Association
09:10:51 Jason Todd, Montana Logging Association
09:11:18 Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited

09:11:42 Dave Burch, Montana Weed Control Association
09:12:41 Acting Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
09:12:55 Karry White, former legislator, Bozeman
09:13:15 Jason Mohr, Legislative Environmental Analyst, LSD
09:13:46 Jacelyn Sterling, Secretary, LSD
09:14:13 Joseph Carroll, LSD
09:14:33 Casey Pallister, LSD
09:15:20 Jason Mohr

COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

09:17:24 Jason Mohr, Legislative Environmental Analyst, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 1](#)
09:22:52 Acting Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
09:23:20 Jason Mohr, LSD
[EXHIBIT 2](#)

EXPLANATION OF SB64

09:26:15 Angie Carter, Financial Director, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 3](#)
09:30:40 Kelly DaSilva, Human Resource Director, LSD

Committee Discussion/Questions

09:31:52 Rep. Paul Fielder
09:32:19 Director Angie Carter, LSD
09:33:13 Rep. Paul Fielder
09:33:49 Jason Mohr, Legislative Environmental Analyst, LSD
09:34:26 Rep. Paul Fielder
09:34:42 Jason Mohr
09:35:19 Rep. Paul Fielder
09:35:41 Acting Presiding Officer Willis Curdy

Public Comment

09:35:46 None

Motion

09:36:19 Rep. Tom France moved to adopt the use of proxy votes.

Discussion on the Motion

09:36:53 Sen. Forrest Mandeville
09:37:12 Acting Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
09:37:20 Sen. Forrest Mandeville
09:37:24 Rep. Steve Gist
09:38:03 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
09:38:30 Sen. Wylie Galt

Substitute Motion

09:38:32 Sen. Wylie Galt made a substitute motion to adopt the use of proxy votes in the form of written, email or text message, and require a copy is sent to the Presiding Officer and Lead Staff

Vote

09:41:47 Carried 13 - 3 by roll call vote with Rep. Paul Fielder, Rep. Steve Gist, Sen. John Esp voting no.

Committee Discussion/Questions

09:38:51 Sen. Forrest Mandeville
09:39:18 Sen. John Esp
09:39:38 Sen. Wylie Galt
09:40:06 Jon Metropoulos
09:40:30 Rep. Paul Fielder
09:40:59 Jason Mohr

Motion

09:44:03 Sen. Pat Flowers moved to adopt the rules as amended by the committee.

Vote

09:44:27 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Motion

09:44:50 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle nominated Rep. Paul Fielder as Presiding Officer.
Approved by acclamation

Motion

09:45:39 Sen. Pat Flowers nominated Sen. Willis Curdy as Vice Presiding Officer.
Approved by acclamation

Discussion

09:46:17 Rep. Shannon Maness
09:46:38 Rep. Joshua Seckinger

09:47:25 **Recessed**
09:56:18 **Reconvened**

09:56:27 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

REVIEW OF 2025 NATURAL RESOURCES LEGISLATION

09:58:54 Jason Mohr, Legislative Environmental Analyst, Legislative Service Division
(LSD)
[EXHIBIT 4](#)

Discussion

10:03:22 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
10:03:38 Jason Mohr, LSD

Public Comment

10:06:14 None

DISCUSSION OF 2025-26 INTERIM PRIORITIES

10:06:24 Jason Mohr, Legislative Environmental Analyst, Legislative Service Division
(LSD)
[EXHIBIT 5](#)

Committee Discussion/Questions

10:13:40 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
10:13:48 Jason Mohr, LSD
10:14:03 Joseph Carroll, Legal Staff, LSD
10:15:10 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
10:15:21 Joseph Carroll, LSD
10:16:15 Jason Mohr
10:24:51 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
10:25:05 Jason Mohr
10:25:17 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
10:25:24 Jason Mohr
10:25:47 Sen. John Esp
10:26:00 Jason Mohr
10:26:10 Rep. Tom France
10:27:01 Jason Mohr

10:28:09 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 10:28:29 Jason Mohr
 10:29:16 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 10:29:49 Rep. Tom France
 10:30:30 Rep. Steve Gist
 10:31:59 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 10:32:30 Sen. Pat Flowers
 10:34:46 Jason Mohr
 10:35:17 Sen. John Esp
 10:35:40 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 10:35:50 Jason Mohr
 10:36:07 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
 10:36:20 Jason Mohr
 10:37:07 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

10:37:50 Joseph Carroll, Legal Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 6](#)

Public Comment / Committee Discussion

10:43:46 Kerry White, Bozeman
[EXHIBIT 7](#)
 10:47:46 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 10:47:57 Kerry White
 10:48:44 Matt Vincent, Executive Director, Montana Mining Association
 10:51:03 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 10:51:21 Jon Metropoulos
 10:51:43 Matt Vincent
 10:52:13 Trevor Graff, Government Affairs Director, Commissioner of Securities and Insurance
 10:53:32 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 10:53:41 Rep. Tom France
 10:54:38 Rep. Steve Gist
 10:55:53 Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
 10:56:33 Trevor Graff
 10:56:51 Sen. John Esp
 10:57:44 Dustin Tetrault, Fire Chief, Big Sky Fire Department
 11:01:19 Dave Burch, Montana Weed Control Association
 11:03:49 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 11:04:02 Joseph Carroll, LSD

11:04:09	Dave Burch
11:05:58	Karli Johnson, Montana Farm Bureau Federation
11:07:22	Ellie Brighton, Montana Stock Growers Association
11:09:46	Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited
11:11:47	Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
11:12:42	Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
11:12:59	Jason Mohr, LSD
11:13:16	Sen. Pat Flowers
11:14:15	Dustin Tetrault
11:16:28	Sen. Pat Flowers
11:17:20	Dustin Tetrault
11:18:06	Rep. Steve Gist
11:20:07	Justin Russel, Fire Chief, Musselshell County
11:22:17	Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
11:22:31	Rep. Tom France
11:24:59	Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
11:26:02	Rep. Steve Gist
11:26:19	Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
11:26:48	Sen. John Esp
11:28:01	Mike Mershon
11:29:37	Jon Metropoulos
11:30:14	Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
11:31:19	Brian Yablonski

**UPDATES FROM ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY (ETIC) AND WATER POLICY (WPIC)
INTERIM COMMITTEES**

11:33:26	Griffin Burns, Lead Staff, ETIC
11:39:52	Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, WPIC

Public Comment

11:44:46	None
----------	------

11:45:33	Recessed
13:04:12	Reconvened

House Bill 70 (STUDY OF WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING)

13:04:49	Jason Mohr, Legislative Environmental Analyst, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
	<u>EXHIBIT 8</u>

13:14:57 Kenneth Cayden Noddings, Management and Program Analyst, Legislative Audit Division (LAD)

Committee Discussion/Questions

13:28:50 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
13:29:10 Rep. Steve Gist
13:29:35 Kenneth Noddings, LAD
13:30:30 Sen. John Esp
13:33:03 Kenneth Noddings
13:33:17 Jim Keane
13:33:31 Rep. Tom France
13:34:02 Kenneth Noddings
13:34:51 Sen. Pat Flowers
13:36:05 Kenneth Noddings
13:37:59 Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
13:40:08 Kenneth Noddings
13:40:57 Jon Metropoulos
13:41:16 Kenneth Noddings
13:41:44 Amanda Kaster, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
13:46:30 Rep. Steve Gist
13:46:55 Director Amanda Kaster, DNRC

UPDATE ON CONSOLIDATED FEDERAL FIRE AGENCY

13:47:45 Amanda Kaster, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

Committee Discussion/Questions

13:51:22 Rep. Steve Gist
13:52:06 Director Amanda Kaster, DNRC

HISTORY OF MONTANA WILDFIRES DATA TOOL

13:54:05 Alice Hecht, Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD)
(see video for presentation)

Committee Discussion/Questions

14:12:06 Rep. Steve Gist
14:13:09 Alice Hecht
14:14:52 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
14:17:26 Sen. John Esp
14:18:13 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

2025 WILDFIRE SEASON UPDATE

14:18:48 Shawn Thomas, Division Administrator, Forestry and Trust Lands Division,
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

Committee Discussion/Questions

14:23:28 None

REPORT ON STREAMSIDE MANAGEMENT ZONE

14:23:48 Shawn Thomas, Division Administrator, Forestry and Trust Lands Division,
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

[EXHIBIT 9](#)

[EXHIBIT 10](#)

Public Comment

14:33:03 Alan Olsen, Government Affairs Director, NorthWestern Energy

14:34:00 Jason Todhunter, Montana Logging Association

14:39:21 Jim Simpson, Evergreen Foundation

[EXHIBIT 11](#)

14:45:00 Julia Altemus, Executive Director, Montana Wood Products Association

14:47:02 Ian Moore, Montana Logging Association

Committee Discussion/Questions

14:48:54 Rep. Steve Gist

14:49:32 Director Amanda Kaster, DNRC

14:49:54 Rep. Tom France

14:50:54 Jim Simpson, Evergreen Foundation

14:51:24 Director Amanda Kaster

14:51:59 Jim Keane

14:54:50 Sen. Pat Flowers

14:56:08 Jim Simpson

14:56:47 Sen. John Esp

14:57:18 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

14:57:44 Jim Keane

14:58:27 Director Amanda Kaster

14:58:50 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

REPORT ON HYDROCARBON AND GEOLOGY INVESTIGATION

15:00:21 Jay Gunderson, Geologist, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology (MBMG)

Committee Discussion/Questions

15:08:39 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
15:11:01 Jay Gunderson, MBMG

Public Comment

15:13:02 None

REPORT ON COAL ASH MARKET INVESTIGATION PROGRAM

15:13:25 Mary Craigle, Research and Information Services Bureau Chief, Montana
Department of Commerce (DOC)

[EXHIBIT 12](#)

15:15:09 Dustin deYoung, Freestone Development and Consulting

15:21:53 Mary Craigle, DOC

Public Comment

15:24:12 None

Committee Discussion/Questions

15:24:26 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle

15:25:03 Mary Cragle

DIRECTORS' REPORTS

15:26:24 Sonja Nowakowski, Director, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

15:34:50 Cristy Clark, Director, Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP)

[EXHIBIT 13](#)

[EXHIBIT 14](#)

15:43:00 Amanda Kaster, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
(DNRC)

[EXHIBIT 15](#)

Public Comment

15:54:41 Ellie Brighton, Montana Stockgrowers Association

15:55:55 Karli Johnson, Montana Farm Bureau Federation

Discussion

15:57:05 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle

15:59:02 Director Cristy Clark, FWP

16:00:10 Sen. Wylie Galt

16:00:47 Director Amanda Kaster, DNRC

16:01:46 Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy

16:03:53 Director Amanda Kaster

16:04:16 Sen. Pat Flowers

16:04:53 Director Amanda Kaster
 16:05:26 Rep. Steve Gist
 16:06:11 Director Amanda Kaster
 16:06:50 Shawn Thomas, DNRC
 16:07:10 Rep. Steve Gist
 16:07:21 Shawn Thomas
 16:10:13 Mike Mershon
 16:11:13 Director Amanda Kaster
 16:12:16 Rep. Tom France
 16:14:59 Director Amanda Kaster
 16:19:14 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 16:19:29 Brian Yablonski
 16:20:28 Director Amanda Kaster
 16:20:35 Rep. Steve Gist
 16:20:49 Director Amanda Kaster
 16:21:34 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

16:23:43 **Recessed**

16:34:50 **Reconvened**

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK SESSION

Committee Discussion

16:35:08 Jason Mohr, Legislative Environmental Analyst, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
 16:36:52 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 16:37:33 Sen. Forrest Mandeville
 16:37:42 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 16:38:15 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
 16:38:25 Jason Mohr, LSD
 16:39:41 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
 16:39:52 Sen. John Esp
 16:40:16 Jason Mohr
 16:40:55 Rep. Shannon Maness
 16:41:36 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 16:42:26 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
 16:42:50 Rep. Steve Gist
 16:43:03 Sen. Pat Flowers
 16:43:40 Jason Mohr
 16:43:41 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
 16:43:45 Rep. Steve Gist

16:44:01 Rep. Tom France
16:44:06 Rep. Shannon Maness
16:44:27 Sen. Forrest Mandeville
16:45:09 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
16:45:26 Jason Mohr
16:45:57 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

Motion

16:46:32 Sen. Forest Mandeville moved to adopt the committee meeting dates from January 2026 onward.

Vote

16:47:02 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

Committee Discussion Continued

16:47:23 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
16:48:00 Jason Mohr
16:48:30 Rep. Steve Gist
16:48:48 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
16:53:24 Sen. Pat Flowers
16:54:49 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
16:56:25 Sen. Forrest Mandeville
16:58:03 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
16:58:36 Rep. Steve Gist
17:00:59 Sen. Forrest Mandeville
17:01:28 Sen. John Esp
17:02:34 Sen. Pat Flowers
17:03:26 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
17:03:43 Jason Mohr

Motion

17:03:52 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle Moved to approve the workplan set forth by the committee.

Vote

17:06:53 Carried 10 - 6 by roll call vote with Jim Keane, Mark Mershon, Rep. Tom France, Rep. Joshua Seckinger, Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy, Sen. Pat Flowers voting no.

Committee Discussion Continued

17:06:36 Rep. Tom France
17:07:28 Rep. Steve Gist
17:08:25 Sen. John Esp
17:08:39 Rep. Steve Gist
17:08:55 Jim Keane
17:09:13 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 17:09:47