



## **WATER POLICY INTERIM COMMITTEE**

### **69th Montana Legislature**

#### **SENATE MEMBERS**

Willis Curdy  
Wylie Galt  
Bruce "Butch" Gillespie  
Bob Phalen

#### **HOUSE MEMBERS**

Jill Cohenour  
Jamie Isaly  
Tom Millett  
Russ Miner  
Tracy Sharp

#### **COMMITTEE STAFF**

Toni Henneman – Lead Staff  
Alexis Sandru – Legal Staff  
Maddelyn Black - Secretary

# **MINUTES LOG**

July 30, 2025  
Capitol & 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.

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#### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sen. Wylie Galt, Presiding Officer (R)  
Rep. Jill Cohenour, Vice Presiding Officer (D)  
Sen. Willis Curdy (D)  
Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie (R)  
Rep. Jamie Isaly (D)  
Rep. Tom Millett (R)  
Rep. Russ Miner (R)  
Sen. Bob Phalen (R)  
Rep. Tracy Sharp (R)

#### **MEMBERS EXCUSED:**

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

#### **STAFF PRESENT:**

Toni Henneman, Lead Staff  
Alexis Sandru, Legal Staff  
Maddelyn Black, Secretary

## **AGENDA** [\(Attachment 1\)](#)

## **VISITORS' LIST** [\(Attachment 2\)](#)

### **CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

09:00:30 Acting Presiding Officer Bruce "Butch" Gillespie called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

### **Committee Introductions**

09:01:22 Acting Presiding Officer Bruce "Butch" Gillespie  
09:02:12 Rep. Jill Cohenour  
09:04:03 Rep. Tom Millett  
09:04:45 Rep. Jamie Isaly  
09:05:16 Rep. Russ Miner  
09:06:10 Sen. Bob Phalen  
09:06:59 Rep. Tracy Sharp  
09:07:49 Sen. Willis Curdy  
09:08:43 Sen. Wylie Galt  
09:09:15 Maddelyn Black  
09:09:27 Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)  
09:10:03 Alexis Sandru, Legal Staff, LSD  
09:10:46 Acting Presiding Officer Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

### **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

09:10:59 Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 1](#)

[EXHIBIT 2](#)

[EXHIBIT 3](#)

[EXHIBIT 4](#)

### **Committee Questions / Discussion**

09:20:47 Rep. Jill Cohenour

### **Motion**

09:21:41 Sen. Wylie Galt moved to allow written proxies through email or text messages that notify the presiding officer and staff.

### **Discussion on the Motion**

09:22:08 Rep. Russ Miner

### **Vote**

09:22:14 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS - Continued**

09:22:21 Toni Henneman, LSD

(See Exhibit 4)

09:26:07 Acting Presiding Officer Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

**Motion**

09:26:11 Rep. Jill Cohenour moved to adopt the 2025 Interim Committee Rules, with allowance of written proxies.

**Discussion on the Motion**

09:26:19 None

**Vote**

09:26:24 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS - Continued**

09:26:32 Toni Henneman

[EXHIBIT 5](#)

09:26:54 Dan Messerli, Accounting & Payroll Specialist, LSD  
(See Exhibit 5)

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

09:03:01 Acting Presiding Officer Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

09:30:10 Rep. Russ Miner

09:30:15 Dan Messerli, LSD

09:30:39 Sen. Bob Phalen

09:30:49 Dan Messerli

**ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICER AND VICE PRESIDING OFFICER**

09:32:12 Acting Presiding Officer Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

**Motion**

09:32:22 Rep. Jill Cohenour moved to nominate Sen. Wylie Galt as Presiding Officer of the Water Policy Interim Committee.

**Discussion on the Motion**

09:32:40 Rep. Russ Miner

**Vote**

09:32:46 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

**Motion**

09:33:10 Rep. Russ Miner moved to nominate Rep. Jill Cohenour as Vice Presiding Officer of the Water Policy Interim Committee.

**Discussion on the Motion**

09:33:18      None

**Vote**

09:33:34      Carried unanimously by voice vote.

**Discussion on the Vote**

09:33:44      Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

09:33:49      Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

09:34:04      **Recessed**

09:42:16      **Reconvened**

**2025-26 WPIC INTERIM PRIORITIES DISCUSSION**

09:42:29      Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 6](#)

[EXHIBIT 7](#)

[EXHIBIT 8](#)

09:59:37      Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

10:05:44      Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

10:06:03      Toni Henneman, LSD

10:06:41      Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

10:07:04      Toni Henneman

10:07:36      Sen. Bob Phalen

10:07:48      Toni Henneman

10:09:26      Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

10:09:42      Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

**2025-26 WPIC INTERIM PRIORITIES DISCUSSION - Continued**

10:10:30      Alexis Sandru, Legal Staff, LSD

[EXHIBIT 9](#)

[EXHIBIT 10](#)

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

10:17:22      None

**Public Comment**

10:17:23      Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

10:17:52      Ronda Wiggers, Montana Well Drillers Association

10:19:14      Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

10:19:21      Rep. Jane Gillette

[EXHIBIT 11](#)

[EXHIBIT 12](#)

[EXHIBIT 13](#)

10:21:55 Derek Oestreicher, Chief Legal Counsel, Montana Family Foundation  
10:25:48 Joel Gaertig, Montana State Firefighters Association  
[EXHIBIT 14](#)  
10:30:28 Adrienne Cotton, Montana Building Industry Association  
10:31:10 Sharron Nason  
[EXHIBIT 15](#)  
10:35:03 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
10:35:16 Joslyn Cahill, Executive Director, Senior Ag Water Rights Alliance  
10:36:06 Raylee Honeycutt, Montana Stockgrowers Association  
10:40:02 Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited  
10:47:07 Andy Shirliff, Montana Building Industry Association  
10:47:46 Kelly Lynch, Executive Director, Montana League of City and Towns (MLCT)  
10:50:23 Karli Johnson, Montana Farm Bureau Federation  
10:52:15 Brian Thompson, Senior Water Rights Coalition  
10:53:16 Ann Hallowell  
10:53:45 Daniel Cox, Montana Association of Realtors  
10:54:23 Walt Sales, Association of Agricultural Irrigators  
10:56:12 Robin Sertell, Montanans for Life

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

11:00:11 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:00:26 Sen. Bob Phalen  
11:00:57 Derek Oestreicher, Montana Family Foundation  
11:01:33 Rep. Tom Millett  
11:01:51 Joel Gaertig, Montana State Firefighters Association  
11:02:27 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**AGENCY INTRODUCTIONS & OVERVIEW OF WATER-RELATED PROGRAMS**

11:03:02 Christy Clark, Director, Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP)  
[EXHIBIT 16](#)  
[EXHIBIT 17](#)  
11:06:23 Sonja Nowakowski, Director, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)  
11:10:44 Lindsey Krywaruchka, Administrator, Water Quality Division, DEQ  
11:14:03 Amanda Kaster, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)  
[EXHIBIT 18](#)  
[EXHIBIT 19](#)  
[EXHIBIT 20](#)  
[EXHIBIT 21](#)  
[EXHIBIT 22](#)

[EXHIBIT 23](#)  
[EXHIBIT 24](#)  
[EXHIBIT 25](#)  
[EXHIBIT 26](#)

**Public Comment**

11:20:31 Ellie Brighton, Montana Stockgrowers Association

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

11:21:56 Rep. Tracy Sharp  
11:22:12 Director Sonja Nowakowski, DEQ  
11:23:16 Lindsey Krywaruchka, DEQ  
11:24:52 Rep. Tom Millett  
11:25:02 Director Amanda Kaster, DNRC  
11:27:27 Rep. Tom Millett  
11:27:40 Director Christy Clark, FWP  
11:28:54 Bill Schenk, Program Manager, Land and Water, FWP  
11:29:42 Rep. Tracy Sharp  
11:29:49 Director Amanda Kaster  
11:31:20 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:31:39 Toni Henneman

11:31:57 **Recessed**

13:00:04 **Reconvened**

**WATER QUALITY NUTRIENT STANDARDS UPDATE (HOUSE BILL 664)**

13:00:15 Lindsey Krywaruchka, Administrator, Water Quality Division, Department of  
Environmental Quality (DEQ)  
16:06:32 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**Public Comment**

13:06:46 Kelly Lynch, Executive Director, Montana League of City and Towns (MLCT)

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

13:08:08 Sen. Bob Phalen  
13:08:47 Lindsey Krywaruchka, DEQ  
13:09:54 Sen. Willis Curdy  
13:10:55 Lindsey Krywaruchka  
13:14:57 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
13:15:12 Director Kelly Lynch, MLCT  
13:18:22 Rep. Jamie Isaly  
13:18:46 Lindsey Krywaruchka  
13:19:54 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

13:20:16 Lindsey Krywaruchka

**WATER RIGHTS ADJUDICATION UPDATE (85-2-281, MCA)**

13:21:23 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, Administrator, Water Resources Division,  
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

[EXHIBIT 27](#)

[EXHIBIT 28](#)

13:24:39 Hon. Stephen Brown, Chief Judge, Montana Water Court

**Public Comment**

13:49:58 Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited

13:54:41 Raylee Honeycutt, Montana Stockgrowers Association

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

13:56:12 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

13:56:21 Hon. Stephen Brown, Montana Water Court

13:58:20 Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

13:58:49 Sen. Willis Curdy

13:59:28 Rep. Tracy Sharp

13:59:34 Hon. Stephen Brown

14:03:22 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC

14:05:32 Rep. Jamie Isaly

14:06:00 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson

14:07:23 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

14:07:29 Hon. Stephen Brown

14:11:48 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

14:12:15 Hon. Stephen Brown

**2025 DROUGHT AND FIRE OUTLOOK**

14:13:53 Michael Downey, Coordinator, Drought Program, Department of Natural  
Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

[EXHIBIT 29](#)

14:30:56 Shawn Thomas, State Forester, DNRC

**Public Comment**

14:35:19 None

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

14:35:42 Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

14:35:49 Shawn Thomas, DNRC

14:37:19 Sen. Willis Curdy

14:38:00 Shawn Thomas

**STREAM GAGE REPORT (2-15-3308, MCA)**

14:39:13 Anna Pakenham Stevenson, Administrator, Water Resources Division, DNRC  
[EXHIBIT 30](#)

**Public Comment**

14:54:30 Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

14:57:06 Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

14:57:17 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC

**MILK RIVER PROJECT – ST. MARY SIPHON UPDATE**

14:59:24 Steve Darlinton, Project Manager, Bureau of Reclamation  
[EXHIBIT 31](#)

**Public Comment**

15:19:28 None

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

15:19:48 Sen. Bob Phalen

15:20:06 Steve Darlinton

15:20:57 Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

15:21:10 Steve Darlinton

15:22:39 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**WATER RESEARCH (85-2-105, MCA)**

15:22:58 John Metesh, State Geologist and Director, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology  
[EXHIBIT 32](#)

**Public Comment**

15:42:51 Rebecca Bosloughking, Montana Association of Conservation Districts

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

15:43:55 Sen. Bob Phalen

15:44:13 Director John Metesh, Bureau of Mines and Geology

15:45:59 Rep. Russ Miner

15:46:27 Director John Metesh

15:46:39 Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

15:47:30 Director John Metesh

15:49:56 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

15:50:22 Director John Metesh

15:51:59 Sen. Bob Phalen

15:52:38 Director John Metesh



15:54:47 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

15:54:58 Director John Metesh

15:55:44 **Recessed**

16:10:21 **Reconvened**

#### **COMMITTEE WORK SESSION**

16:10:55 Sen. Bob Phalen left the meeting during recess.

16:10:29 Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)  
[EXHIBIT 33](#)

#### **COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**

##### **House Joint Resolution 44**

16:12:53 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

16:13:51 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

16:15:01 Rep. Tom Millett

16:15:53 Rep. Russ Miner

16:16:36 Rep. Tracy Sharp

16:16:44 Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

16:17:09 Sen. Willis Curdy

16:17:26 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

16:18:04 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

16:19:15 Toni Henneman, LSD

#### **COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**

##### **House Joint Resolution 74 / Water Storage**

16:19:45 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

16:21:01 Sen. Willis Curdy

16:21:34 Rep. Russ Miner

16:22:09 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

16:22:32 Toni Henneman

#### **COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**

##### **Exempt Wells**

16:22:59 Rep. Russ Miner

16:23:43 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

16:24:08 Toni Henneman

16:25:58 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

16:28:05 Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

16:28:29 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**  
**Shields Valley Water Rights / Enforcement**

16:29:11 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
16:30:24 Sen. Willis Curdy  
16:31:02 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**  
**Federal Changes**

16:31:18 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
16:33:21 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**  
**Water Compact**

16:33:52 Rep. Tracy Sharp  
16:34:23 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
16:34:41 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**  
**House Bill 676 / Land Board**

16:34:55 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
16:35:27 Toni Henneman

**COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**  
**Oversight and Rule Review**

16:35:43 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**  
**Program Evaluation**

16:36:04 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
16:37:10 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**  
**Publications**

16:37:31 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
16:37:55 Toni Henneman  
16:38:32 Rep. Russ Miner  
16:39:11 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
16:40:34 Sen. Willis Curdy

**COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**  
**Data Centers / Artificial Intelligence / Use of Water**

16:46:19 Rep. Tracy Sharp  
16:47:33 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
16:47:40 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

## **COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**

### **Final Approval**

16:50:47 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
16:51:01 Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie  
16:51:41 Rep. Jamie Isaly  
16:52:10 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
16:52:57 Rep. Russ Miner  
16:53:34 Toni Henneman

### **Motion**

16:54:14 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour moved to accept the work plan matrix suggested by the Water Policy Interim Committee.

### **Vote**

16:54:23 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

### **Discussion on the Vote**

16:54:35 Toni Henneman

## **COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**

### **Calendar**

16:54:58 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
16:55:06 Toni Henneman  
16:55:26 Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie  
16:56:00 Rep. Tom Millett  
16:56:14 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
16:56:33 Sen. Willis Curdy  
16:58:21 Rep. Jamie Isaly  
17:00:02 Rep. Tracy Sharp  
17:06:09 Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited

### **Motion**

17:08:53 Rep. Russ Miner moved to accept the proposed meeting dates for the Water Policy Interim Committee.

### **Vote**

17:09:00 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

### **Instructions to Staff**

17:09:15 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
17:09:41 Rep. Tracy Sharp  
17:09:49 Toni Henneman  
17:10:42 Rep. Jamie Isaly

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY ITEM IN WPIC'S SUBJECT MATTER JURISDICTION**

17:12:34      None

**ADJOURNMENT**

Adjournment: 17:12:56