



## **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  
Maddelyn Pennington - Secretary  
Alexis Sandru – Legal Staff

# **WATER POLICY INTERIM COMMITTEE MINUTES LOG**

October 21, 2025  
Capitol Room 317, 137, & Zoom  
Helena, Montana

## **AND**

# **MODERNIZATION AND RISK ANALYSIS COMMITTEE MINUTES LOG**

October 21, 2025  
Capitol Room 317 & 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.

#### **MODERNIZATION AND RISK ANALYSIS COMMITTEE (MARA) MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Rep Llew Jones, Presiding Officer (R)  
Sen. Janet Ellis (D)  
Rep. Brad Barker (R)

Sen. Josh Kassmier (R)  
Rep. Paul Tuss  
Jim Hamilton, Public Member  
Heather O'Loughlin, Public Member  
Jesse Ramos, Public Member

**MARA MEMBERS EXCUSED:**

Sen. Shane Morigeau, Vice Presiding Officer (D)  
Kendall Cotton, Public Member

**MARA MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**MARA STAFF PRESENT:**

Josh Paulette, Lead Fiscal Analyst  
Amy Carlson, Director  
Jennifer Whitt, Secretary  
Julie Johnson, Legal Staff

**WATER POLICY INTERIM COMMITTEE (WPIC) MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**WPIC MEMBERS EXCUSED:**

Sen. Bruce "Butch" Gillespie (R)

**WPIC MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**WPIC STAFF PRESENT:**

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

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

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

**MARA CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

07:59:39 Presiding Officer Llew Jones called the meeting to order at 7:59 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

**WPIC CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

08:00:34 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt called the meeting to order at 8:02 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

## **MEETING OVERVIEW**

08:01:23 Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 26](#)

[EXHIBIT 27](#)

## **REVIEW OF MARA COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES & WATER DATA EXPLORATION**

08:07:11 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

08:07:18 Josh Poulette, Lead Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD)

[EXHIBIT 28](#)

[EXHIBIT 29](#)

[EXHIBIT 30](#)

[EXHIBIT 31](#)

08:21:23 Presiding Officer Llew Jones

08:25:10 Josh Poulette, LFD

08:26:02 Barb Wagner, LFD

(See Exhibit 28)

## **Committee Questions / Discussion**

08:31:33 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

08:31:42 Josh Poulette, LFD

08:32:57 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

08:33:00 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

08:34:53 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

08:35:44 Sen. Willis Curdy

08:36:16 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

08:36:18 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour

08:37:35 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

08:37:45 Toni Henneman, LSD

## **MONTANA WATER POLICY 101**

08:38:33 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

08:39:31 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, Water Resources Division Administrator,  
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

[EXHIBIT 32](#)

08:44:19 Kendall Cotton joined the meeting

## **Public Comment**

09:11:20 None

## **Committee Questions / Discussion**

09:11:40 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

09:11:47 Kendall Cotton

09:13:16 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 09:18:29 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 09:18:33 Rep. Paul Tuss  
 09:19:08 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 09:22:20 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 09:22:25 Rep. Tracy Sharp  
 09:23:01 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 09:24:38 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 09:24:42 Heather O'Loughlin  
 09:25:22 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 09:27:50 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 09:28:07 Presiding Officer Llew Jones  
 09:28:44 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 09:28:47 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 09:29:03 Josh Poulette, Lead Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD)  
  
 09:29:32 **Recessed**  
 09:37:48 **Reconvened**

## **2023-24 COMPREHENSIVE WATER WORKING GROUP PANEL DISCUSSION**

09:37:56 Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)  
[EXHIBIT 33](#)  
 09:39:29 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 09:39:34 Kelly Lynch, Montana League of Cities and Towns  
 09:48:51 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 09:48:58 Andrew Gorder, Clark Fork Coalition  
 09:55:23 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 09:55:27 Nicole Rolf, Montana Farm Bureau Federation  
 10:03:02 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 10:03:04 Raylee Honeycutt, Montana Stockgrowers Association  
 10:03:44 Vice Presiding Officer Shane Morigeau joined online.  
 10:09:30 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 10:09:33 Julie Merritt, Water Right Consultant, WGM Group  
 10:13:49 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 10:13:53 Ronda Wiggers, Montana Water Well Drillers Association

## **Public Comment**

10:25:08 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 10:25:27 John Tubbs, Upper Missouri Waterkeeper  
 10:29:38 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 10:29:45 Adrienne Cotton, Montana Building Industry Association

10:31:24 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
10:31:29 Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

10:39:15 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
10:39:33 Presiding Officer Llew Jones  
10:40:00 Ronda Wiggers, Montana Water Well Drillers Association  
10:41:44 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
10:41:46 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
10:42:25 Kelly Lynch, Montana League of Cities and Towns  
10:46:00 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
10:46:15 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, Water Resources Division Administrator,  
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)  
10:51:52 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
10:51:57 Kendall Cotton  
10:53:10 Ronda Wiggers, Montana Water Well Drillers Association  
10:54:00 Julie Merritt, WGM Group  
10:55:11 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
10:55:15 Jim Hamilton  
10:55:53 Kelly Lynch, Montana League of Cities and Towns  
10:57:44 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
10:57:45 Sen. Janet Ellis  
10:58:25 Raylee Honeycutt, Montana Stockgrowers Association  
10:59:29 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
10:59:34 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
10:59:47 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
[EXHIBIT 34](#)  
[EXHIBIT 35](#)  
11:05:56 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:06:00 Sen. Willis Curdy  
11:06:40 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
(See Exhibit 34)  
(See Exhibit 35)  
11:15:12 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:15:51 Ronda Wiggers, Montana Water Well Drillers Association  
11:17:13 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:17:49 Julie Merritt, WGM Group  
11:19:33 Raylee Honeycutt, Montana Stockgrowers Association  
11:21:47 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:21:48 Nicole Rolf, Montana Farm Bureau Federation

11:23:03 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:23:06 Andrew Gorder, Clark Fork Coalition  
11:25:30 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:25:32 Kelly Lynch, Montana League of Cities and Towns  
11:26:41 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

#### **EXISTING WATER WELL MITIGATION DISCUSSION**

11:28:31 Jake Mohrmann, Water Sciences Bureau Chief, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

[EXHIBIT 36](#)

#### **Public Comment**

11:40:47 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:41:00 Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited  
11:46:11 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:46:16 Julie Merritt, Water Right Consultant, WGM Group  
11:49:18 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:49:25 Raylee Honeycutt, Montana Stockgrowers Association  
11:50:11 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:50:17 John Tubbs, Upper Missouri Water Keeper

#### **Committee Questions / Discussion**

11:56:08 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:56:29 Heather O'Loughlin  
11:57:25 Jake Mohrmann, Water DNRC

#### **Committee Discussion on Remaining Agenda Schedule**

11:58:40 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:58:54 Presiding Officer Llew Jones  
11:59:11 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
11:59:23 Toni Henneman, LSD

11:59:41 **Recessed**

13:14:19 **Reconvened**

13:14:20 For the remainder of the WPIC meeting, WPIC members moved to Room 137. MARA committee members remained in 317 for their individual committee meeting.

#### **2025 EXEMPT WELL BILL REVIEW**

13:14:29 Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 37](#)

#### **Committee Questions / Discussion**

13:33:20 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:33:22 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
13:33:32 Toni Henneman, LSD

**2025 EXEMPT WELL BILL REVIEW - Continued**

13:33:46 Toni Henneman, LSD  
(See Exhibit 36)

**Public Comment**

13:35:32 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:36:01 Kelly Lynch, Montana League of City and Towns  
13:36:19 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:36:25 Jocelyn Cahill, Senior Ag Water Rights Alliance (SAWRA)  
13:37:20 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:37:34 Nicole Rolf, Montana Farm Bureau Federation  
13:38:36 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:38:52 Rep. Kenneth Walsh, House District 69

**Committee Questions / Discussion**

13:41:01 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:41:18 Rep. Jamie Isaly  
13:41:30 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, Water Resources Division Administrator,  
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)  
[EXHIBIT 38](#)  
13:42:40 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:42:43 Rep. Russ Miner  
13:42:55 Kelly Lynch, Montana League of City and Towns  
13:43:39 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:43:46 Kelly Lynch, Montana League of City and Towns  
13:44:27 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:44:30 Rep. Russ Miner  
13:44:39 Nicole Rolf, Montana Farm Bureau Federation  
[EXHIBIT 39](#)  
13:47:20 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:47:27 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
13:52:42 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
13:52:48 Toni Henneman, LSD  
13:52:51 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
13:53:00 Rep. Jamie Isaly  
13:53:15 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
13:54:33 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

13:54:34 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
 13:55:06 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 14:00:43 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:00:45 Sen. Willis Curdy  
 14:02:25 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 14:04:25 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:04:41 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 14:07:00 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:07:15 Ronda Wiggers, Montana Water Well Drillers Association  
 14:08:18 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:08:22 Sen. Willis Curdy  
 14:09:16 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC

#### **IDENTIFICATION OF EXEMPT WELL STUDY FOCUS**

14:09:27 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:09:49 Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)  
[EXHIBIT 40](#)

#### **Committee Questions / Discussion**

14:12:33 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:12:35 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
 14:14:15 Toni Henneman, LSD  
 14:15:04 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:15:35 Rep. Tracy Sharp  
 14:16:23 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:16:48 Sen. Willis Curdy  
 14:17:47 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:17:48 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
 14:20:01 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:20:54 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, Water Resources Division Administrator,  
 Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)  
 14:21:54 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:22:25 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
 14:23:30 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:24:09 Toni Henneman, LSD  
 14:24:37 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:25:14 Sen. Willis Curdy  
 14:26:05 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:26:05 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 14:26:40 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:26:53 Julie Merritt, Water Right Consultant, WGM Group

14:28:01 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:28:09 Rep. Tracy Sharp  
 14:28:52 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:29:15 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 14:30:09 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:30:10 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
 14:30:24 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 14:30:50 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:31:09 Toni Henneman, LSD  
 14:31:35 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:31:37 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
 14:31:58 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:32:01 Sen. Willis Curdy  
 14:32:47 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:33:20 Ronda Wiggers, Montana Water Well Drillers Association  
 14:35:28 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:35:35 Dr. Anna Pakenham Stevenson, DNRC  
 14:36:20 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:36:38 Toni Henneman, LSD  
 14:39:03 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:39:38 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
 14:40:12 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:42:43 Toni Henneman, LSD

#### **Public Comment**

14:43:05 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:43:25 Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited  
 14:52:19 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:52:28 Kelly Lynch, Montana League of Cities and Towns

#### **Committee Questions / Discussion**

14:53:58 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:54:28 Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited  
 14:57:10 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
 14:57:15 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
 14:57:41 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

#### **WATER RIGHT ENFORCEMENT AND REGULATION**

##### **Legal Memo and Enforcement Overview**

14:57:57 Alexis Sandru, Legal Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)  
[EXHIBIT 41](#)

## **Review Of Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Processes**

14:59:19 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
14:59:55 Todd Netto, Water Adjudication, Enforcement, & Distribution Bureau Chief,  
DNRC  
[EXHIBIT 42](#)

## **Public Comment**

15:09:55 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:10:08 Clayton Elliott, Montana Trout Unlimited  
15:15:00 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:15:08 Ronda Wiggers, Montana Water Well Drillers Association  
15:16:13 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:16:23 Ross Salmond, Choteau  
15:17:58 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:18:09 Karli Johnson, Montana Farm Bureau Federation  
15:20:24 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:20:28 Raylee Honeycutt, Montana Stockgrowers Association  
15:22:20 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:22:26 Jocelyn Cahill, Senior Ag Water Rights Alliance (SAWRA)

## **Committee Questions / Discussion**

15:23:26 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

## **COMMITTEE WORK SESSION**

### **Adopt Final Work Plan**

15:24:35 Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)  
([See Exhibit 2](#))  
([See Exhibit 3](#))

## **Committee Questions / Discussion**

15:28:18 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:28:44 Toni Henneman, LSD  
15:29:15 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:29:26 Sen. Willis Curdy  
15:29:47 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:29:48 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
15:30:13 Toni Henneman, LSD  
15:31:24 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:31:27 Rep. Jamie Isaly  
15:31:42 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:32:11 Rep. Tracy Sharp

15:32:23 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:32:27 Toni Henneman, LSD  
15:33:03 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:33:04 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour  
15:33:50 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:34:14 Toni Henneman, LSD  
15:34:36 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**Motion**

15:34:42 Vice Presiding Officer Jill Cohenour moved to adopt the committee work plan.

**Discussion on the Motion**

15:34:49 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:34:57 Rep. Tom Millett  
15:35:39 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:37:46 Toni Henneman, LSD

**Vote**

15:40:33 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

**Confirm Committee Dates**

15:40:59 Toni Henneman, LSD  
(See Exhibit 1)  
15:43:12 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:43:26 Toni Henneman, LSD  
15:43:32 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:43:36 Rep. Jamie Isaly  
15:43:40 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:43:41 Sen. Willis Curdy  
15:44:48 Toni Henneman, LSD  
15:47:09 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

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

15:47:38 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt  
15:47:58 T. Alastair McLain  
15:49:01 Presiding Officer Wylie Galt

**ADJOURNMENT**

Adjournment: 15:49:17