



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

Christian Bray
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

May 13, 2026
Room 317 & Zoom
Helena, Montana

Minutes logs provide an annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of a meeting and the time at which a topic is presented or discussed, a motion made, or a vote taken. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion in the video. The minutes log is only a guide to the video of the meeting. The official record of the meeting is the video. Minutes logs can be accessed at <https://committees.legmt.gov> and videos can be accessed at <https://media.legmt.gov>.

For more information, please contact:

The Legislative Services Division at 406-444-3064 for policy committees;
The Legislative Fiscal Division at 406-444-2986 for fiscal committees; or
The Legislative Audit Division at 406-444-3122 for the Legislative Audit Committee.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Paul Fielder, Presiding Officer (R)
Sen. Willis Curdy, Vice Presiding Officer (D)
Christian Bray, Public Member
Sen. John Esp (R)
Sen. Pat Flowers (D)
Rep. Tom France (D)
Sen. Wylie Galt (R)
Rep. Steve Gist (R)
Rep. Jedediah Hinkle (R)
Jim Keane, Public Member
Sen. Forrest Mandeville (R)
Rep. Shannon Maness (R)
Mike Mershon, Public Member
Jon Metropoulos, Public Member
Rep. Joshua Seckinger (D)
Sen. Tony Tezak (R)
Brian Yablonski, Public Member

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Joseph Carroll, Legal Staff
Jason Mohr, Legislative Environmental Analyst

MONTANA LEGISLATIVE BRANCH MANAGEMENT: JERRY HOWE, LEGISLATIVE SERVICES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR • ANGUS MACIVER, LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR • AMY CARLSON, LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ANALYST • TODD EVERTS, LEGAL SERVICES DIRECTOR • DALE GOW, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER • RACHEL WEISS, RESEARCH DIRECTOR • ANGIE CARTER, FINANCIAL OFFICE DIRECTOR • KELLY DASILVA HR DIRECTOR

Jacelyn Sterling, Secretary

AGENDA

VISITOR'S LIST

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

08:01:08 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

LEGAL STATUS OF "CORNER CROSSING"

08:02:25 Kristen Juras, Lieutenant Governor

[EXHIBIT 1](#)

[EXHIBIT 2](#)

Public Comment

08:33:27 Mike Volesky, former EQC member

08:40:32 Eric Vilen, Helena

08:42:35 Karli Johnson, Montana Farm Bureau Federation

08:45:03 Raylee Honeycutt, Montana Stock Growers Association

08:48:05 Ryan Callaghan, President, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

08:50:32 R. T. Cox

[EXHIBIT 3](#)

Committee Discussion / Questions

08:56:15 Rep. Steve Gist

08:58:09 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

08:58:53 Rep. Steve Gist

08:59:04 Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras

09:00:11 Jim Keane left the meeting.

09:00:30 Mike Mershon

09:02:38 Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras

09:03:57 Rep. Shannon Maness

09:04:58 Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras

09:06:30 Sen. Forrest Mandeville

09:08:23 Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras

09:09:40 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle

09:11:21 Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras

09:16:26 Rep. Joshua Seckinger

09:17:51 Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras

09:18:01 Rep. Steve Gist

09:18:44 Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras

09:19:03 Sen. Pat Flowers
09:21:08 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
09:21:36 Vice Chair Willis Curdy
09:22:52 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PARKS (FWP) ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

09:24:00 Christy Clark, Director, FWP
09:31:25 Brian Gootkin, Special Advisor to Director, FWP
09:43:49 Dir. Christy Clark, FWP

Public Comment

09:44:27 None

Committee Discussion / Questions

09:44:48 Rep. Tom France
09:45:56 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
09:47:16 Dir. Christy Clark, FWP
09:47:52 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
09:49:07 Sen. Pat Flowers
09:50:20 Dir. Christy Clark, FWP
09:52:02 Sen. Pat Flowers

09:52:19 **Recessed**

10:00:16 **Reconvened**

DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

10:01:21 Sonja Nowakowski, Director, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
10:14:25 Amanda Kaster, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
10:28:51 Christy Clark, Director, Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP)

[EXHIBIT 4](#)

[EXHIBIT 5](#)

[EXHIBIT 6](#)

Public Comment & Committee Questions / Discussion

10:48:00 Derf Johnson, Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC)
10:56:05 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
10:57:35 Jon Metropoulos
10:57:55 Derf Johnson, MEIC
10:58:36 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
10:58:42 Dir. Christy Clark, FWP

10:59:32 Rep. Tom France
11:00:20 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
11:00:31 Sen. Wylie Galt
11:00:54 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
11:03:22 Derf Johnson, MEIC
11:04:11 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
11:05:05 Rep. Steve Gist
11:05:28 Rep. Shannon Maness
11:05:46 Matt Hall, Fire Protection Bureau Chief, DNRC
11:06:21 Rep. Shannon Maness
11:06:51 Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
11:07:11 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
11:09:16 Adam Strainer, FWP
11:10:30 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
11:11:53 Rep. Tom France
11:12:47 Dir. Sonja Nowakowski, DEQ
11:14:31 Rep. Tom France
11:15:37 Dir. Amanda Kaster, DNRC
11:16:38 Sen. Pat Flowers
11:17:15 Dir. Amanda Kaster, DNRC
11:17:40 Sen. Pat Flowers
11:18:53 Matt Hall, DNRC
11:19:05 Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
11:21:10 Dir. Amanda Kaster, DNRC
11:21:52 Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
11:25:44 Dir. Amanda Kaster, DNRC
11:25:51 Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
11:26:27 Dir. Sonja Nowakowski, DEQ
11:27:08 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
11:27:17 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
11:28:10 Dir. Christy Clark, FWP
11:28:45 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
11:29:00 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
11:31:07 Rep. Steve Gist
11:31:24 Dir. Amanda Kaster, DNRC

ELK MANAGEMENT IN NORTHWEST MONTANA

11:32:22 Neil Anderson, Regional Wildlife Manager

[EXHIBIT 7](#)

Public Comment

11:49:00 None

Committee Questions / Discussion

11:49:15 Sen. Pat Flowers
11:52:28 Neil Anderson
11:53:21 Mike Mershon
11:55:14 Chris Hansen, Research Biologist, FWP
11:56:48 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
11:57:41 Neil Anderson
12:00:09 Quentin Kujala, Chief of Conservation Policy, FWP
12:02:02 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
12:02:56 Neil Anderson
12:05:18 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
12:06:38 Neil Anderson
12:07:17 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
12:08:48 Quentin Kujala, FWP
12:09:12 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
12:10:34 Rep. Shannon Maness
12:11:18 Neil Anderson
12:12:42 Rep. Shannon Maness
12:12:54 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
12:13:57 Neil Anderson
12:15:28 Rep. Tom France
12:16:02 Neil Anderson
12:17:39 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

MULE DEER MANAGEMENT

12:18:27 Brian Wakeling, Game Management Bureau Chief, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP)

[EXHIBIT 8](#)

12:28:52 Nick DeCesare, Research Biologist, FWP
12:34:17 Sen. Flowers left the meeting.

Public Comment

12:38:21 Eric Vilen, Helena
12:42:15 Mark Cooke, Wolves of the Rockies

Committee Discussion / Questions

12:43:29 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
12:45:28 Brain Wakeling, FWP

12:48:10 Rep. Jedediah Hinkle
12:48:28 Brian Wakeling, FWP
12:48:57 Mike Mershon
12:50:00 Brian Wakeling, FWP
12:51:59 Rep. Tom France
12:52:40 Brian Wakeling, FWP

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK SESSION

12:55:15 Jason Mohr, Legislative Environmental Analyst, Legislative Service Division (LSD)
12:58:30 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
12:58:44 Jason Mohr, LSD
12:59:00 Sen. John Esp
12:59:18 Rep. Tom France
13:00:21 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
13:01:17 Sen. John Esp
13:01:35 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
13:02:03 Jason Mohr, LSD
13:02:34 Vice Presiding Officer Willis Curdy
13:03:25 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
13:03:41 Jason Mohr, LSD
13:04:02 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
13:04:12 Rep. Joshua Seckinger
13:04:51 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder
13:05:36 Sen. John Esp
13:06:03 Rep. Steve Gist
13:06:52 Sen. Mandeville left the meeting.
13:07:04 Presiding Officer Paul Fielder

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 13:07:47