



Water Policy Interim Committee

69th Montana Legislature

PO BOX 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706
(406) 444-3064
FAX (406) 444-3036

SENATE MEMBERS

WILLIS CURDY
WYLIE GALT – Chair
BRUCE “BUTCH” GILLESPIE
BOB PHALEN

HOUSE MEMBERS

JILL COHENOUR – Vice Chair
JAMIE ISALY
TOM MILLETT
RUSS MINER
TRACY SHARP

COMMITTEE STAFF

TONI HENNEMAN, Lead Staff
ALEXIS SANDRU, Legal Staff
MADDELYN PENNINGTON, Secretary

May 11, 2026

Legislative Council
1301 East 6th Ave
Helena MT 59620

Presiding Officer Bogner and Executive Director Howe:

The Water Policy Interim Committee (WPIC) often conducts at least one field trip or travel meeting during the interim. This interim, the committee had intended to travel in July 2026. The committee decided against a travel meeting, however, after learning that Legislative Council policy does not allow for remote public testimony at a travel meeting.

Travel meetings are a great opportunity for committee members to see policy decisions in action and learn more about the geography, history, economy, social dynamics, and unique circumstances across the state. Members gain a better understanding of Montana life outside of their respective districts, thus helping state legislators become more well-rounded decision makers.

The Water Policy Interim Committee is currently engaged in a study of exempt groundwater wells, a topic affecting many citizens. For this reason, the committee's work plan requires multiple opportunities for the public to provide comment throughout the interim, especially in the next few meetings as WPIC considers draft legislation. Increased public input will create a more well-developed bill for introduction to the 70th Legislative Session. The committee decided not to travel in July due to concern that not allowing remote testimony at a travel meeting will restrict important public input on this statewide issue.

The Water Policy Interim Committee requests that the Legislative Council revisit discussions regarding the interim travel meeting policy, and reconsider allowing remote testimony at all interim meetings, regardless of whether a meeting is held at the Capitol or at a remote location. The committee recognizes that travel meetings may present challenges such as access to technological needs. However, most areas of the state now have locations with high-speed internet and video and audio recording capabilities, providing interim committees appropriate options for travel meetings with remote testimony.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wylie Galt".

Sen. Wylie Galt, Presiding Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Cohenour".

Rep. Jill Cohenour, Vice Presiding Officer