



Water Policy Interim Committee

69th Montana Legislature

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MADDELYN PENNINGTON, Secretary

AGENDA

Water Policy Interim Committee

March 26 & 27, 2026

State Capitol Building, Room 154

Agenda times are approximate.

Thursday, March 26th

- 9:00 am** **Call to Order & Roll Call** – Sen. Wylie Galt, Presiding Officer
- 9:05 am** **Meeting Overview** – Toni Henneman, Lead Staff
- 9:10 am** **Member Topic: Exempt Groundwater Wells**
- Litigation update – Alexis Sandru, Legal Staff
 - Presentation of stakeholder policy options
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 11:00 am** **Committee Work Session**
- Consideration of potential draft legislation related to exempt groundwater wells
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 11:15 am** **Required Report: Appropriation rights changed to streamflow, FWP ([85-2-436](#), MCA)**
- Bill Schenk – Land and Water Unit Manager, Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 11:45 am** **Rule Review**
- Rule Review memo – Alexis Sandru
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 12:00 pm** **LUNCH**

- 1:00 pm** **2026 Drought Outlook**
- Michael Downey, Drought Program Coordinator, DNRC
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 1:30 pm** **Review water data, measuring systems, and recent research**
- Montana Climate Office: Mesonet – Kelsey Jencso, State Climatologist
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA): Snow Survey Program – Florence Miller, Hydrologist
 - Water storage related studies: MSU Water Center – Stephanie Ewing, Director
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 3:00 pm** **HJ 74 Study: Water Reuse and Storage**
- Allowable uses of reclaimed wastewater review – Toni Henneman
 - Panel Discussion: Implementing a Water Reuse System in MT
 - Rich Chandler – Lone Mountain Land Company
 - Johnny O’Connor – Big Sky Water & Sewer District
 - Scott Buecker – AE2S engineering
 - Pat Byorth – Trout Unlimited
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 4:30 pm** **Committee Work Session**
- Review and suggest next steps for any topic on March 26 agenda
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 4:45 pm** **Public comment** on any item in WPIC’s subject matter jurisdiction
- 5:00 pm** **Recess**

Friday, March 27th

- 9:00 am** **Call to order** – Sen. Wylie Galt, Presiding Officer
- 9:05 am** **Montana Water 201: Deeper Dive into the Role of the Judiciary in Montana Water Management**
- Hon. Stephen Brown – Chief Judge, Montana Water Court
 - Ben Sudduth – Montana Water Bar
 - Diana Abbott – Montana Water Bar
 - Todd Netto – Water Adjudication, Enforcement & Distribution Bureau Chief, DNRC
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion

- 10:00 am** **Water Rights Adjudication Update** ([85-2-281](#), MCA)
- Todd Netto – Water Adjudication, Enforcement & Distribution Bureau Chief, DNRC
 - Hon. Stephen Brown – Chief Judge, Montana Water Court
 - Review draft legislation (PD1-WC) – Toni Henneman
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 10:45 am** **Agency Update & Monitoring**
- Federal funding update – Josh Poulette, Legislative Services Division
 - Department of Environmental Quality – Sonja Nowakowski, Director
 - Department of Natural Resources and Conservation – Amanda Kaster, Director
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 11:45 am** **Required Report: US Forest Service Compact – state water reservation applications**
([85-20-1401](#), MCA)
- Maya Rao – Compact Implementation Program Hydrologist, DNRC
 - Public Comment
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 12:00 pm** **Committee Work Session**
- Review and suggest next steps for any topic on agenda
 - Review committee timeline and preview May agenda
 - Legislative Days reminder: June 25-26
 - Committee questions, discussion
- 12:30 pm** **Public comment** on any item in WPIC’s subject matter jurisdiction
- 12:45 pm** **Adjourn**

Public Participation

The public may attend the meeting and offer public comment in the Capitol or provide public comment either using remote meeting technology or in writing.

To offer public comment via remote meeting technology, please submit the online form for remote participation at least 2 hours before the scheduled start of the meeting: <https://participate.legmt.gov/>.

Written public comment may be submitted either through the [online form](#) for written comment or by mailing the comments to the Water Policy Interim Committee, PO Box 201706, Helena, MT 59620.

**Public comment provided in person or remotely at a legislative meeting is a public record that is videotaped, archived, and available on the internet. Public comment submitted in writing at a meeting is a public record that will be posted to the legislative website as part of the minutes log for the meeting.*

Accessibility

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