

# Down to Earth

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It's your right, our mission.



NEWS FROM THE MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CENTER



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**Hundreds Across the State Speak Out for Climate Solutions, page 3**

# Smith River Mine: Exploration Plans Cancelled, Mining is Next

by Derf Johnson

The Smith River may have received a temporary reprieve from the threat of a reckless copper mine exploration project at its headwaters, but the backers now say they will seek to develop a full-scale mine at the same site. As a result of a lawsuit filed in state district court by MEIC and Earthworks, Tintina Resources, Inc., a Vancouver, Canada-based

*The Smith River.  
Photo by Billy  
Pfeiffer.*



mining start-up, recently cancelled its plans for an 18-foot tall by 18-foot wide, and mile long, exploration tunnel. At the same time, Tintina announced that it would be seeking an operating permit to begin actual mining.

A full-scale copper mine poses a very serious threat to the water quality and quantity of the Smith River. Sheep Creek, where

the mine would be located, is an essential spawning ground for the trout in the Smith River basin and the Missouri River. Over 50% of the tributary spawning in the Smith River occurs in the Sheep Creek drainage, and it is an essential source of in-stream flows for an already over-stressed watershed.

The proposed mine is particularly threatening to water quality because Tintina will have to mine through an ore body that contains high concentrations of sulfide minerals. When sulfide is exposed to air and water it reacts to form sulfuric acid, resulting in what is known as acid mine drainage. Acid mine drainage is highly toxic to fish and other aquatic life, and Montana has several legacy mining sites that will continue to pollute rivers and streams for centuries to come.

MEIC and Earthworks recently launched [www.SaveOurSmith.com](http://www.SaveOurSmith.com), an informational website on the Smith River Mine. The website also contains a petition that will send a message to Montana governor Steve Bullock and Montana Department of Environmental Quality director Tracy Stone-Manning, asking them to protect the cherished Smith River from this mine. 

## Contact Gov. Bullock and DEQ Director Stone-Manning

Visit [www.SaveOurSmith.com](http://www.SaveOurSmith.com), and sign the petition (wording below), asking them to Save Our Smith!

*I am joining with others who are concerned about Tintina Resources' proposal to develop a large copper and silver mine in the headwaters of our cherished Smith River. The Smith River is renowned for its spectacular scenery, towering limestone canyons, and blue-ribbon trout fishery, and it's an economic engine for the region – generating \$1.2 in annual revenue from these activities.*

*Tintina has signaled that it is interested in seeking a full-scale mine operating permit from the Department of Environmental Quality. This puts the headwaters at risk from arsenic, acid mine drainage, and dewatering.*

*The Montana Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the right to a clean and healthful environment is fundamental and is intended to be preventative and anticipatory. I implore you to uphold that right, and safeguard the Smith River watershed by not issuing a mining permit to Tintina.*

# Montanans Demand Climate Solutions

by Anne Hedges

On April 26th, despite bad weather, over 1,500 Montanans gathered in 13 communities across the state to show strong support for solutions to climate change. The rallies and events, entitled Montanans for Climate Solutions, were held from Red Lodge to Whitefish and from Pablo to Lame Deer. At all of them Montanans showed up to ask their political leaders to support efforts to reduce carbon pollution from power plants, and to increase reliance on energy efficiency and renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.

The events were sponsored by 87 businesses and organizations including the Bridger Bowl ski resort, solar companies, and organizations representing Native Americans, clean energy, outdoor recreation, faith, sportsmen, conservation, agriculture, women, human rights, elders, students, education, and more. The diverse sponsorship list demonstrates the breadth of Montanans' desire for meaningful action on climate change.

A wide array of speakers discussed their commitment to clean energy and climate solutions. Speakers included clean energy business representatives, federal elected officials (including U.S. Senator John Walsh

and spokespeople for U.S. Senator Jon Tester), and state and local elected officials such as Montana state senator Dave Wanzenreid, Bozeman deputy mayor Carson Taylor, and Helena city commissioner Andres Halladay.

The events were as inspiring as they were unique. Montanans care about solving the climate crisis. Even an opposition group, called Count on Coal Montana, felt compelled to issue a press release admitting: "There is no doubt we need to get serious about climate change." Of course, unlike rally speakers across the state, Count on Coal Montana offers no solutions, only roadblocks. But sometimes admitting there is a problem is half the battle. 🌱

## Sign Our Climate Solutions Petition Today!

Hundreds of signatures were collected at the statewide rallies and events on a petition asking Montana elected officials to support climate solutions. To add your name to the list of people who support switching from highly polluting fossil fuels to clean energy, visit <http://meic.org/get-involved/petition-climate-action/>.

Cover Photos by:  
Amy Cilimburg  
(Missoula), Jerry Cole  
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Deer), Steve Thompson  
(Whitefish),  
and Molly Severtson  
(Helena).



Photos by Jerry Cole, Molly Severtson, and Alexis Bonogofsky.



# MEIC Wins; Attorney General Releases Documents

by Jim Jensen

Montana attorney general Tim Fox has agreed to release documents and pay MEIC's attorney's fees and court costs in a lawsuit related to his opposition to new federal regulations aimed at protecting ground water on federal lands from fracking for oil and gas. Fox agreed to MEIC's request on the eve of a hearing on MEIC's suit in state district court. The records were sought under Montana's public records law and the State Constitution's right of the public to examine government documents.

In August 2013 Fox wrote a letter, along with the attorneys general of four other states, challenging the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's authority to promulgate such regulations. MEIC wanted to know what facts or political pressure caused him to come to the conclusion that protecting water on federal lands was illegal or bad policy.

Fox did not respond to the records request until MEIC hired Helena lawyer Kim Wilson, a public records and open meetings authority, to write on its behalf. After several delays, Fox's offices released heavily blacked-out memos and e-mails. After further complaints by MEIC, Fox then withdrew some of the redactions, but not all of them.

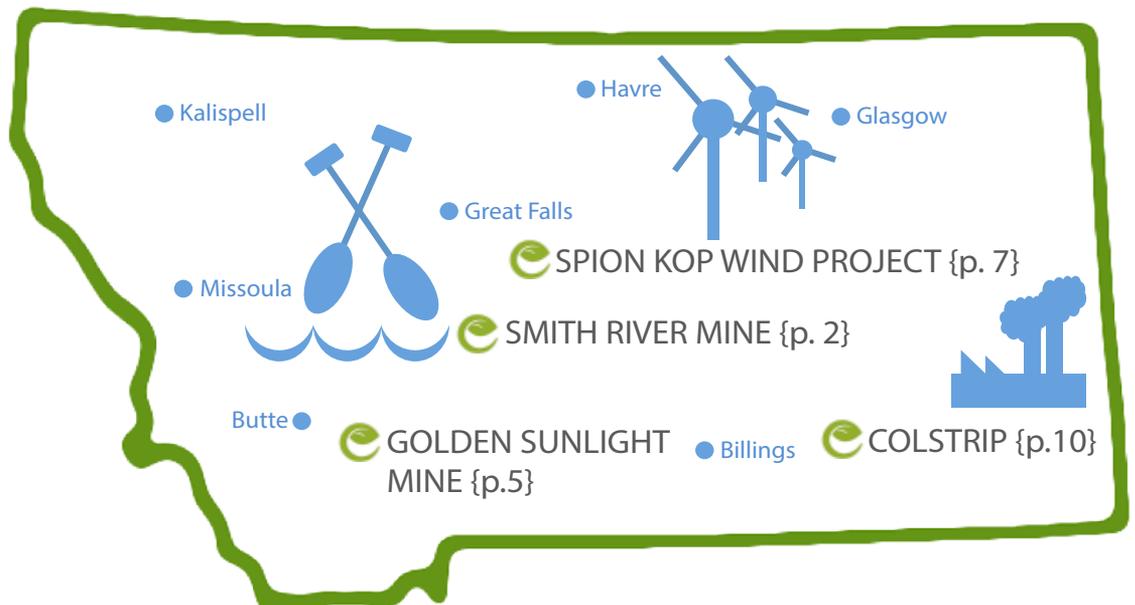
Because the Constitution only allows an agency to keep information secret when the right to privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure, MEIC sued Fox in February 2014. MEIC's position was that there could be no privacy interest when a public official or employee was involved in purely public activities.

Montana law, and the State's Constitution, is clear on the right of citizens to examine public documents, and the Montana Supreme Court has generally stated its strong agreement. It appears that Fox finally realized he was defending a losing position when he chose not to go before a judge. ☺



Montana attorney general Tim Fox.

## Stories from around the state...



# MEIC Challenges New Pit Permit at Golden Sunlight Mine

by Jim Jensen

**M**EIC filed suit in April 2014 against the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), claiming that the agency's decision to permit a new open pit at the Golden Sunlight mine without requiring the new pit to be backfilled after mining violated the Montana Constitution's requirement that all mined lands be reclaimed. The Constitution's wording is clear: "All lands disturbed by the taking of natural resources shall be reclaimed."

In 1992, in an earlier suit that MEIC brought against the State over Golden Sunlight's reclamation plan for its original pit, Helena district judge Thomas Honzel ruled: "The constitutional provisions at issue here are not merely advisory. They mean something." Just what the words mean may be determined by the outcome of this new lawsuit.

At the new pit, called the North Pit, the company proposes to mine 9.2 million tons of rock. In the environmental impact statement prepared by DEQ, the agency declared that its preferred alternative was to leave the pit open after mining in case the perpetual water pollution treatment system failed in the future. According to the MEIC, however, that logic means that no mine will ever be reclaimed since the mine companies and DEQ will always use that "logic" to avoid backfilling.

Golden Sunlight started open-pit mining in 1982 at the site near Whitehall on the south end of Bull Mountain, just north of the Jefferson River. Problems arose almost immediately when in 1983 the mine leaked 19 million gallons of cyanide-laced water into the ground water, threatening the Jefferson River. The ground water has not, to this day, been cleaned up. Instead the State has allowed the mine to buy out neighbors whose water was poisoned, and to expand the mine's overall boundary to include the contaminated area, thereby avoiding an enforcement action.



*Golden Sunlight mine.*

The company had at least seven significant releases of cyanide between 1982 and 1998, some of which it failed to report to DEQ for weeks or months.

The mine also created a serious problem for itself when in 1994 waste rock placed above the massive mill caused the ground under the mill to move, requiring a shutdown of operations while the waste rock was moved to a different location.

Because the mine was in operation at the time Montanans banned cyanide leach gold mining at open pit mines in 1998 by passing the MEIC-sponsored Initiative 137, Golden Sunlight has been able to continue to conduct this type of mining. It is the only remaining cyanide leaching mine in the state. ☺

# EPA to Release Carbon Pollution Rules

by Anne Hedges

When U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator Gina McCarthy was on **The Daily Show with Jon Stewart** in late April 2014, she said her top priority as administrator was dealing with climate change. Electric power production is the nation's leading cause of the carbon dioxide pollution that is the principal cause of climate change.

*“Ultimately the outcome will eventually be the same – essential reductions in carbon pollution. The only real question is whether plant owners will continue to be a part of the problem or part of the solution.”*

McCarthy's commitment to solving the climate crisis will be tested on June 2, 2014, when EPA releases the first-ever proposal to reduce

carbon pollution from existing power plants. In Montana 56% of energy-related carbon pollution comes from electricity generation, and most of that pollution is from the Colstrip coal-fired power plant. Nationally 36% of carbon dioxide from energy production comes from electricity production. Tackling carbon pollution from power plants is a critical step in addressing climate change.

That's why Administrator McCarthy's commitment to climate change means she will have to require carbon pollution reductions from existing power plants such as Colstrip, which emits around 15 million tons of carbon dioxide each year. It is the largest carbon dioxide polluter in the northwestern United States and one of the largest in the entire country. Like all coal-fired power plants, Colstrip currently is not required to control any of its carbon pollution. EPA's rule should change that.

It is possible that no rule in the history of EPA will be as controversial. It is also possible that no rule in the history of EPA will be as important. Doctors, scientists, large and small businesses, agricultural producers, sportsmen and women, veterans, winter sports enthusiasts and more, are gearing up to support EPA's efforts. However, the fossil fuel industry, fueled

by the Koch brothers and their Tea Party allies, are also preparing for what is likely to be an unprecedented battle.

This carbon pollution rule is different from previous air pollution rules. In this instance the law does not require reductions at the stack. Instead, EPA can allow flexibility in how each power plant reduces overall carbon pollution. It is quite possible EPA will allow plant owners to prove they are offsetting their emissions through increased reliance on renewable energy and energy efficiency. Verifiable on-site and off-site pollution reductions could be good for consumers and the environment. In the past year the solar energy industry has enjoyed its biggest growth period in history and its costs have plummeted (see article on page 8). The wind industry is currently cost-competitive with coal-fired electricity. And for NorthWestern Energy, Montana's largest utility, the cheapest power supply comes from energy efficiency measures, followed closely by wind energy. Fossil fuel plants like Colstrip, and waste coal and petroleum plants, are consistently NorthWestern Energy's most expensive energy resources.

When EPA releases its carbon pollution rule in June, power plant owners such as NorthWestern will have two options for responding. They can ignore the science and the deadly toll of carbon pollution and fight the proposal. This path will force government agencies such as the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and EPA to make the decisions about how to reduce carbon pollution from power plants – an outcome power plant owners are not likely to support. The second option is to “roll up their sleeves” and propose the most efficient, effective, and verifiable means to decrease their pollution and increase their reliance on cleaner and cheaper electricity sources.

Ultimately the outcome will eventually be the same – essential reductions in carbon pollution. The only real question is whether

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# Spion Kop Wind Project is a Tremendous Resource

by Kyla Maki

Spion Kop, the newest wind project serving NorthWestern Energy's (NWE) Montana customers, is proving to be an inexpensive and reliable resource. It is located southeast of Great Falls near Geysler, Montana.

In February 2012, Montana's Public Service Commission (PSC) approved the Spion Kop project but stipulated that the 40-megawatt project needed to average about a 33% capacity factor – the percentage of time that the project is generating electricity – over a three-year period. To date, Spion Kop's average capacity factor has been well above 40%, greatly outperforming NWE's expectations. According to NWE, Spion Kop's capacity factor is "phenomenal." Higher production and capacity factors also mean that the wind project is reliable and a good deal for NWE's consumers.

The chart on page 12, compiled from PSC documents, shows that wind energy from Spion Kop is some of the least expensive in NWE's energy mix. In fact, at 3.3 cents per kilowatt-hour the price of energy from Spion Kop since 2012 is about half the price of energy from Colstrip Unit 4, which is 6.2 cents per kilowatt-hour.



Unlike non-renewable resources such as coal and oil, wind has zero fuel costs. This means that the cost of energy from wind projects such as Spion Kop and Judith Gap is more predictable and reliable than from fossil-fuel plants. Spion Kop is a good deal for consumers now, and will be a good deal in the long run. Consumers and the environment will benefit if NWE continues to invest in wind energy projects that shield customers from volatile fossil fuel prices and keep our air and water clean. ☺

*Spion Kop  
Wind Project.  
NorthWestern  
Energy Photo.*

plant owners will continue to be a part of the problem or part of the solution. One thing is inescapably clear: time is a luxury that can no longer be afforded.

Following the release of the rule in June, there will be a public comment period. President

Obama has directed EPA to adopt a final rule by June 2015.

MEIC will continue to let you know how you can become involved and voice your support for meaningful carbon pollution limits for existing power plants. ☺

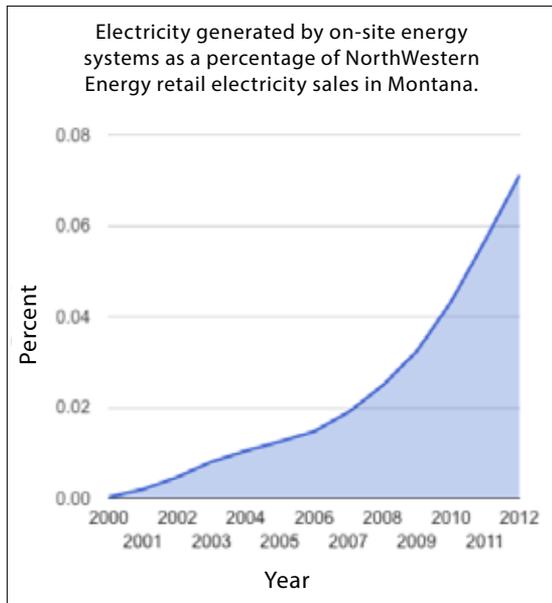
# The Beginning of a Solar 'Revolution'

by Kyla Maki

Last year was a banner year for solar energy in the United States. Here are some impressive facts from the Solar Energy Industries Association about solar energy's unprecedented growth in 2013:

- Over 4,700 megawatts of solar capacity was installed across the country in 2013. This is up 40% from the amount installed in 2012.

Montana Renewable Energy Association Image.



- Solar accounted for 29% of all new electric generation capacity in 2013. This made solar last year's second largest source of new generating capacity, just behind natural gas.

- The last quarter of 2013 was the largest quarter ever for solar photovoltaic (PV) installations in the U.S., with over 2,000 megawatts energized. This is up 60% over the last quarter of 2012.

- Weighted average PV system costs fell 15% in 2013, reaching a new low of \$2.59 per watt. Less than a decade ago, average PV system costs were nearly \$10.00 per watt.

Several factors are causing the dramatic expansion of solar energy and putting it on the path to being a mainstream energy resource. Market factors including increased financing options, cost reductions, and growing consumer demand are causing solar energy to compete with fossil fuels such as coal. Notable recent decisions by utility regulators in Minnesota and Colorado even determined that new solar projects were a better deal for ratepayers than natural gas projects.

The solar energy revolution doesn't show any signs of stopping. Industry analysts expect solar energy generating capacity to grow by over 25% in 2014, with its costs continuing to decrease.

## Solar Energy in Montana

Montana's solar energy capacity has also grown over the last decade. All of the solar energy generated in Montana comes from rooftop solar systems. Even though the rate of growth in Montana is much lower than in other states, rooftop solar installations have steadily increased. Most of these installations have been on NorthWestern Energy's system.

According to data collected by the Montana Renewable Energy Association, there were just over 900 solar arrays installed on NorthWestern Energy's customers' rooftops by the end of 2012. Since 2001, Montana's on-site solar generation

*continued on next page*

A solar installation in Red Lodge. Photo by Betsy Scanlin.





capacity has increased from less than 25 kilowatts to over 3 megawatts of capacity in 2012. This growth is notable, but solar still makes up less than 1% of NorthWestern Energy's retail electricity sales (see chart on previous page).

As distributed solar gains momentum, monopoly utilities in several states are trying to prevent homeowners and businesses from installing solar systems. In the last year alone, utilities in nearly a dozen states have proposed repealing policies such as net metering that enable individuals to connect their solar system to the electricity grid, and receive credit for

the net amount of electricity their solar system produces. In other states, utilities have also proposed anti-competition laws that would charge solar customers exorbitant monthly fees.

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a conservative industry front group, is behind many of the utility attacks on distributed solar energy. So far, utility and ALEC attacks have not been successful. MEIC is monitoring the fate of anti-solar proposals in other states, in order to be prepared if similar bills come to Montana in the 2015 legislative session. ☺

*An 85-kilowatt solar system just installed by Solar Montana on the River Rock senior living residences in Helena. This is the second largest solar system in Montana and is made up of 338 solar panels installed on 12 buildings. The system will offset power use for over 30 fixed income units and will help make living there more affordable by cutting power bills in half. Photo by Jess Jones.*

## Seeking Prospective Board Candidates!

MEIC is seeking suggestions for prospective Board of Director candidates from you, our members. Any suggested names will be considered for nomination, based on the needs the Board has for specific skills and geographic representation. If you know of a current MEIC member, including yourself, who should be considered for nomination, please send the member's name, telephone number, address, and e-mail address to the MEIC office by June 1st. Thank you!

*MEIC's annual board/staff retreat last October at the Flathead Lake Biological Station. Photos by Molly Severtson.*

# Media Campaign to Highlight Colstrip Water Pollution

by Anne Hedges

The Colstrip power plant's 800 acres of coal waste impoundments, often referred to as ash ponds, have been leaking since they were built in the 1980s. The best estimate is that they are leaking at least 363 gallons per minute of contaminated water into the area's ground water. That's over 500,000 gallons a day, and nearly 200,000,000 gallons per year. Pennsylvania-based PPL, the operator and partial owner of the plant, pumps about 1,000 gallons per minute of ground water from the various aquifers back into the impoundments in an insufficient effort to contain the pollution plumes. PPL has no water right for the ground water nor has it been fined by the State for the extensive water pollution problems at the site. The State's only enforcement action, taken under the former Montana "coal cowboy" governor Brian Schweitzer, contained no penalties, no clean-up timelines, and no clean-up standards.

The State is only now starting to "play catch-up" from decades of inaction. It is starting to investigate whether a water right is necessary. And the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has begun to question the sufficiency of PPL's submittals on the extent of the problem. These steps are heartening but there is a long way to go.

The Colstrip coal ash impoundment problem is reminiscent of past environmental disasters in Montana, where DEQ struggled to keep up with well-heeled international corporations, seemingly secure in the knowledge that the companies were so well financed that they would be there to clean up the contamination for decades to come. It's a familiar story for Montanans. W.R. Grace Co. was considered too big to fail, but it did. Pegasus Gold Co. was considered too politically powerful to adequately regulate. The Anaconda Mining Co. was considered too important to the state and local economy to control.

Each of these disasters – at Libby, at Zortman/Landusky, in Butte and downstream – seems very similar to what is happening and is likely to happen at Colstrip. Collectively, billions of dollars will be spent at these sites, much of it from taxpayers, in an attempt to fix the unfixable: ground and surface water pollution that will continue in perpetuity; disease and death; and permanent environmental degradation. Each of these environmental and public health disasters was preventable. While much damage at Colstrip is already done, the plant continues to place huge volumes of waste into these impoundments. It is time for the State to act quickly to force PPL

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*The billboard below will soon be on display on Montana Avenue near Helena High School in Helena as part of a media campaign about the ground water pollution at Colstrip.*

**IF YOU THINK THE AIR'S BAD...**

**YOU SHOULD SEE THE WATER.**

Help Clean Up the Colstrip Coal Plant | [CleanUpPPL.org](http://CleanUpPPL.org)

to clean up its mess before PPL “leaves town.”

PPL has already tried to sell its share of the Colstrip plant and leave Montana. It tried, for example, to sell it to NorthWestern Energy, but NorthWestern, wisely, was not interested. No other buyers have appeared. Other regulated utilities also own shares in Colstrip and will be jointly responsible for the mess along with PPL. DEQ’s ability to rely on those regulated utilities to foot the bill may provide some comfort, but remember what happened to the Montana Power Co.? Everyone assumed it would be around forever.

In an effort to make sure that Colstrip’s ground water pollution doesn’t become Montana’s next toxic legacy, MEIC and other

groups have teamed up to bring attention to this problem in the media. Starting this month, MEIC and its allies will launch a media campaign about the ground water pollution at Colstrip.

Here’s what you can do. Listen for the radio ads that will be running. Visit the website [www.CleanUpPPL.com](http://www.CleanUpPPL.com) and sign the petition asking DEQ to force PPL to clean up the ground and surface waters around Colstrip before it “hightails it” out of Montana. If you live in Helena, look for the billboard on Montana Avenue near Helena High School (see billboard design on page 10) .

PPL earned \$1.5 billion in profits in 2012, and its CEO was paid \$12 million that same year. PPL can afford to clean up its mess. And your help can make that happen. ☺

## Want to do even more for Montana’s Environment?

By supporting MEIC financially, you make a big difference in the fight for clean air and water in Montana. But you can do even more! Please fill out this survey and let us know how you’d like to be more involved in the cause of protecting a clean and healthful environment in this beautiful state.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Let us know what you’d like to do:

- Write a letter-to-the-editor about important environmental issues.
- Host a house party in your community to benefit MEIC.
- Consider running for a position on MEIC’s board of directors.
- Include MEIC in your will or other planned giving.
- Volunteer at our annual Rendezvous, set for September 13, 2014, in Missoula.

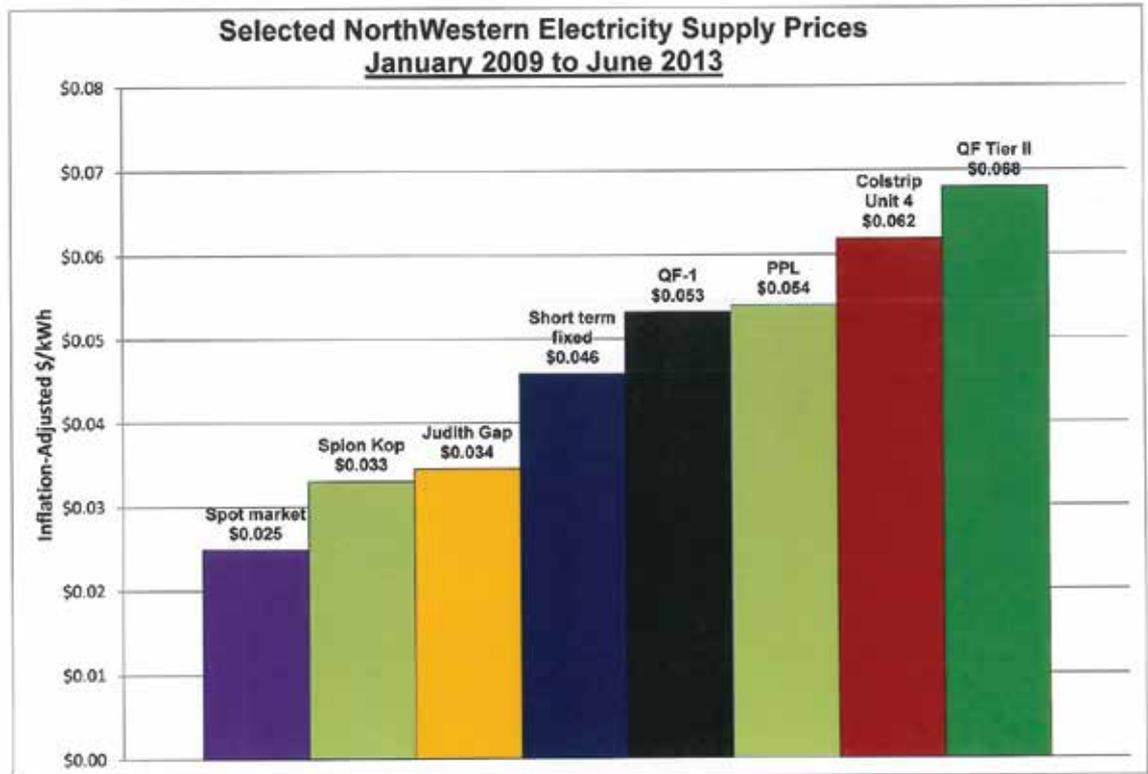
Use enclosed envelope or mail this form to: MEIC, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624.

# Hundreds of Smith River Petitions Delivered to Gov. Bullock's Office

Steve Gilbert, an Orvis River Guide of the Year and former MEIC board member, delivered hundreds of petitions to Gov. Steve Bullock's office on May 9th. Thank you to all our new and longtime members who signed this petition asking Gov. Bullock and DEQ Director Stone-Manning to deny a mining permit to Tintina Resources and to safeguard the Smith River watershed (read the complete wording of petition on page 2). If you haven't yet signed the petition, please do so at [www.saveoursmith.com](http://www.saveoursmith.com) today!



## Spion Kop (story on page 7)

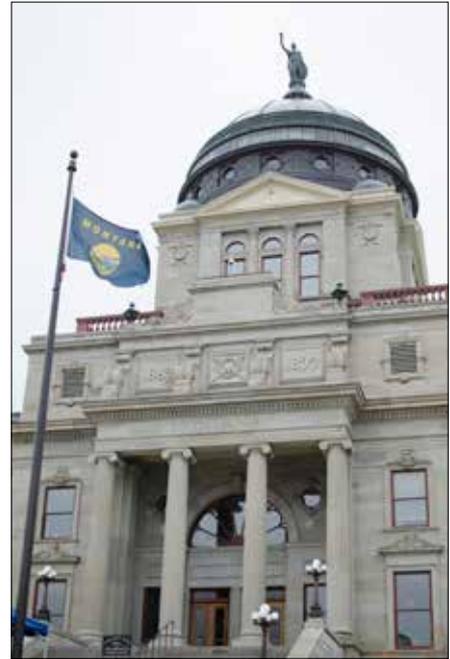


## Call for Raffle Prizes

Believe it or not, the 2015 Legislative Session isn't too far away. That means it soon will be time for MEIC's Montana Futures Raffle! The Raffle is the principal source of funding for MEIC's lobbying during the session. Supporting MEIC's Raffle is one of the best ways you can ensure that your voice is heard regarding Montana's environmental policies.

We have had wonderful prizes from generous businesses and individuals over the years – from guided float trips to great outdoor gear to fine art and meals.

That's where you come in! The more high quality prizes we have, the better chance we have of selling tickets to fund MEIC's lobbyists at the session. Those who donate a prize will be listed on our website, in the November 2014 issue of *Down to Earth*, and in the Raffle brochure MEIC will distribute. If you have a prize valued at \$50 or more that you would like to donate to the Raffle, please complete and mail the form below. Or call Sara Marino at MEIC at 406-443-2520 or e-mail her at [smarino@meic.org](mailto:smarino@meic.org). 



**Yes!** I want to help MEIC protect the environment during the 2015 Legislative Session by donating a prize to the Montana Futures Raffle.

Description of prize (please be as specific as possible) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Estimated retail value (\$50 or more) \_\_\_\_\_ Date prize is available \_\_\_\_\_

Donor's name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person (if a business) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one of the following:

The prize or gift certificate is enclosed.

I will deliver the prize to MEIC by \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me to make arrangements to pick up the prize.

## President's Letter



by Roger Sullivan

In some important ways things are not going well. Last month the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its latest update on climate disruption. Significantly,

the cascading impacts that these scientists have long predicted are no longer looming threats, they are now a new reality re-working (wrecking) the tapestry of ecological systems that constitute the environment of planet Earth.

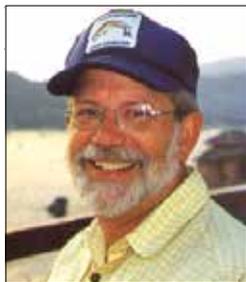
As detailed by Elizabeth Kolbert in the April 14, 2014, issue of the *The New Yorker*, this edition of the IPCC report notes that "both coral reef and arctic systems are already experiencing irreversible regime shifts." More far-reaching impacts – from famine and flooding to ecological collapse – are predicted if we continue to allow our corporations

to dispose of vast quantities of their air-borne sewage into the finite atmosphere that regulates life as we know it on Spaceship Earth. Literally adding insult to injury, Kolbert reports that the U.S. is the largest source of fossil-fuel subsidies in the world, paying billions of dollars in tax incentives to carbon producers annually, even while the tax credit primarily responsible for wind generation development has been allowed to lapse.

Our society is infected with a deadly mindset that is desperately in need of a cure. Akin to Dorothy and her crew in "The Wizard of Oz," five justices of our U.S. Supreme Court (and many members of Congress) are seemingly entranced by corporations as if they were the Wizard of Earth, *entitled* to pre-empt our political decisions and determine the fate of the Earth for this and future generations. Thus our civic institutions have vested corporations with a divine power previously reserved for the religious sphere.

I have sued many corporations in my time. Emulating Toto, I have sniffed around and pulled back the corporate veil and found only fallible humans pulling the levers that have wrought various forms of havoc on our land and our people. Most are "decent" enough folks who

## Thoughts from the Executive Director



by Jim Jensen

One of those little things that really annoys me is the California Air Resources Board's designation of some Subaru cars as PZEV,

or partial zero emission vehicles. Just what in the heck does that mean? What part of zero is it? Does zero even have parts? Of course not. Either a car has zero emissions or it doesn't. Just what whiz bang at ARB made that decision? If I knew, I would nominate him or her for the 100% of Zero Award.

On another topic, I've been reading with interest how the Chinese government is experimenting with converting coal to liquids for use in its cities to replace coal burning in order to improve air quality. Montana's coal companies are hoping that this will mean China will become ever more dependent on coal, which

they hope to ship there.

This was, of course, former governor Brian Schweitzer's project *du jour* for a time when he was first elected. Then, fortunately, the reality of water scarcity made eastern Montanans start to ask him questions that he could not answer satisfactorily. Well, the Chinese government is now facing the same reality. There is just not enough water for this stupid idea, and the process creates more global warming pollution than just burning coal.

The obvious solution to all of this is to just stop using coal. Period. Everywhere. Forever. Let's put our collective capital – financial, human, and political – into energy efficiency and sustainable energy sources and thus begin on a course to a livable future world.

Another thought: Governor Steve Bullock has been taking some positions recently that are reminiscent of former governors Judy Martz and Brian Schweitzer regarding federal forest management and EPA regulation of new power plants. Let's hope these are just some mistakes that he will learn from, and not make again in

support families and care about many of the things that you and I do. But within the sphere of their corporate lives they have subordinated their personal values to the sacrosanct purpose of the corporation – the bottom line, which as yet assigns no value to the very qualities that maintain a clean environment and healthy communities. As poet Denise Levertov put it: “It should be visible that this bluegreen globe suffers a canker which is devouring it.”

All of this is cause for grave concern and grief. And yet, as deep-ecologist and activist Joanna Macy points out:

*“The most remarkable feature of this historical moment on Earth is not that we are on the way to destroying the world – we’ve actually been on the way for quite a while. It is that we are beginning to wake up, as from a millennia-long sleep, to a whole new relationship to our world, to ourselves and to each other.”*

As chronicled in the documentary film on the last fifty years of the environmental movement, “A Fierce Green Fire,” which aired on Montana PBS on Earth Day, there is indeed a vital and still growing global movement that is forging a new relationship to our world. Ironically this

movement is rooted in truly “conservative” values, including a deep sense of ethics, responsibility, and stewardship. In Montana, MEIC is at the forefront of this movement, providing leadership in confronting and solving the critical environmental issues of our time, especially climate disruption. We steadfastly provide sound scientific information and analysis to our government agencies so that they will regulate polluting industries in accord with our environmental laws. We hold these agencies accountable in the courts when they don’t. We are there in the halls of the legislature when attempts are made to eviscerate our environmental laws.

So let us continue to faithfully respond to those seemingly mundane requests by our staff for comments on such matters as the proposed EPA carbon standard for new power plants (see article on page 6), and needed DEQ action on toxic coal waste pollution of groundwater at Colstrip (see page 10). Keep attending the climate change rallies. Keep thinking critically for yourself, and acting for the good of future generations through thoughtful lifestyle choices. And remember, we will find no solace in the righteous but hollow refrain, “See, I told you so.” ☺

the future. Otherwise, he risks losing the support of conservation-minded voters.

Finally, for the last decade or more, it has been an unwritten taboo in environmental circles to talk about the ecological threat of world population growth and the inequities of disparate levels of human consumption of natural resources. For obvious reasons, population and consumption cannot be separated.

However, some organizations are beginning to realize that we cannot ignore these facts. The venerable Isaac Walton League, one of the United States’ oldest environmental organizations, has begun to educate its members and news reporters in earnest (see <http://www.iwla.org/index.php?ht=a/GetDocumentAction/i/1779> for a series of thoughtful essays). The League, perhaps the most politically conservative “green” group in the country, has connected the dots of loss of quality of life and population growth.

Also, the Royal Society (Britain’s national academy of sciences) has begun to urge very serious discussions (see <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/>

**apr/26/earth-population-consumption-disasters**) about the imminent need to stabilize world population and significantly reduce per capita consumption in industrialized countries to “avoid a downward spiral of economic and environmental ills.”

Here in Montana, the demand for coal and oil and gas are influenced by consumption demands in countries whose standard of living has been low for a very long time but is now rising. In China for example, the emergence of a very large middle class who are buying cars instead of using bicycles is resulting in enormous demand for petroleum products, along with cement, steel, and other products for infrastructure investment. All of these result in large increases in global warming pollution. In America, with only 5% of the world’s population we use 20% of the world’s energy. Neither of these conditions is sustainable.

This also means that we Americans must take action and lead by example. We can only do that if these issues are a part of the public dialogue so that political officials cannot continue to ignore the consequences of inaction. ☺

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MEIC’s purpose is to protect Montana’s clean and healthful environment. The words “clean and healthful” are taken from the Montana Constitution, Article II, section 3 - Inalienable Rights, which begins: “All persons are born free and have certain inalienable rights. They include the right to a clean and healthful environment....”

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We need as many resources as possible to make sure the State does not issue a permit for this mine and to step up our public education campaign. You can help in the efforts by making a Save Our Smith donation today by using the enclosed postage-paid envelope to donate by check or credit card, or you can donate securely on-line at [www.meic.org](http://www.meic.org). Thank you!

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