



Your “Insider’s Guide” to the 2015 Legislature

Welcome to the first issue of MEIC’s **Capitol Monitor** for the 2015 legislative session. As usual, you can expect to receive high-quality and up-to-date information on the Montana legislative session.

We expect this session will be one of the most challenging in MEIC’s 41-year history. We hope that by communicating promptly and frequently with you—our members—you will be able to participate more effectively in our lobbying efforts.

And—no kidding—we need your help. Our lobbyists cannot do it alone. Protecting the environment this session will require everyone’s efforts. So please use the **Capitol Monitor** and our website (www.meic.org) to become involved. Let’s protect the things that make Montana special.

Legislators need to be told over and over that Montanans want clean air, clean water, clean energy, and the right to participate in government decision-making. If they don’t hear from you, it could be that they will only hear from well-heeled, self-interested lobbyists. **It’s your choice.**



Let the Games Begin

The 64th Legislature convened this week, and there are already hundreds of bills that have been introduced and nearly 2,000 more that are in the drafting process. Dozens of these bills relate to the important issues that MEIC works on including: clean water, clean air, land use, climate change, energy, and citizens’ right to know and participate in government. Unfortunately, many of these bills threaten Montanans’ right to a clean and healthful environment, undermine public health and the environment, and attempt to shut citizens out of their government.

Given the attacks, part of MEIC’s response will be providing our members with up-to-the-minute information about what’s going on at the Capitol. Our website will be updated daily so you can follow the bills and issues that you care about most. MEIC will also regularly publish **Capitol Monitor** with the most recent information on the important upcoming bills and hearings. To follow the session and read the MEIC Blog, go to www.meic.org/legislature.

MEIC also invites you to join us during the session to help us lobby during one of our Citizen Lobby Days. We will help guide you through the steps you need to effectively talk to your legislator about issues that matter to you. Please sign up for one or all of our citizen lobby days and let us help you protect the environment. They are scheduled for January 27th, February 18th, and March 6th.

A How-to Guide for Engaging During the 2015 Session

MEIC Legislative Bill Tracker

MEIC maintains and regularly updates a **Legislative Bill Tracker** on our website (go to www.meic.org/legislature) that includes the important legislative proposals that could impact Montana’s environment. All of the bills on our bill tracker are categorized by issue, offer an easy-to-understand description, list MEIC’s position, and it includes a tool for contacting key legislators.

Capitol Monitor & Blog

On MEIC’s website you can find an electronic version of **Capitol Monitor** (go to www.meic.org and look under “Media Center”), as well as a sign-up form to receive **Capitol Monitor** and other alerts by e-mail. MEIC also maintains a blog (also under “Media Center”) that has frequent posts about environmental and energy issues affecting Montana, and will include relevant writings on the 2015 Montana legislative session.

Calendar of Events

MEIC and other environmental organizations will hold “lobby days,” host legislative socials, and schedule membership meetings across the state to provide legislative updates. MEIC regularly updates its online events calendar, where you can view the details of different events (go to www.meic.org and look under “Get Involved/Attend an Event”).



Proactive Solar Energy Bills a Priority this Session

Despite the numerous bad bills, there are a handful of proactive energy bills that MEIC supports. These are bills that promote distributed renewable energy by expanding a policy called net metering. Net metering allows individuals and businesses who install a wind, solar, and even micro-hydro systems on their own property to receive credit on their energy bill for the energy their system produces. Renewable energy system owners can only get credit for the amount of energy their system produces up to the amount that offsets their energy use. They can't get paid for any excess energy produced by their rooftop solar array, small wind turbine, or micro-hydro system.

Montana was one of the first states to pass a net metering law in 1999. The bill had nearly unanimous support from the House and the Senate and was signed into law by Gov. Mark Racicot. Unfortunately, the law hasn't been changed since then and needs updating. This legislative session there are several bills to modernize the law. These bills are currently in draft form but you can track them using their "LC" or draft number. These bill drafts are awaiting sponsors in the Senate and House.

LC 291 - Allows for neighborhood net metering. This bill allows individuals and businesses to invest in a nearby renewable energy systems that is not necessarily located on their own property. Similar to the current net metering arrangement, this would allow anyone to get credit on their energy bill for the share of the renewable energy system that they own. This policy is also called "community solar" or "shared solar" in other states.

LC 292 - Applies net metering to all public utilities. Currently, Montana's net metering law only applies to NorthWestern Energy. This bill would apply the law to Montana Dakota Utilities,

an electric utility that serves about 27,000 customers in eastern Montana.

LC 293 - Increases the cap on net metering. Would increase the total cap for net metered systems from 50 kilowatts to 1 megawatt. This would allow for larger businesses, universities, public buildings, etc. to offset their energy use by installing larger renewable energy systems. The current 50 kilowatt cap on net metered systems is becoming a barrier as more businesses and other larger energy users are interested in reducing their energy bills by installing renewable energy systems.

LC 294 - Allows for roll-over of net metering credits. This would allow individuals to carry forward any credits that they don't use during the course of a year and use those credits to offset energy use in future months. Currently, the law only allows renewable energy system owners to carry forward net metering credits from month to month up to one year. At the end of the year, they have to forfeit their credits to NorthWestern Energy.

LC 295 - Allows for aggregate net metering. Under the current law, each renewable energy system has to have a separate meter. This proposal allows farms, universities or multi-unit housing projects with multiple electric meters on the same or adjacent property to be able to run all those meters and get credit for the energy from one renewable energy system.

Amidst the bad bills, net metering provides a potential bright spot in this legislative session. Expanding the ability and opportunity for individuals and businesses to lower their energy bills, invest in clean energy, and make their own energy decisions is a win-win for individuals, businesses, and Montana taxpayers. Let's hope the Legislature recognizes these benefits and passes the package of net metering bills.

Save this Newsletter

While the information information in this newsletter will all be available on our web site (www.meic.org) it will not all be repeated in future newsletters. Please put this issue in some prominent place on your refrigerator or in your "TO DO" pile, so that you can refer to it in the future.

LEADERSHIP OF THE 64TH LEGISLATURE

Officers of the Senate

President: Debby Barrett, *R-Dillon*

President Pro Tempore: Frederick (Eric) Moore, *R-Miles City*

Majority Leader: Matthew Rosendale, *R-Glendive*

Majority Whips: Ed Buttrey, *R-Great Falls*,
Cary Smith, *R-Billings*

Minority Leader: Jon Sesso, *D-Butte*

Minority Whips: Robyn Driscoll, *D-Billings*,
Tom Facey, *D-Missoula*

Officers of the House of Representatives

Speaker: Austin Knudsen, *R-Culbertson*

Speaker Pro Tempore: Lee Randall, *R-Broadus*

Majority Leader: Keith Regier, *R-Kalispell*

Majority Whips: Jerry Bennett, *R-Libby*,
Alan Doane, *R-Bloomfield*,
Greg Hertz, *R-Polson*,
Sarah Laszloffy, *R-Billings*

Minority Leader: Chuck Hunter, *D-Helena*

Minority Caucus Chair: Carolyn Pease-Lopez, *D-Billings*

Minority Whips: Bryce Bennett, *D-Missoula*,
Margie MacDonald, *D-Billings*,
Jenny Eck, *D-Helena*

CAPITOL MONITOR

Capitol Monitor is a publication of the Montana Environmental Information Center designed to keep our members informed about environmental issues at the Montana legislature.

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MEIC Executive Director: James Jensen



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2015 Senate Committees*

NATURAL RESOURCES

MWF, 3 pm, Room 303
Chair: Chas Vincent (R-Libby)
Vice Chair: Rick Ripley (R-Wolf Creek)
Vice Chair: Christine Kaufmann (D-Helena)
 Duane Ankney (R-Colstrip)
 John Brenden (R-Scobey)
 Pat Connell (R-Hamilton)
 Jennifer Fielder (R-Thompson Falls)
 Bradley Hamlett (D-Cascade)
 Brian Hoven (R-Great Falls)
 Jim Keane (D-Butte)
 Cliff Larsen (D-Missoula)
 Mike Phillips (D-Bozeman)
Secretary: Taylor Fridrich, 444-4889

ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Tu/Th, 3 pm, Room 317
Chair: Rober Webb (R-Billings)
Vice Chair: Duane Ankney (R-Colstrip)
Vice Chair: Cliff Larsen (D-Missoula)
 Mark Blasdel (R-Kalispell)
 Pat Connell (R-Hamilton)
 Robyn Driscoll (D-Billings)
 Llew Jones (R-Conrad)
 Doug Kary (R-Billings)
 Jim Keane (D-Butte)
 Bob Keenan (R-Bigfork)
 Mary McNally (D-Billings)
 Bruce Tutvedt (R-Kalispell)
 Jonathan Windy Boy (D-Box Elder)
Secretary: Barbara Pietuch, 444-7363

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MWF, 3 pm, Room 405
Chair: Janna Taylor (R-Dayton)
Vice Chair: Ed Buttrey (R-Great Falls)

Vice Chair: JP Pomnichowski (D-Bozeman)
 Dick Barrett (D-Missoula)
 Mary McNally (D-Billings)
 Scott Sales (R-Bozeman)
 Bruce Tutvedt (R-Kalispell)
 Gordon Vance (R-Belgrade)
 Gene Vuckovich (D-Anaconda)
Secretary: Charlene Devine, (406) 444-4335

JUDICIARY

M-F, 8 am, Room 303
Chair: Scott Sales (R-Bozeman)
Vice Chair: Jennifer Fielder (R-Thompson Falls)
Vice Chair: Diane Sands (D-Missoula)
 Robyn Driscoll (D-Billings)
 Kristin Hansen (R-Havre)
 Jedediah Hinkle (R-Bozeman)
 Doug Kary (R-Billings)
 Cliff Larsen (D-Missoula)
 Mary McNally (D-Billings)
 Mary Sheehy Moe (D-Great Falls)
 Nels Swandal (R-Livingston)
 Chas Vincent (R-Libby)
Secretary: Pam Schindler, 444-4618

FISH AND GAME

Tu/Th, 3 pm, Room 422
Chair: John Brenden (R-Scobey)
Vice Chair: Rick Ripley (R-Wolf Creek)
Vice Chair: Gene Vuckovich (D-Anaconda)
 Tom Facey (D-Missoula)
 Jennifer Fielder (R-Thompson Falls)
 Bradley Hamlett (D-Great Falls)
 Jedediah Hinkle (R-Bozeman)
 Phillips, Mike (D-Bozeman)
 Cary Smith (R-Billings)
 Chas Vincent (R-Libby)
Secretary: Julie Emge, 444-1527

*This is only a partial list.

2015 House Committees*

NATURAL RESOURCES

MWF, 3 pm, Room 172
Chair: Kerry White (R-Bozeman)
Vice Chair: Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls)
Vice Chair: Ed Lieser (D-Whitefish)
 Jerry Bennett (R-Libby)
 Bob Brown (R-Thompson Falls)
 Zach Brown (D-Bozeman)
 Virginia Court (D-Billings)
 Mary Ann Dunwell (D-Helena)
 Kelly Flynn (R-Townsend)
 Theresa Manzella (R-Hamilton)
 Nate McConnell (D-Missoula)
 Dale Mortensen (R-Billings)
 Mark Noland (R-Bigfork)
 Andrea Olsen (D-Missoula)
 Keith Regier (R-Kalispell)
 Ray Shaw (R-Sheridan)
 Scott Staffanson (R-Sidney)
 Kathleen Williams (D-Bozeman)
Secretary: Sherri Row, 444-4877

FEDERAL RELATIONS, ENERGY, AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

MWF, 3 pm, Room 172
Chair: Mike Lang (R-Malta)
Vice Chair: Daniel Zolnikov (R-Billings)
Vice Chair: Tom Steenberg (D-Missoula)
 Tom Berry (R-Roundup)
 Geraldine Custer (R-Forsyth)
 Austin Knudsen (R-Culbertson)
 Ryan Lynch (D-Butte)
 David (Doc) Moore (R-Missoula)
 Zac Perry (D-Bozeman)
 Andrew Person (D-Missoula)
 Randall Pinocci (R-Sun River)
 Christopher Pope (D-Bozeman)
 Tom Richmond (R-Billings)
 Casey Schreiner (D-Great Falls)

Jeffrey Welborn (R-Dillon)
Secretary: Jessica Riffel, 444-2554

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Tu/Th, 3 pm, Room 172
Chair: Edward Greef (R-Florence)
Vice Chair: Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls)
Vice Chair: Kathy Swanson (D-Anaconda)
 Tom Berry (R-Roundup)
 Geraldine Custer (R-Forsyth)
 Moffie Funk (D-Helena)
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 Denise Hayman (D-Bozeman)
 Kathy Kelker (D-Bozeman)
 Debra Lamm (R-Livingston)
 Steve Lavin (R-Kalispell)
 Forrest Mandeville (R-Columbus)
 Nate McConnell (D-Missoula)
 Christopher Pope (D-Bozeman)
 Vince Ricci (R-Laurel)
 Tom Richmond (R-Billings)
 Nicholas Schwaderer (R-Superior)
 Tom Steenberg (D-Missoula)
 Nancy Wilson (D-Missoula)
 Daniel Zolnikov (R-Billings)
Secretary: Noah Horan, 444-1863

JUDICIARY

M-F, 8 am, Room 137
Chair: Jerry Bennett (R-Bennett)
Vice Chair: Alan Doane (R-Bloomfield)
Vice Chair: Virginia Court (D-Billings)
 Seth Berglee (R-Joliet)
 Jenny Eck (D-Helena)
 Clayton Fiscus (R-Billings)
 Stephanie Hess (R-Havre)
 Ellie Boldman Hill (D-Missoula)
 Kathy Kelker (D-Billings)

Sarah Laszloffy (R-Billings)
 Margie MacDonald (D-Billings)
 Theresa Manzella (R-Hamilton)
 Nate McConnell (D-Missoula)
 G. Bruce Meyers (R-Box Elder)
 Matthew Monforton (R-Bozeman)
 Carolyn Pease-Lopez (D-Billings)
 Zac Perry (D-Bozeman)
 Andrew Person (D-Bozeman)
 Randall Pinocci (R-Sun River)
 Keith Regier (R-Kalispell)
 Kirk Wagoner (R-Montana City)
Secretary: McKenzie Chambers, 444-4846

FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PARKS

Tu/Th, 3 pm, Room 152
Chair: Kelly Flynn (R-Townsend)
Vice Chair: Jeffrey Welborn (R-Dillon)
Vice Chair: Jean Price (D-Great Falls)
 Bob Brown (R-Thompson Falls)
 Zach Brown (D-Bozeman)
 Rob Cook (R-Conrad)
 Virginia Court (D-Billings)
 Clayton Fiscus (R-Billings)
 Stephanie Hess (R-Havre)
 Tom Jacobson (D-Great Falls)
 Ed Lieser (D-Whitefish)
 G. Bruce Meyers (R-Box Elder)
 Mark Noland (R-Bigfork)
 Andrew Person (D-Missoula)
 Randall Pinocci (R-Sun River)
 Ray Shaw (R-Sheridan)
 Bridget Smith (D-Wolf Point)
 Kirk Wagoner (R-Montana City)
 Kerry White (R-Bozeman)
Secretary: Jennifer Peterson, 444-4666

*This is only a partial list.

How to Contact Your Legislators

If you do not know who your legislators are, you can search by zip code on Project Vote Smart's website: www.votesmart.org

By computer:

MEIC will regularly offer ways to contact legislators via our 2015 Legislative Session page and online bill tracker:

<http://meic.org/legislature>

Some legislators have private e-mail accounts listed on the Legislative Roster:

www.leg.mt.gov/css/Sessions/62nd/roster.asp

By telephone:

To leave a message for your legislator or for session information, call **(406) 444-4800** between 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 8 a.m. until adjournment on Saturday. You may need to be patient; the line has been understaffed in previous years.

By mail:

Montana Senate
 P.O. Box 200500
 Helena, MT 59620

Montana House of Representatives
 P.O. Box 200400
 Helena, MT 59620



MEIC's Team at the Capitol

L eading MEIC's lobbying staff at the Capitol is **Anne Hedges**, MEIC's Deputy Director. Anne joined MEIC in May 1993, and has lobbied every session since. She handles a wide range of issues that are important to MEIC members including energy, land-use planning, environmental policy, and air quality.

Jim Jensen has been MEIC's Executive Director since 1985. He attended Westminster College in Salt Lake City and holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Montana (1980). Jim will focus primarily on clean water and mining issues at the legislature.

Derf Johnson will be lobbying primarily on oil and gas development and energy issues. He is beginning his third year at MEIC, having lobbied during the 2011 and 2013 sessions. He is a graduate of the UM School of Law, and originally hails from Bozeman.

Kyla Maki will be lobbying primarily on renewable energy and energy efficiency issues. She is beginning her fifth year at MEIC, having lobbied since the 2009 session. Kyla graduated from the University of Montana in 2006, obtaining a degree in Wildlife Biology with an emphasis in Political Science from the College of Forestry and Conservation.



Left to right: Kyla Maki; Anne Hedges; Jim Jensen; and Derf Johnson

Save paper and money

D o you want to save paper, have one less item in your mailbox, and save MEIC much-needed funds this session? **Send us your e-mail address.** We'll remove your name from our postal mail list and add you to our **e-Activists** list. You'll receive **Capitol Monitor**, updates on the bills we're lobbying, and alerts when important bills need an extra push from citizens speaking out by contacting their legislators. Send your e-mail address, if we don't already have it, to Adam McLane: mclane@meic.org. **THANK YOU!**



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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