

Down to Earth

NEWS FROM THE MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CENTER



MEIC Board Elections, p.8

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Cover Photo:
Methane gas
flaring, or
the burning
of associated
gas at oil
production.

Victory!

Oil rig at sunset.
Photo credit Twilight
Productions.

VICTORY: Methane Pollution Regulations Reinstated

by Derf Johnson

Methane is a dangerous, potent, climate-killing greenhouse gas. Some estimates place methane as 84 times as potent as carbon dioxide in trapping the heat in our atmosphere and changing our climate. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, oil and natural gas development accounted for approximately 28% of methane emissions in 2018. During the Obama Administration, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released the methane waste rule, which aimed to protect people and the climate from methane waste and pollution from oil and gas extraction on public lands. The Trump Administration predictably tried to scrap the rule in order to maximize the oil and gas industry's profits at the expense of taxpayers, public health, and the climate. Thankfully, MEIC and a coalition of organizations took Trump to court, and in July a federal judge

reinstated the BLM rule in a terse and well-reasoned order.

The reinstated rule will once again require oil and gas companies operating on public lands to take reasonable measures to prevent the waste of publicly owned fossil gas. It will go back into effect in 90 days from the ruling, meaning that by mid-October oil and gas developers must comply with the rule or face penalties. In issuing the order, the judge stated that "the rulemaking process resulting in the Rescission was wholly inadequate. In its haste, BLM ignored its statutory mandate under the Mineral Leasing Act, repeatedly failed to justify numerous reversals in policy positions previously taken, and failed to consider scientific findings and institutions relied upon by both prior Republican and Democratic administrations."

MEIC and its coalition partners brought the litigation in 2018 after defeating prior Trump attempts to end the protections. The court found the administration downplayed the significance of the rule's benefits to public health, local communities, and the climate. The court also determined that BLM's cost-benefit analysis ignored the global climate costs associated with unchecked methane pollution. The reinstatement of the rule is not just important for the climate, but also for the public's coffers. The U.S. Government Accountability Office estimated lost royalties at nearly \$23 million annually under the pre-2016 regime. The 2016 rule will help

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Quadrupling Montana's Solar Electricity Generation

by Brian Fadie

In June 2020, Basin Electric Cooperative announced a truly game-changing solar project that is worth noting (and celebrating!) for many reasons.

Called the Cabin Creek solar farm, the project will have an installed capacity of 150 megawatts (MW) and will be located near Baker, MT. To put the size of this project in perspective, Montana currently has about 35 MW of solar generation (including all solar installations of any size, statewide). This means that one project will more than quadruple Montana's solar power!

Until now the largest single Montana solar project was three MW in size, which is quite small compared to other recently developed solar projects in other states. However, the Cabin Creek project will be squarely in line with the size of new solar facilities around the country, a sign that Montana's solar resource potential is strong. In fact, the developer of Cabin Creek is already working on a 160 MW solar project to be located north of Dillon (that project is still looking for a contract), and another solar developer has stated it is working on a multi-hundred-megawatt project northwest of Billings. While Montana's world-class wind energy resource is well known, these projects are a clear sign that our solar energy sector is ready to take off.

Also noteworthy is the utility purchasing the power: an electric cooperative. While co-ops are sometimes

thought of as slow to adopt new technologies, Montana's electric co-ops are showing leadership on solar. The first community solar projects in Montana were voluntarily built by co-ops years ago, the first wave of which all sold out their subscriptions.

To date, NorthWestern Energy still does not have any community solar projects. For larger scale solar projects, NorthWestern does have a few, but they all had to be forced onto the company by federal law (called PURPA, which NorthWestern has fought strongly against). Now Montana's co-ops have blown past NorthWestern for large-scale solar as well.

This leadership by the electric co-ops is significant. Approximately 400,000 Montanans receive electricity from co-ops, making them a sizeable market that can help drive new clean energy projects. Some co-ops act as an island, signing their own power supply contracts, but some bundle their members with other co-ops and collectively sign contracts. Basin Electric supplies electricity to many co-ops in Montana and this particular solar project will deliver energy to about half of the co-ops in the state. It is conceivable Montana could see more solar projects of this size being built to supply electric co-ops.

Finally, not only will this solar project provide more clean energy to



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Farewell to a Giant of the Conservation and Hunting Worlds

by Gayle Joslin.

This is a condensed version of an obituary that was published in the Helena Independent Record.

Jim Posewitz died a month ago at the age of 85. But his reputation and accomplishments will live on.

He was born in Sheboygan, Wisconsin in 1935. He was a graduate of Montana State College (now Montana State University) where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1957. After two-years in the Army, he returned to MSU where he obtained his Master of Science degree in Fish and Wildlife Management.

He began his long and storied career with Montana Fish & Game (now Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

- FWP) in 1961 as a fisheries biologist working in Great Falls, Kalispell, and Glasgow. While serving as head of the Water Resource Development Unit, a big issue he faced was the proposal for additional dams on the Missouri River upstream from Fort Peck Reservoir. His biologists

gathered the scientific data to resist those dams, and they were never built.

A few years later he moved to Helena. In 1969, he was named the first and only administrator of the Ecological Services Division of FWP, a position he remained in for the next 13 years. During that time, he became the head of the International Joint Commission addressing water quality in the Flathead River system, and with an expert team, prevented an open-pit coal mine, and associated pollution, from being developed on the Canadian portion of the Flathead.

Throughout his career, he documented and successfully defended the importance of in-stream flows for fish and wildlife against the demands for energy development and agricultural production. As just one example of the successes that he and others had was to prevent what was called the Allenspur Dam from being built at the mouth of the Paradise Valley, 5 miles south of Livingston. As a result of these efforts, the Yellowstone River remains the longest free-flowing, undammed river in the Lower 48 States.

Another of the accomplishments he was involved in was improving Montana's Strip and Underground Mine Reclamation standards (that are still used today) to reclaim wildlife habitat affected by strip-mining in Montana. Field biologists all around Montana gathered baseline data to ensure that wildlife and fisheries resources were protected in the face of

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Conservation
leader Jim
Posewitz.



Guest opinion: Protect the Smith River forever

by Jim Posewitz

"We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people ever received, and each one must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune."

— President Theodore Roosevelt

Montana is many things. It is a small town with some very long roads. It is a collection of people, culture, faiths, and beliefs. It is a history of turmoil and peace. It is a collection of towering peaks dotting the skyline and expansive prairie as far as one can see. It is rivers starting in the alpine tundra as drops of rain on shale and ending on our borders as mighty forces that fuel our United States through food and power. It is a place so unique in the lower 48 that the visitors to our great state outnumber our residents 10 to 1 every year to seek a solitude unavailable for most citizens of the world.

As President Roosevelt so eloquently affirmed more than a century ago, the people of Montana have inherited this great place. How we treat this place will leave an indelible mark on the land and in turn those that come. Those that inherit the peaks and the prairies, the rivers and the cathedrals, from us. Our decisions about the land must be for a greater good, because our decisions will be forever forged into the hillsides.

Through a lifetime of conservation work, I've watched the people of Montana continue to build society, as people do, and I've watched the Smith

River wind its way through the canyon, as the river does. The river is, for the most part, the same. It is the people who change. In 1977, the Council on Natural Resources and Development released a study and report on the Smith, its great bounty, and how it must be preserved. Public hearings with concerned Montana citizens were held. The report captures the sentiment at the time for those with an interest in the river: "The testimony given reflected an exceptional general agreement in principle. The primary concern expressed was that the unique quality of the Smith River and its canyon must be preserved."

The sentiment of the people, and the report, resulted in major conservation measures for the Smith that have withstood the tests of time and kept the river, for the most part, the same. The river meandering through the towering canyon, the bountiful fishery, and the abundant wildlife are still present. The greater lesson here is that the people, and not the river, will make the choice about what the next generation inherits.

The Smith is now in the hands of a new generation, and the decisions it



Smith River.
Photo credit
B. Pfeiffer

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MEIC: Protect Clean Air from Coal Plants' Toxic Emissions

by Anne Hedges

In 2006, MEIC successfully lobbied the State of Montana to adopt a mercury emission limit for coal-fired power plants. We were thankful to finally have some protections for vulnerable human populations, and fish and wildlife, from this potent neurotoxin, but we also knew there was more work to be done. That's why we were relieved when the federal government finally adopted a limit on mercury pollution from coal plants such as Colstrip. That's because the federal rule limited far more than just mercury, it also placed limits on a host of other highly toxic substances. That rule, known as the Mercury and Air Toxics Standard (MATS), was long overdue and critical for protecting people and wildlife.

But the coal industry loathed the rule. It lobbied and sued to eliminate the rule. All to no avail. But then came the Trump Administration. With contempt for public health, it set about to eliminate any limits for toxics or mercury from coal plants. Coal plants have long been the single biggest source of mercury in the air, but Trump and his lackey at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Andrew Wheeler, didn't care.

Instead of believing the scientific evidence and strengthening the rule, as the data indicated was

necessary, they rewrote the rule, eliminating consideration of most of the scientific underpinnings, placing more emphasis on the cost of compliance for industry than on the cost of the harm done to individuals living downwind (often low-income or minority populations), and concluded that the rule was no longer "appropriate and necessary." That was all the help the coal industry needed.

Westmoreland Coal Co., the owner of the Rosebud Mine at Colstrip and the Absaloka Mine on the Crow Reservation, was primed to file suit to eliminate the rule altogether – as soon as EPA determined that it was no longer "appropriate and necessary." EPA made its decision and within hours of EPA's decision, Westmoreland was in court. This clearly coordinated action between the federal government and the coal industry to poison the public and wildlife is truly reprehensible.

MEIC, represented by Earthjustice, quickly filed suit to stop EPA from making this dangerous public health decision based upon biased and incomplete cost data. We also sued to intervene in the Westmoreland lawsuit that sought to eliminate the rule altogether. We are proud to be in partnership with the NAACP, American Lung Association, Sierra Club, Downwinders at Risk, and so many others that have worked for decades to protect people and wildlife from the harmful toxins emitted by coal plants.

Colstrip Power Plant.



Colstrip Purchase Update

by Brian Fadie

In July 2020, the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) voted 5-0 to suspend the procedural schedule for NorthWestern Energy's attempt to purchase more of the Colstrip coal-fired power plant, essentially putting the case on pause. This vote may have surprised some people, so here's the sequence of events.

- February 5, 2020: NorthWestern filed its application with the PSC for approval to purchase Puget Sound Energy's 25% share of Colstrip Unit 4 (or 185 megawatts).

- April 10, 2020: To the surprise of all, Talen Energy decided to exercise its right as a Colstrip co-owner to acquire part of the share being offered by Puget Sound Energy. Talen expressed interest in half of the sale, or 92.5 megawatts of Unit 4, as well as some of the Colstrip transmission line capacity Puget would sell to NorthWestern. This created a problem because NorthWestern's original application – including hundreds of pages of testimony and calculations – did not contemplate Talen getting half of the sale. Parties to the case, including MEIC, no longer knew precisely what they or the PSC were being asked to consider or how it would impact ratepayers.

- April 24, 2020: NorthWestern filed additional information with the PSC, however it still did not include the Talen Purchase and Sale Agreement, which is needed to understand exactly what Talen would be getting. Thus, the PSC and intervening parties still

did not know fully what was being proposed or how it would impact ratepayers.

- July 2, 2020: In yet another surprise, NorthWestern filed "revised" information with the PSC about the Colstrip purchase changing some of its previously filed documents, but it still did not include the full Talen Purchase and Sale Agreement. It was then that PSC staff brought the issue of the constantly changing, yet still incomplete, information from NorthWestern to the commissioners.

Before voting to pause the case, the PSC staff noted to commissioners that pre-approval, which NorthWestern was asking for, is supposed to be about "kicking the tires" on a proposal to decide if it's a good deal or not before it is approved, because it can't be done later. But according to one PSC staff attorney, "We don't even have tires to kick yet." Staff pointed out that the PSC was being asked to approve a sale that they haven't even seen the specifics of yet. Commissioner Tony O'Donnell

UPDATE!

In late July, Colstrip co-owner PacifiCorp agreed to depreciate its ownership in Colstrip Unit 4 for its Washington state customers by 2023. Depreciation is a way for a utility to prepare to take a power plant off its books and likely close the facility. This is the first time 2023 has been used by a co-owner and immediately raises the question about whether the other owners will also move up to 2023.

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MEIC's 2020 Board of Directors Election

Cast your ballot today!

It's time for the annual MEIC Board of Directors election. This year we have three incumbent directors and three new candidates running. Please vote. It may seem like a formality, but it is an important part of keeping MEIC a viable and healthy organization. *Vote yes or no on all or just a few of the candidates!*

Instructions:

- 1) Only MEIC members can vote; subscribers and business corporations are not eligible.
- 2) Mark a "yes" or "no," or abstain from voting, for each candidate on the enclosed postage-paid card.
- 3) Mail the card back to MEIC in time to arrive by October 10, 2019.

Thank you for your participation.



Skye Borden, Missoula, MT

The price of a clean and healthful environment is, to paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, "eternal vigilance." In my years of advocacy here in Montana, I have found that there is simply no better watchdog than MEIC when it comes to safeguarding our water, air and climate. As the former director of Environment Montana, I have been fortunate to partner with MEIC on a wide range of issues, from lead in school drinking water to local 100% renewable electricity resolutions, and I hope to continue that spirit of partnership in a new capacity as a member of MEIC's Board of Directors. I believe that my boots-on-the-ground advocacy experience in Helena, and throughout the state, will help me be an asset to the organization as it navigates through whatever challenges and opportunities the upcoming years will bring.

Steve Gilbert, Helena, MT

I came to Montana in 1967 and realized immediately that I had found my home – clean air, cold clear water, pristine wildlife habitat. But I hadn't been here long before I discovered there was a history of extractive development of natural resources in Montana and that maintaining our right to a clean and healthful environment required a personal commitment. To that end, I became a member of MEIC and eventually a member of its board of directors. It has been my great pleasure to work with the amazing and successful staff at MEIC to protect the wonders of Montana that make it the last best place. I would like to continue my relationship with MEIC as a member of its Board.

**Diana Hammer, Helena, MT**

I am trained as a life scientist and am an avid user of public lands and waters, and enjoy exploring nature with friends and family. I studied environmental science at Macalester College (B.A.) and in India, was an Agroforestry volunteer in Peace Corps in Niger, West Africa, and then as a consultant for WWF/IUCN. I earned a Master's in Public Health from Johns Hopkins and a Master's of Science in Biomimicry from Arizona State University. Through my community volunteer efforts and my work with ReGenerous Cities, LLC, I am committed to creating more resilient communities in a changing climate. I worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for 29 years in Superfund (e.g., the Milltown Dam Removal and Clark Fork River Restoration) and other environmental programs; most recently, as a Tribal Program Manager, working to address environmental challenges in Indian Country. While at EPA and now, I have been keenly



aware of MEIC's critical role in protecting our right to a clean and healthful environment, and the places where we live, work, and, of course, where we play!

Kathy Juedeman, Helena MT

I watch and admire the work that the talented and experienced MEIC team does to preserve and advance Montanans' right to a clean and healthful environment. I spend time with my husband on our family ranch, which gives me opportunity to see the extravagant wildlife, the natural spaces, and rivers as we work. I am inspired by the richness and diversity of Montana's land, water, and air, and keenly aware of the need to protect Montana. I have served on MEIC's Board for several years, and I am currently serving as MEIC Board President. It would be a privilege to continue to serve on the MEIC Board.

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Roger Sullivan, Kalispell, MT

MEIC is the most effective environmental advocacy organization in Montana! It has been a great honor to work with MEIC in the ongoing effort to vindicate the right of this and future generations of Montanans to a clean and healthful environment. In this effort I have advocated on behalf of MEIC on a number of occasions, including against oil and gas exploration adjacent to Glacier National Park, against the Highwood Coal-fired Generation Station near Great Falls, and in helping to achieve closure of Colstrip Generating Units 1 and 2. It has also been my great pleasure to have previously served on the Board of MEIC. If selected to serve again, I would hope to contribute to MEIC through participating in the thoughtful analysis of requests for MEIC's involvement in new matters, in the effective management of litigation, and in envisioning a sustainable future for MEIC.

Beth Taylor Wilson, Missoula, MT

I grew up in Missoula. Post high-school, I took a break from studies at the University of Montana, and took a "summer job" in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, moving away from Montana just as our fair state was drafting and adopting our extraordinarily prescient, forward-facing Montana Constitution. Montanans became constitutionally assured the "fundamental right to a clean and healthful environment." When I left, Missoula had some of the worst temperature-induced winter "inversion" air pollution in the country. But thanks to activists like the Gals Against Smog and Pollution (GASP), who numbered my mother as a member, Missoulians forced the then Hoerner-Waldorf paper mill plant to start cleaning up its corporate act. Missoula's air became far cleaner and healthier thanks to environmental mitigation and citizen activism. Environmental activism and stewardship are in my family DNA, and I'm excited and honored to have the opportunity to work with our state's premier environmental watch-dog.



Many thanks to all of our volunteer board members!
Are you interested in serving on MEIC's board? If so,
please contact Jim Jensen at jjensen@meic.org or (406)
443-2520 to learn more. We value your voice!

Methane Victory *(continued from page 2)*

taxpayers reclaim about \$800 million in royalties over the next decade.

Montana is one of the top oil and gas producing states in the country. Reinstatement of the rule will cut down on toxic air pollutants originating from Montana that are released from oil and gas operations. In addition to flaring and methane emissions, gas waste associated with oil and gas development results in smog pollution and the release of other toxic pollutants,

such as benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene.

MEIC was represented by the Western Environmental Law Center, and was joined in the litigation by the Center for Biological Diversity, Citizens for a Healthy Community, Diné Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment, Earthworks, Los Padres ForestWatch, San Juan Citizens Alliance, WildEarth Guardians, Wilderness Workshop and the Wyoming Outdoor Council.

Colstrip Purchase *(continued from page 4)*

agreed, noting “we have nothing to analyze” and “There is nothing for intervenors to comment on because the document doesn’t exist.”

As of this writing, NorthWestern still has not submitted the full Talen Purchase and Sale Agreement. When this happens, the PSC will decide whether intervenors should be allowed a new round of discovery questions, given only then would they have the full details of NorthWestern’s proposal.

These continued surprises in the Colstrip purchase proceeding should be concerning to all NorthWestern ratepayers. The check on bad utility decision making – the PSC and intervening parties – are supposed to have access to the full details of a proposal from the beginning. Instead, the proceeding is seven months old and still no one has all the details (perhaps not even NorthWestern).



MONTANA HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR A HEALTHY CLIMATE

- Are you a Montanan?
- Are you a health professional — a nurse, doctor, therapist, aide, veterinarian, hospital employee, researcher, or environmental/public health specialist?
- Are you concerned about the health and environmental effects of climate change?
- Do you want good health for all Montanans: individuals, families, and communities?

Consider joining Montana Health Professionals for a Healthy climate (MtHPHC)!

Visit www.montanahphc.org, and learn more about MtHPHC efforts to promote the health of Montanans through education, science, advocacy, & action. Sign up for MHPHC's mailing list, attend an event, educate yourself, and get involved!

Posewitz *(continued from page 3)*

Floaters on the
Smith River.



a multitude of development projects: from dams and diversion projects to oil-and-gas drilling projects to

underground and surface mining projects to highway placement.

His constant proselytizing also helped ensure that Montana's wildlife would not be commercialized. In 2000, Montana voters passed a citizen initiative in banning "high-fence" operations and captive shooting of wildlife.

Throughout his career, Jim worked with Montanans to develop inclusive, philosophically and scientifically sound approaches to conservation issues and to encourage public involvement and support for those initiatives.

Upon retirement, he did not sit down in an easy chair. In fact, some would say that this next chapter in his life led to equally influential achievements. In 1994 his first book, *Beyond Fair Chase – The Ethic and Tradition of Hunting*, was published for hunters of all ages, but focused on those venturing out for the first time. More than a million copies have

been distributed. He also established Orion – The Hunter's Institute, a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to ethical hunting and the wild resources essential to that purpose. Over the years, he delivered more than a thousand presentations on those subjects. In all cases, he advocated for the public's expectation that government will be the conscientious steward of the public's wildlife and natural resources.

He continued writing and completed four more books: *Inherit the Hunt – A Journey into the Heart of American Hunting*; *Rifle in Hand – How Wild America Was Saved*; *Taking a Bullet for Conservation*; *The Bull Moose Party – A Centennial Reflection, 1912–2012*; and *My Best Shot – Discovering and Living the Montana Conservation Ethic*.

His expertise, dedication, and commitment led to his appointment and service on dozens of advisory councils and boards, the Cinnabar Foundation, the Helena Hunters and Anglers Association, the Teller Wildlife Refuge, the Forever Wild Endowment, and the Montana Outdoor Hall of Fame. The list goes on.

The list of honors and awards he received through the years is long, including ones from the Montana Wildlife Federation, the Montana Environmental Information Center, the Montana Hunting Hall of Fame, Safari Club International, Montana State University, and the National Wildlife Federation.

His motto for life could be

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considered as: “as long as there is time on the clock, you have to play the game.” He never faltered in the face of opposition; he never gave up and usually found a way to achieve his goal. In the end, his determination and strategic mind, his relentless humor and hearty laugh, and his unflinching positive attitude ensured success in so many, many arenas. The natural resource conservation legacy he has left for all Montanans is what

sets our state apart from others. When we fish or float a free-flowing river, or spot a herd of elk heading over the hill or a group of bison peacefully grazing on the plains, when we seek out the quiet solitude of a long hike into the backcountry and experience the country as it once was, we should remember how much of those rights and places have been given to us through Jim Posewitz’ efforts.

Smith River *(continued from page 4)*

makes will determine the river's fate. I worry deeply about the possibility of a large copper mine on its headwaters, and the permanent changes to the wild landscape, water quality, and recreation that could result. Allowing for large-scale mining on the headwaters of the Smith is a decision you cannot go back on. So many places in Montana have been irreparably damaged by the greed of a few, to the detriment of all. Here, the risks are just too great.

It is my wish that the new generation

of Montanans become stewards for the Smith and continue its conservation legacy, leaving the next generation with the river’s bounty, as my generation has done for yours.

Between the peaks and the prairies, far off in the distance, we can see a horizon that we have not yet reached but continue to travel towards. As we cross the mighty Smith, we must be careful to leave it intact. We must show we have been worthy of its good fortune.

Solar *(continued from page 3)*

Montanans across the state, but the economic benefits we know renewable energy can generate will start to accrue as well. The Cabin Creek project is expected to contribute \$8 million in property taxes to Fallon County and pay an additional \$5 million to the state.

If you are a member of an electric co-op, please consider contacting your Board of Directors and ask what they

are doing to bring more low-cost clean energy onto your system. Because they are member-owned entities, you have a direct voice in determining your energy future. A list of all co-op websites, which have Board of Directors contact information, can be found at: www.montanaco-ops.com/content/member-co-ops

Thoughts from the Executive Director

by Jim Jensen

During my recent sabbatical I had the luxury of long hours to reflect on how MEIC can be better at motivating Montanans to push elected officials to act (or horrors, even lead) on climate change.



Before I go on, I can't help but observe that this pandemic era has resulted in a truly quieter world. I love that so many folks are out walking and hiking, many deepening their relationship with neighbors and nature.

But, back to the question: Is the COVID-19 pandemic going to be the lever that finally shakes people out of their state of denial? From the beginning it has been made patently clear that this virus is a symptom of our

rapidly warming earth. The brilliant Bozeman writer, David Quammen, predicted that just such a corona family virus would escape the wild and invade the human species in his 2012 seminal book *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*.

Quammen connects the dots of shrinking natural habitat as humans push into virgin tropical forests to meet an expanding population's food needs in the face of lower per acre production caused by less rain and hotter temperatures. These are classic and long-predicted effects of climate change. We owe many thanks to Quammen for his work to be a lucid public voice in communicating these truths to the public at large.

But will reality be enough to save ourselves? There are good signs that it will. Coal companies are in bankruptcy and renewable energy is ascendant because of economic reality. Electrification of the transportation sector is moving forward, with every major automobile manufacturer moving away from oil-powered locomotion. Electric bicycles are at a premium. Many cities are moving quickly away from car-driven design. The potential for a major redo of inefficient freight systems through a massive federal infrastructure program is real. And finally, people are understanding and demanding that our concentrated corporate agriculture system be fundamentally localized.

These changes are real. I think they represent reasons to be realistically hopeful for our future.

Montanans are fortunate to be able to enjoy wide open spaces and solitude during the pandemic.



President's Column

by Kathy Juedeman

What did you do with your long days of Summer?



I have done a fair bit of walking. During a pandemic, when concerns are real, like many of you I have the luxury of Montana spaces with clean water and clean air, I can see for miles everywhere I look, sometimes I am graced with wildlife crossing my path, and often at night I can see the Milky Way. What a wonderful life. When I take the time to go outside, who knows what wonders I will see?

The beautiful spaces of Montana are important to all of us, and this is magnified in the Summer of 2020. In early Summer, when I was taking first hikes, every mountain field was awash with wildflowers. Now, in the morning at breakfast hours, we watch our Montana friends float down the Missouri, or take a weekend day to fly fish on the banks of that river. Groups of friends have taken cherished trips down the Smith River, savoring the beauty of that wild river.

A number of our friends with young families are out camping and hiking, sharing the love for our natural spaces. I've seen the pictures of younger family members on first hikes, and in a canoe out at the Gates of the Mountains – spectacular. Some

have toddlers who are seeing these natural wonders for the first time – imagine that miracle. Friends have hiked this Summer into the Bob Marshall Wilderness and will have stories to tell (the Bob is such a special jewel). A friend has also been out with her husband to float a favorite river one last time before their first baby arrives. It is almost unimaginable to me how many places we could choose for a hike, or to camp, or to float a waterway in our rich Montana.

I visited with Jim Jensen about several places that he has camped this Summer, and I had never gone to the places that he chose – and he said that they were all fantastic. You will find that spending time outside in our Montana is miraculous, and will make memories for a lifetime. Just step outside.

MEIC works every day to protect these treasured spaces, for us and for our future generations. Tell a friend a story about the good work that MEIC has done this Summer – and look in this issue of *Down to Earth* to find a story to share.



MEIC – a nonprofit environmental advocate

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 1184
Helena, MT 59624

Telephone: (406) 443-2520

Web site: www.meic.org

E-mail: meic@meic.org

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Steve Gilbert, Helena
Neal Ullman, Helena

Staff

Brian Fadie, Clean Energy Program
Director/Lobbyist,
bfadie@meic.org

Mel Griffin, Special Projects, mgriffin@meic.org

Anne Hedges, Deputy Director/Lobbyist,
ahedges@meic.org

James Jensen, Executive Director/Lobbyist,
jjensen@meic.org

Derf Johnson, Staff Attorney/Lobbyist,
djohnson@meic.org

Cari Kimball, Development Director, ckimball@meic.org

Adam McLane, Business Manager, mclane@meic.org



MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

A Fadie Farewell *by Jim Jensen*

MEIC's Clean Energy Program leader, Brian Fadie, has decided to leave MEIC at the end of August. His reason for leaving is purely personal, saying that "working at MEIC is the best job I've ever had."

MEIC has been incredibly well-served by Brian's amazing advocacy skills. His sense of humor, purpose, and optimism will be very sincerely missed by the staff and Board. One example of his ability came when he was diligently reviewing the recording of a Public Service Commission hearing. He heard a totally accidental "live mic" conversation in which Commissioner Bob Lake discussed that the PSC was intentionally setting a price for renewable energy so low as to intentionally kill the industry. This discussion was the basis for a successful lawsuit by MEIC to overturn the PSC's decision.

He was also an amazingly effect lobbyist at the Legislature, exposing the unsavory work and relationships of NorthWestern Energy to gouge Montana electricity customers, and in educating legislators about the value of, and the need for, renewable energy.

Brian also brought a suite of social media and computer skills that enable MEIC to truly reach a very high level of engagement in a very short period of time.

He's going to be very much missed at MEIC, but he will no doubt continue to use his amazing skills in the clean energy space wherever he lands.



We'll miss you, Brian!