

Audubon's Priority Legislative Initiatives for the 2007 Montana Legislature

Bill/ Sponsor	Description	Status	Audubon Position	Overall Audubon Rating
General Environmental Protection				
HB 204/ Rep. Dave Kasten, R- Brockway	Restricting State Expenditures - This bill would limit state spending to a rigid formula of inflation plus population growth. As a result, state agencies would have their wildlife and environmental protection programs cut or capped. It is similar to CI-97, one of last fall's ballot initiative, which was thrown out by the Supreme Court for fraud in signature gathering.	Passed House 51 - 49 DEFEATED in Senate Committee	Oppose	+
HB 405/ Rep. Mike Lange, R- Billings	Exempt Energy Projects from MEPA - This bill would exempt all energy projects from review under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) - everything from large power plants to pipelines.	Passed House 50 - 49 DEFEATED in Senate Committee	Oppose*	+
HB 610/ Rep. Jim Keane, D- Butte	Revise Laws Relating to Challenges to Agency Actions - This bill would prohibit lawsuits under MEPA, removing all accountability for agencies when they review projects for environmental impacts.	Passed House 59 - 40 DEFEATED in Senate Committee	Oppose*	+
HB 754/ Rep. Debby Barrett, R- Dillon	Generally Revise MEPA - This bill would have companies write their own environmental impact analysis for projects (currently state agencies do this work). Having companies - who are more interested in stockholders than our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment - oversee environmental review makes no sense.	DEFEATED in House Committee	Oppose	+
HB 835/ Rep. Wayne Stahl, R- Saco	Facilitate environmental permit laws and create an college internship program - This bill would have established a college intern program, making interns responsible for significant environmental permitting activities. It is a bad idea to have college interns play a major role in environmental	Passed House, 60-38 DEFEATED in Senate 25 - 25	Oppose	+

	permitting.			
SB 363/ Senator Christine Kaufmann, D-Helena	Revise Eminent Domain Laws - SB 363 clarifies the eminent domain portion of I-154, which was proposed for the ballot in November 2006, but thrown out by the Montana Supreme Court. MT Audubon opposed I-154, but committed to "clarifying" eminent domain law as it related to I-154.	Passed Senate 49 - 1 Passed House 99 - 0 Signed by Governor May 17, 2007	Support	+
Recreation, Public Lands and Forest Protection				
SB 25/ Senator Lane Larson, D- Billings	Revise Contract Timber Harvest Laws - MT Audubon worked with others to amend this bill to ensure that sustainable timber harvest would not be abused on school trust land.	Passed Senate 50 - 0 Passed House with bad Amendments 94 - 6 Audubon amendments Added in Conference Committee Signed by Governor	Support with Amendments	+
SB 78/ Senator Lane Larson, D- Billings	Bridge Access - SB 78 provides certainty for recreationists, counties, and landowners by clarifying public access at bridges to streams and rivers, thereby reducing the potential for litigation.	Passed Senate 31 - 16 DEFEATED in House Committee	Support*	-
SB 452/ Senator Carol Williams, D-Missoula	Working Forests, Ranches, and Watersheds Program - SB 452 sets up a program to buy interest in land for long-term protection.	Passed Senate 31 - 19 DEFEATED in House Committee	Support*	-
Subdivisions & Land Use Planning				
HB 415/ Rep. Michelle Reinhart, D-Missoula	Require Parkland Dedication in Subdivision - HB 415 will allow local governments to require parks to be dedicated for minor subdivisions.	Passed House, 55 - 45 Passed Senate, 25 - 22	Support*	+
HB 557/ Rep. Ralph Heinert, R-	Zoning Impact on Sand, Gravel, Asphalt - HB 557 would make it impossible for counties to protect open space from gravel	Passed House 52 - 46 DEFEATED in Senate Committee	Oppose*	+

Libby	pit development through zoning.			
SB 201/ Senator Rick Laible, R- Darby	Revise Subdivision Laws - SB 201 sets up a program for cities and counties to work together to encourage development closer to cities - thus encouraging development around cities and discouraging urban sprawl.	Passed Senate 36 - 14 Passed House 65 - 33 Signed by Governor	Support*	+
SB 345/ Senator Bob Hawks, D- Bozeman	Streamside Setbacks – SB 345 would have prohibited new buildings within 250 feet from the edge of the high water mark for rivers; a vegetative buffers was also specified. A variance process ensures that no one loses the ability to build on an existing lot.	DEFEATED in Senate 30 - 20	Support*	-
SB 398/ Senator Kelly Gebhardt, R-Roundup	Require Gravel Resource Report - SB 398 would have made it more difficult for counties to protect rural areas from the development of gravel pit operations.	DEFEATED in Senate 24 - 25	Oppose*	+

Water

HB 262/ Rep. Mike Jopek, D- Whitefish	Water Rights in Growth Counties - HB 262 would have closed a loophole being used by rural subdividers to obtain water that could affect senior water right holders in high growth counties.	DEFEATED in the House Committee	Support	-
HB 104/Rep. Kevin Furey, D- Missoula	Water Rights in Growth Counties - HB 104 would have closed a loophole being used by rural subdividers to obtain water that could affect senior water right holders.	DEFEATED in House Committee	Support	-
SB 128/ Senator Jesse Laslovich, D- Anaconda	Eliminate Termination of FWP Instream Flow - MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks currently purchases water rights to keep them in our streams, so streams are not de-watered. This bill removes the termination date for this program.	Passed Senate 37 -13 Passed House 57 - 42 Signed by Governor	Support*	+

Energy and Mining

SB 241/ Senator Christine Kaufmann, D-Helena	Revise Oil and Gas Laws - SB 241 would have improved the reclamation requirements for oil, gas, and coal bed methane development.	DEFEATED in Senate 17 - 33	Support	-
HB 282/ Rep. Ron Erickson, D-Missoula	Sequestration to Slow Global Warming - HB 282 would have established a program to help curb polluting gases that contribute to global warming.	DEFEATED in House Committee	Support	-
HB 301/ Rep. Michele Reinhart, D-Missoula	Secure and Sustainable Energy Policy Act - HB 301 established a renewable energy policy for the state of Montana.	DEFEATED in House Committee	Support	-
HB 189/ Rep. Doug Cordier, D- Columbia Falls	Establish Baseline Data for Flathead River - With an open-pit coal mine proposed in British Columbia, HB 189 would help protect the water quality of the Flathead River system by obtaining baseline water quality information.	DEFEATED in House Committee However, this money was added to the state budget bill	Support	+
HB 753/ Rep. Betsy Hands, D- Missoula	Montana Global Warming Solutions Act - HB 753 requires the state to adopt caps with timelines for greenhouse polluting gases; the plan would be completed by 2010 and emission levels reduced by 2020.	DEFEATED in House Committee	Support	-
SB 200/ Senator Dave Lewis, R- Helena	Authorize Litigation to Cleanup Mike Horse Dam - SB 200 will move cleanup of the toxic mining pollution associated with a dam located at the headwaters of the Blackfoot River.	Passed Senate 46 - 3 Passed House 100 - 0 Signed by Governor	Support	+
SJR 20/ Senator Mike Cooney, D- Helena	Carbon Reduction Timeline - This resolution calls for Congress to adopt strict caps with timelines for greenhouse polluting gases from power plants.	Passed Senate 29 - 20 DEFEATED in House Committee	Support*	-
Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat				
SB 372/ Senator Joe Balyeat, R- Bozeman	Create Wolf Hunting Licenses - SB 372 sets up a hunting season for wolves, that won't be enacted until they are removed from the Endangered Species Act protection. MT Audubon supports controlled hunting of wolves.	Passed Senate 43 - 6 Passed House 92 - 8 Signed by Governor	Support	+

HB 343/ Rep. Diane Rice, R- Harrison	Legal Action in Wolf Delisting Lawsuit - HB 343 would have the state pay for an anti-wolf groups' lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.	Passed House 58 - 41 DEFEATED in Senate 23 -27	Oppose*	+
HB 364/ Rep. Bruce Malcolm, R-Emigrant	Establish Board to Compensate Livestock Owners for Wolf Predation - With wolves anticipated to be de-listed from the Endangered Species Act list, HB 364 sets up a state program to compensate livestock owners from known wolf kills.	Passed House 79 - 20 Passed Senate 50 - 0 Signed by Governor	Support	+
HB 37/ Rep. Michele Reinhart, D-Missoula	Weed Control on State Lands - This bill will increase the ability of the Montana Dept. of Natural Resource to control weeds on school trust lands. Weeds significantly impact wildlife habitat.	Passed House 56-43 Passed Senate 41 - 8 Signed by Governor	Support	+
HB 439/ Rep. Roger Koopman, R- Bozeman	Exempt Fish Ponds from Licensure - Exotic wildlife introduced into fish ponds can significantly impact native aquatic ecosystems. This bill would eliminate licenses for some of these ponds, removing the ability to educate landowners about problems with exotic species.	Passed House 50 - 49 Amended and Passed Senate 27 - 23 VETOED by Governor	Oppose - Senate Amendments improved this bill*	+
HB 440/ Rep. Debby Barrett, R- Dillon	Direct FWP to Revise and Update State's Wolf Management Plan - HB 440 as initially introduced would have required Montana's wolf plan to be re-written, which would slow the de-listing process for wolves. As amended it will establish criteria for updating the plan.	Passed House 91 - 9 DEFEATED in Senate Committee	Oppose	+
HB 484/ Rep. Debby Barrett, R- Dillon	Compensation for Wildlife Damages to Livestock - HB 484 would require compensation to landowners for all impacts from wildlife - a bottomless pit that could eat up significant state money.	DEFEATED in House Committee	Oppose	+
HJR 35/ Rep. Bob Ebinger, D- Livingston	Urge Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Weed Program Performance Audit - This bill asks for an audit of the weed control program for FWP lands.	Passed House 86 - 13 Passed Senate 46 - 2	Support	+
SB 58/ Senator Ken Hansen, D- Harlem	Eliminate Termination of Prairie Dog Management Law - SB 58 would have allowed better management of prairie dogs, a keystone species for Montana's prairies.	DEFEATED in Senate Committee	Support	-
SB 126/ Senator	Eliminate Termination of Future Fisheries Program Funding - The state's Future	Passed Senate 47 - 3 Passed House 78 - 21	Support	+

Steve Gallus, D-Butte	Fisheries program works on stream restoration projects; this bill eliminates a termination date for that program.	Signed by Governor		
SB 391/ Senator Dan Weinberg, D-Whitefish	Allow conservation easements on any and all school trust land. Currently conservation easements can be placed on a small number of school trust lands.	Passed Senate 26 - 24 DEFEATED in House 49 - 51	Support*	-
HJR 57/Rep. Mike Jopek, D-Whitefish	Interim study on allowing conservation easements on any and all school trust land.	Passed House 50 - 48 Passed Senate 27 - 23	Support*	+
Program Funding				
HB 820/ Rep. Janna Taylor, R-Dayton	Funding for State Agencies - MT Audubon specifically works to fund wildlife and wildlife habitat programs (MT Fish Wildlife and Parks and the Montana Natural Heritage Program). This is Governor Schweitzer's budget.	Passed House Passed Senate DEFEATED in regular session	Support	-
HB 830/ Rep. Dave Kasten, R-Brockton	\$15 Million for Parks/Habitat Montana money - HB 820 contains \$6.2 million in funding for Habitat Montana, which purchases critical wildlife habitat for the state. It also contains \$7.5 million for new parks and fishing access sites (the Governor had asked for \$15 million).	Passed House Passed Senate DEFEATED in regular session	Support	-
HB 2/ Rep. Edith Clark, R-Sweetgrass	Special Session Funding for State Agencies - MT Audubon specifically works to fund wildlife and wildlife habitat programs (MT Fish Wildlife and Parks and the Montana Natural Heritage Program). This is the budget for the state of Montana.	Passed House Passed Senate Signed by Governor	Support	+

* These bills will be featured in our 2007 Montana Legislative Voting Record.