

PROPOSED RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA
SUPPORTING CELEBRATION OF OUR STATE SOILS DURING THE INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF SOILS.

SENATE AGRICULTURE

Exhibit No. 1

Date 2 / 10 / 15

Bill No. SB 176

Whereas, agriculture is Montana's largest industry, generating in the state's economy more than \$4.7 billion in services and products; and

Whereas, soil has been called the Earth's "living skin", sustaining not only Montana's agricultural industry but all of the state's plants, animals, and people; and

Whereas, the 68th United Nations General Assembly declared 2015 the International Year of Soils; and

Whereas, 4th grade students from Longfellow Elementary School in Bozeman have researched and presented to the 64th Legislature significant information about geological history, characteristics, and attributes of the Scobey Soil Series and its importance to Montana; and

Whereas, the Scobey Soil Series is unique to Montana and occurs on 1,261,000 acres mostly in the Golden Triangle and Hi-line areas of the state, producing high-quality wheat without irrigation, and is among the most productive of the 1,358 soils named and mapped in the state; and

Whereas, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts along with individual conservation districts and other conservation groups are working to promote soil health through soil health workshops and outreach efforts; and

Whereas, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts has designated August as Montana Conservation Month with a focus on the role of Montana soil;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA: That the Senate recognizes the work of the Students of Longfellow School and salutes their initiative to heighten the awareness of the Scobey Soil Series as fine, smectitic, frigid Aridic Argiustoll soils,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Montana Senate encourages Longfellow Elementary School students to seek opportunities to share their research with other Montanans during the International Year of Soils,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Montana Senate encourages the statewide Montana Association of Conservation Districts to recognize the work of Longfellow School regarding the Scobey Soils Series during Montana Conservation Month in August 2015,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be provided to both the Longfellow School and to the Montana Association of Conservation Districts.

Appropriate Characteristics of Symbols:

To have value as a State Symbol, a designated symbol needs to be identifiable and RECOGNIZABLE to the average citizen. It is important that people can know for sure when they see that symbol. Only a trained soil scientist can tell if they are looking at the Scobey Soil Series, and even within that series there are many subtle variations that can be debated. That is because we are not talking about an identifiable object. Instead, a soil series is a set of designated scientific conditions, identified by the presence of a variety of ingredients.

A State Symbol needs to be CONSTANT and relatively unchanging. As Montana soils have been identified and mapped, we heard how the definition of the original Scobey Series has evolved, to the point where today the actual soil found in Scobey is no longer considered to be part of what is currently known as the official Scobey Soil Series. Soils mapping is a relatively new and dynamic science that is still evolving and changing. Scientific designations are not absolute. Science changes as more information becomes available.

Primary objection:

There is not a compelling reason for this Legislature to continue to invest the time and the resources of the people of Montana in this manner.

The people of Montana have chosen to severely limit their citizen Legislature to meet for a very short time, and meet only every other year. This is because they want us to focus on what is truly important to our state, and spend our very limited time and resources on only the most significant matters.

We have some huge issues and challenges before our 64th Legislature, and many of those will demand some extremely complex and difficult solutions that will require a lot of effort. (Growing our economy, job creation, education systems, infrastructure needs, health care, tax simplification, assistance to the less fortunate who genuinely need it, etc.) We can choose to spend our limited time grappling with these important opportunities and solutions, or we can choose to spend our time, and the People's money, on less significant matters.

As the People's branch of government, the elected legislature has been slowly and dangerously weakened over the past generation. For our body and our staff to spend a significant amount of our very limited time and resources, on the classroom projects suggested by our schoolchildren, is not what the People of Montana expect from us.

To embrace this "State Symbol" concept is to encourage more of this kind of initiative in the future. In that respect, this is an important Policy Choice that we can choose to make.