



Montana Legislative Services Division

Office of Research and Policy Analysis

TO: EQC Assigned Studies Subcommittee

FROM: Leanne Kurtz, Research Analyst

DATE: February 16, 2006

RE: HJR 10 fire study bills/study update

As I reported to you at your January 26 meeting, the work group that is developing legislation to update fire-related statutes and fulfill the intent of HJR 10 began with Title 2 and has been systematically reviewing sections of the Montana Code Annotated as they appear in the books. After each work group meeting, I draft a bill that incorporates changes proposed by the group. The first bill contains Title 2 through Title 38; the second, Title 39 through a portion of Title 50; the third Title 50 through Title 76; and so on.

At its February 6 meeting, the work group completed its review through Title 90. All that remains is Title 7, chapter 33, which the members hope to rearrange so that it reads logically and is reflective of the realities of local government fire protection. The next meeting is scheduled for March 10. I hope to have all of the statute review completed at the conclusion of that meeting.

Only after all of the statute review has been completed will I be able to draft proposed legislation in a way that makes sense, grouping similar changes together in bills that will meet the constitutional requirement that a bill may contain only one subject.

I considered sending you the bills as I have them--arranged numerically by MCA section--but I believe the changes proposed by the group will make more sense if they are presented in bill drafts that are organized by subject.

The group has also been discussing various approaches to address problems associated with the wildland urban interface. This was a specific item articulated in the resolution and is likely to be the most controversial issue the group faces during this process. At your March 16 meeting, members of the group, and possible additional participants, will conduct a panel discussion focusing on the wildland urban interface, problems that residential development in the interface presents to wildfire suppression agencies, and potential legislative solutions.

With all of this in mind, following is the timeline I propose, based on the work plan you adopted early in the interim, for forwarding information to you and completing the HJR 10 study.

March 10: HJR 10 work group meets to complete statute review

March 16: EQC Assigned Studies Subcommittee meeting, wildland urban interface panel, possible subcommittee recommendations for addressing interface problems

March 16 - April 28 Staff drafts proposed legislation, forwards to subcommittee as each draft is completed

April (date TBA) Final work group meeting to review all proposed legislation

May 3: Last day to forward proposed legislation to subcommittee

May 18: EQC Assigned Studies Subcommittee meeting; staff and work group members review legislation with subcommittee

June 1: Public comment period begins

July 17: EQC Assigned Studies Subcommittee final meeting, final review of legislation, recommendation to EQC

I hope I have provided an adequate explanation of the process and of the information you will receive to review. If you have questions or concerns about the study or the proposed timeline, please contact me at (406) 444-3593 or by e-mail at lekurz@mt.gov.

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