

HOUSE BILL NO. 222  
INTRODUCED BY L. JONES

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROVIDING FUNDING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION TO CONTRACT WITH AN ENTITY TO CONDUCT AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF THE VALUE OF IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE IN MONTANA; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

WHEREAS, many rural areas in Montana are continuing to experience loss of population and are losing their stable economic base; and

WHEREAS, Montana is a headwaters state, has reserved water rights for irrigation purposes on the main stem of the Missouri River and the Yellowstone River, and has identified thousands of acres of irrigable land in those drainages; and

WHEREAS, the development of irrigation projects could create rural and urban economic development in terms of providing opportunities to produce high-value crops and to develop value-added businesses; and

WHEREAS, currently available water and irrigable land resources need to be put to beneficial use in the near future so that the State of Montana and its people can forever benefit from the development of these valuable natural resources.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Appropriation.** There is appropriated from the general fund to the department of natural resources and conservation \$200,000 for the biennium beginning July 1, 2007, for the purpose of contracting with an entity to conduct an economic analysis of the value of irrigated agriculture to Montana's economy. The economic analysis must include but is not limited to the identification of economic benefits, who benefits and to what extent from existing irrigation, the economic impact of the development of new irrigation projects, and the rehabilitation of older irrigation projects in Montana.

NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Effective date.** [This act] is effective July 1, 2007.

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