

Amendment - 1st Reading/2nd House-blue - Requested by: Walt Sales - (S) Natural Resources

- 2023

68th Legislature 2023

Drafter: Jason Mohr, 406-444-1640

HB0520.001.002

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 520
2 INTRODUCED BY D. LOGE
3
4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF PRIVATE PONDS
5 ON THE STATE, PERMITTING, WATER RIGHTS, AND OPTIONS TO MITIGATE NEGATIVE IMPACTS,
6 INCLUDING INVASIVE SPECIES AND THREATS TO WILD FISH AND AQUATIC RESOURCES; ASSIGNING
7 THE STUDY TO THE ~~ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL~~ WATER POLICY INTERIM COMMITTEE;
8 ESTABLISHING REPORTING REQUIREMENTS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; PROVIDING FOR
9 CONTINGENT VOIDNESS; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A TERMINATION
10 DATE."

11
12 WHEREAS, Montana's world-class fisheries are rooted in a philosophy of wild fish management; and
13 WHEREAS, high-quality fisheries that rely on self-sustaining wild fish and high-quality aquatic habitat
14 may be negatively impacted by private ponds; and

15 WHEREAS, often touted to increase property values, more than 10,000 pond permits have been
16 issued—most of which remain active; and

17 WHEREAS, the department of fish, wildlife, and parks issues about 200 pond permits annually to stock
18 fish, and the permit review is complex and burdensome leading to inconsistent administration statewide; and

19 WHEREAS, the department cost of managing private pond issues far outweighs the cost of the
20 permit—\$10 for a 10-year permit or \$10 annually for a commercial production pond permit; and

21 WHEREAS, private ponds can provide optimal environments for invasive species and pathogen
22 introduction and propagation; and

23 WHEREAS, the number of permitted in-state commercial hatcheries providing fish for private pond
24 stocking declined over the last decade, and four of the remaining five commercial hatcheries are on limited
25 quarantine due to invasive species or pathogen detection; and

26 WHEREAS, applications for importing stocked fish have increased fivefold because of limited in-state
27 sources, increasing the risk of introducing nontarget species that could damage aquatic resources; and

Amendment - 1st Reading/2nd House-blue - Requested by: Walt Sales - (S) Natural Resources

- 2023

68th Legislature 2023

Drafter: Jason Mohr, 406-444-1640

HB0520.001.002

1 WHEREAS, stocking private ponds illegally from nonpermitted out-of-state commercial hatcheries is
2 also on the rise due in part to easy access to fish purchased online and from other sources; and

3 WHEREAS, frequent and severe drought years in southwest Montana harm agriculture and fisheries,
4 yet pond development continues, bringing with it increased water temperature and water loss from evaporation;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, it is critical to fully understand how the development of ponds may impact constitutionally
7 protected water rights; and

8 WHEREAS, the prior appropriation doctrine and Montana Water Use Act must be considered when
9 evaluating the cumulative impacts of ponds and the associated consumption of water; and

10 WHEREAS, the impact of ponds on existing water rights is an important element of determining the
11 level and type of permitting that is necessary for ponds.

12

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

14

15 NEW SECTION. Section 1. Study of private ponds. (1) The ~~environmental quality council, provided~~
16 ~~for in 5-16-104 water policy interim committee, provided for in 5-5-231,~~ shall study issues related to private
17 ponds.

18 (2) The study must examine:

19 (a) private pond policies, including permitting and protocols;

20 (b) impacts of private ponds on aquatic resources as well as water quality and quantity related to
21 drought, high water temperatures, and evaporation and options to mitigate these impacts;

22 (c) the type and volume of private ponds in the state and the water rights associated with those
23 ponds;

24 (d) the existence and extent of private ponds that have been developed without a water right; and

25 ~~(e)~~ options to provide in-state certified fish to stock private ponds.

26 (3) The ~~environmental quality council~~ water policy interim committee shall complete the study by
27 September 15, 2024, and report its findings and recommendations, including legislation, to the 69th legislature.