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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 9
INTRODUCED BY B. GILLESPIE, J. ELLIS

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA ESTABLISHING THE FIRST WEEK IN APRIL AS MONTANA SOIL HEALTH WEEK AND THE FIRST WEDNESDAY IN APRIL AS SOIL HEALTH DAY.

WHEREAS, recognizing soil as an essential natural resource, and Montana's agricultural producers and professionals as playing a critical role in managing Montana's soil and water resources; and

WHEREAS, Montana is home to more than 27,000 agricultural producers who are reporting less farm-related income; and

WHEREAS, the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture defines soil health as the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans; and

WHEREAS, the concept of soil health across the Montana landscape is not new, but is only recently recognized as needed to prevent soil degradation and the degradation of soil can be rapid, while the formation and regeneration processes can be very slow; and

WHEREAS, as of 2007, an average of 6.4 tons of topsoil per acre were lost every year due to erosion in Montana, compromising the productivity of agriculture in the state; and

WHEREAS, agriculture is Montana's top industry, generating more than \$3.7 billion in services and products to the state's economy; and

WHEREAS, Montana's fish, wildlife, and diverse ecosystem generate almost \$4 billion a year to Montana's economy and provide one-ninth of the total jobs that are dependent on soil health; and

WHEREAS, healthy soil increases nutrient availability and helps capture, retain, and store more water, increasing the economic viability of farms and ranches, the availability of water for municipalities and recreational uses, and in-stream flows for power generation; and

WHEREAS, as soil organic carbon increases, so does its water holding capacity, increasing agriculture's resilience to drought and water shortages; and

Amendment - 1st Reading/2nd House-blue - Requested by: Frank Smith - (H) Agriculture

68th Legislature - 2023

Drafter: Andria Hardin,

SJ0009.001.003

1 WHEREAS, farming and ranching are vital to economic development for Montana's tribes and rural
2 communities; and

3 WHEREAS, healthy soils provide productive grazing; bountiful crops; clean air; water free from
4 sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants; and diverse wildlife and landscapes through five basic functions:

5 (1) help to control where rainfall, snowmelt, and irrigation water goes as water and dissolved
6 solutions flow over or into and through soil;

7 (2) sustain a diverse, productive plant and animal life;

8 (3) filter and buffer potential pollutants;

9 (4) cycle and recycle nutrients of carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other nutrients that are stored
10 and transformed in the soil; and

11 (5) provide physical stability by supporting soil structure, human structures, and archeological
12 artifacts; and

13 WHEREAS, there are six basic principles of soil health that contribute to the long-term prosperity and
14 resilience of our state's, counties', and cities' soil and water resources:

15 (1) minimize soil disturbance and external inputs, including reduced tillage;

16 (2) maximize plant and microbial diversity;

17 (3) maintain the presence of living roots;

18 (4) keep the soil covered, including with cover crops and crop residue, to armor the soil;

19 (5) integrate animals into land management, including grazing animals, birds, beneficial insects, or
20 keystone species, such as earthworms; and

21 (6) incorporate the context of local conditions in decisionmaking, including, for example, soil type,
22 topography, and time of year; and

23 WHEREAS, Montana has designated the Scobey as its official state soil; and

24 WHEREAS, the State of Montana should be actively raising awareness of the importance of soil health
25 and promoting its stewardship to safeguard this resource for future generations; and

26 WHEREAS, awareness facilitates the necessary changes in agricultural practices to sustain our
27 Montana soils for the centuries to come and celebratory activities will bring greater awareness and appreciation
28 of the merits of healthy soils and the producers that cultivate them in Montana.

Amendment - 1st Reading/2nd House-blue - Requested by: Frank Smith - (H) Agriculture

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2 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
3 THE STATE OF MONTANA:

4 That the first week of April be designated as Montana Soil Health Week.

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Wednesday of the first week of April be designated as Soil
6 Health Day and that the people of Montana, the Montana Department of Agriculture, the Montana Department
7 of Natural Resources and Conservation, and the Montana Association of Conservation Districts are encouraged
8 to observe the day.

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send copies of this resolution to the director
10 of the Department of Agriculture, the Office of the Governor, the director of the Department of Natural
11 Resources and Conservation, the director of the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, the
12 administrator of the Forestry Division of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, each federally
13 recognized tribal government in Montana, and Montana's Congressional Delegation.

14
15 - END -