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Feb. 19, 2016

To: EQC members
From: Jason Mohr, research analyst, LEPO
Re: Environmental Indicators

State law asks the Environmental Quality Council to “gather timely and authoritative information concerning the conditions and trends in the quality of the environment...”¹ The most recent documentation of this duty is a 1996 publication, “Our Montana Environment...Where Do We Stand?” In this document, the council identified 13 areas that are indicators the health of Montana’s environment. These areas are population, economic conditions, land use, agriculture, forests, wildlife, energy, minerals, remediation, waste, water quantity, water quality, outdoor recreation.

In 2014, the EQC approved a resumption of this effort. The 2015-16 EQC continues this; the council work plan includes “gather[ing] information concerning conditions and trends in the quality of the environment” as part of the its statutory duties.²

The attachments to this memo are examples of what will be a web-based repository of environmental indicators. The first task of staff is to update trend information in the 13 areas contained in the 1996 report. This is nearly complete, as evidenced by the Environmental Indicators index page attached.

In the future, EQC staff will fully explore the vast amounts of environmental data now being collected and add relevant measures to this initial list of indicators. Staff welcomes any and all suggestions from council members.

¹ Section 75-1-324, MCA

² Environmental Quality Council, “Work Plan for the 2015-16 Interim,” 9.