

## What is the EQC?

The Environmental Quality Council (EQC) is a state legislative committee created by the 1971 Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). As outlined in MEPA, the EQC's purpose is to encourage conditions under which people can coexist with nature in "productive harmony". The committee fulfills this purpose by assisting the Legislature in the development of natural resource and environmental policy, by conducting studies on related issues, and by serving in an advisory capacity to the state's natural resource programs.

## How can the public become involved?

Members of the public can become involved in the activities of the EQC by attending committee meetings or by contacting committee members or the EQC office. Participation in EQC activities provides interested persons with the opportunity to:

- ▶ access information on the state's natural resources;
- ▶ assist in the oversight of the state's natural resource programs;
- ▶ become involved in the creation and resolution of complex policy issues; and
- ▶ promote governmental accountability.

The EQC deals with some of the most complex and divisive issues in the state. It welcomes your involvement in the discussion and resolution of these issues.

## Who is on the EQC?

The EQC has 17 members: 6 state senators; 6 state representatives; 4 members of the public; and 1 nonvoting member who represents the Governor. The EQC is bipartisan. The House, Senate, and public members are all chosen by the majority and minority leaders of each house.

EQC members serve 2-year terms. Members may serve no more than three terms.

### *Senate Members*

Bradley Maxon Hamlett (D-Cascade), Vice Presiding Officer  
Jim Keane (D-Butte)  
Rick Ripley (R-Wolf Creek)  
Jim Shockley (R-Victor)  
Mitch Tropila (D-Great Falls)  
Bruce Tutvedt (R-Kalispell)

### *House Members*

Sue Dickenson (D-Great Falls)  
Julie French (D-Scobey)  
Mike Milburn (R-Cascade)  
Cary Smith (R-Billings)  
Chas Vincent (R-Libby), Presiding Officer  
Franke Wilmer (D-Bozeman)

### *Public Members*

Brian Cebull (Billings)  
Diane Conradi (Whitefish)  
Mary Fitzpatrick (Billings)  
Jeff Pattison (Glasgow)

### *Governor's Representative*

Mike Volesky

## Who staffs the EQC?

The Legislative Environmental Policy Office (LEPO) staff, under the supervision of the Legislative Environmental Analyst, assists EQC members in completing their duties. Staff responsibilities include conducting studies,

writing reports, reviewing natural resource agency actions, organizing public meetings, drafting legislation, and serving as committee staff to several legislative committees during legislative sessions.

The LEPO staff acts as an impartial and nonpolitical source of information on environmental matters for the EQC, the Legislature, and the public. Current staff are:

Legislative Environmental Analyst . . . Todd Everts  
Research Analyst . . . . . Joe Kolman  
Research Analyst . . . . . Sonja Nowakowski  
Research Analyst . . . . . Hope Stockwell  
Research and Publications . . . . . Maureen Theisen

## 2009-2010 EQC Activities

This interim, the EQC will study topics assigned by the Legislative Council (House Joint Resolution No. 1, House Joint Resolution No. 15, House Joint Resolution No. 30, Senate Joint Resolution No. 28), as well as those of interest to EQC members (environmental public health tracking, solvency of the Petroleum Tank Release Fund). The EQC will also continue its traditional statutory and agency oversight duties while communicating with Executive Branch agencies on natural resources issues.

### **HJR 1 - Biomass**

HJR 1 grew out of the EQC's 2007-08 climate change study, in which the EQC identified the expanded use of biomass as an energy source as a potentially important policy directive deserving further evaluation. HJR 1 will consider funding alternatives for research and development, use of tax and loan incentives, use of pilot projects, emissions impacts and mitigation, and the availability of the forest biomass resource.

### **HJR 15 - Public Access for Tourism and Recreational Activities**

This study will examine the feasibility of and possible funding sources for establishing a program that would provide monetary incentives to private landowners who allow the public to access their land for recreational and tourism-related activities.

### **HJR 30 - Fire Suppression**

HJR 30 follows up on the work of the 2007-08 Fire Suppression Interim Committee, which arrived at a number of conclusions and recommendations regarding issues related to the severity and cost of fighting wildfires in Montana. Some recommendations became legislation and others were intended to be considered by the public, as well as local, state, and federal governmental agencies and private industry. HJR 30 will monitor the implementation of the legislation that was enacted, as well as the portions of the budget of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation that are impacted by wildland fire mitigation and suppression.

### **SJR 28 - Recycling**

SJR 28 asks for a study of potential ways to increase recycling rates in Montana, including ways to promote new markets for recycled materials and ideas for overcoming challenges related to recycling in rural areas. The study also seeks to address the recycling of electronic and hazardous household waste.

The EQC has adopted a work plan for completing each of these studies and must report its conclusions and recommendations to the 2011 Legislature.

### **Agency Oversight and Statutory Duties**

Although the EQC bases its interim work in large part on the studies assigned by the Legislative Council, the foundation of its work are the statutory duties outlined in MEPA and in other sections of the law.

Specifically, the EQC will:

- ▶ conduct rule review for the Montana Departments of Environmental Quality, Natural Resources and Conservation, and Fish, Wildlife, and Parks;
- ▶ perform a general review of the EQC's statutory duties;
- ▶ monitor agency compliance and enforcement reporting; and
- ▶ review natural resource litigation.

**Other topics** that the EQC has asked to or is statutorily required to keep informed about include:

- ▶ the progress of the water adjudication process initiated by House Bill No. 22 (2005);
- ▶ the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Service's public health tracking project on environmental hazards; and
- ▶ leaking underground storage tanks.

For more information, please contact the EQC:

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P.O. Box 201704  
Helena, MT 59620-1704  
406 444-3742  
<http://leg.mt.gov/eqc>

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