



**TREASURE STATE**  
**RESOURCES ASSOCIATION**  
OF MONTANA

P.O Box 1700, Helena, Montana 59624  
Phone: (406) 443-5541

**TREASURE STATE RESOURCES ASSOCIATION NEWS**  
December, 2023



*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!*

**TSRA Welcomes New Executive Director – John Iverson, Iverson Consulting**

As shared earlier, TSRA's Executive Director for the past several years is retiring the end of December. We are excited to introduce our new Executive Director, John Iverson, who is working with the outgoing director, Peggy Trenk to make a smooth transition.

Iverson provides government affairs, lobbying and association management services through his boutique consulting firm, Iverson Consulting.

Iverson grew up in Shelby, MT. He received a BA in Accounting from Carroll College, and a Master Degree of Business Administration from the University of Montana. He has worked in both government and private industry prior to forming Iverson Consulting in 2012.

John currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Montana Council on Problem Gambling and was appointed to the Montana Facility Finance Authority by Governor Gianforte.

John enjoys water sports, snow skiing, and hunting, but spends most of his time raising five young children with his wife, Jenny.

John can be reached at [http://jiverson@tsria.net](mailto:jiverson@tsria.net) or by calling 406-459-3344.

### **TSRA Contact Information:**

TSRA's address and general telephone number will remain the same.

Mailing address is: P.O. Box 1700, Helena, Montana. 59624

TSRA Phone: 406-443-5541

Website: <http://treasurestateresources.org/>

## **Governor Gianforte to Launch Property Tax Task Force**

Source: MT Governor's Office, December 5, 2023

HELENA, Mont. – Governor Greg Gianforte has announced he will launch a task force to address rising property taxes and how to restrain their growth to help Montana homeowners.

“Property taxes are too high. Over this year and next, our \$1,350 property tax rebate will provide the average Montana homeowner with relief that more than offsets their property tax increase,” Gov. Gianforte said.

“While these property tax rebates will help in the short term, we need long-term reforms to keep property taxes as low as possible, and we must be deliberate and thoughtful as we develop, enact, and implement those solutions,” Gov. Gianforte continued. “Our property tax task force will deliver an actionable plan to rein in property taxes for legislators to consider for their next regular session in January 2025.”

“Leading legislators in tax policy, stakeholders, and others will be at the table. They’ll leave no stone unturned to bring down property taxes, including providing solutions to reform the appraisal system, increase Montanans’ participation in mill levy elections, and rein in local spending, which is the primary driver of increased property taxes.”

Governor Gianforte will name the task force’s members and their charge in January.

The governor concluded, “We have a model that works: our housing task force delivered meaningful solutions and results, and I’m confident that the property tax task force will do the same.”

## **Puget Sound Energy Announces Clean Energy Wind Project**

Source: Puget Sound Energy, December 7, 2023

Contact: Andrew Padula, 888-831-7250, [http://psenewsroom@pse.com](mailto:psenewsroom@pse.com)

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) has announced it is developing the Beaver Creek wind farm, a utility-scale wind project that will be located on the high plains in Stillwater County, Montana.

The Beaver Creek wind farm is the latest addition in a growing list of renewable energy resources that PSE is acquiring as it works toward complying with Washington state’s ambitious clean energy laws. By 2030, the amount of new, non-emitting generation resources PSE will need to have is more than the utility has accumulated in its 150-year history.

The wind farm will have an expected initial nameplate capacity of 248 megawatts (MW), enough energy to power about 83,000 homes a year. Additionally, there will be an opportunity to add wind turbines in neighboring Sweet Grass County, as well as a lithium-ion battery energy storage system to shape Beaver Creek’s variable wind output and better match PSE’s customer energy needs. Montana wind has a high production rate that is especially valuable during extremely cold weather in the Pacific Northwest, when high pressure systems mean that Washington wind farms produce less energy. "

"PSE is undergoing one of the largest clean energy transformations of any utility in the country," said Mary Kipp, president and CEO of Puget Sound Energy. "Our priority is meeting our customers’ demand for clean energy while continuing to deliver the safe and reliable energy they also expect."

PSE has been a partner in Montana's energy economy since the 1970s and continues to invest in the state of Montana and its communities. The project will interconnect on NorthWestern Energy's system and will use existing PSE transmission on the Colstrip Transmission System to bring the wind energy back to PSE customers.

The Beaver Creek project will utilize federal tax credits and comply with provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act that emphasize the importance of union and/or prevailing wage jobs and apprenticeship programs for tradespeople involved with the project. It is also PSE's intent to use domestically produced products when possible. The wind farm is expected to utilize an estimated 150-200 skilled workers during construction with an ongoing need for 10-15 permanent on-site workers during operation. Construction is set to begin in the spring of 2024, with the facility expecting to be operational in 2025.

As part of the clean energy transition, PSE continues to partner with energy producers in the state of Montana. Recent examples include power purchase agreements signed with Energy Keepers, Inc., the tribally owned corporation of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes for hydroelectric power, and an agreement with NextEra for power from Montana's largest wind farm, Clearwater Wind, based in Rosebud, Custer and Garfield Counties. Learn more about these projects and PSE's work in Montana at [www.psemontana.com](http://www.psemontana.com).

Earlier this year, PSE announced the expansion of its largest wind farm in Washington state, located near Pomeroy, Washington; signed a contract to purchase wind power from Vantage Wind Energy Center in Ellensburg, WA; and signed a long-term clean energy contract with Chelan PUD to receive renewable hydropower from the PUD's two projects on the Columbia River. Since 2019, PSE has added more than 1,000 MW of renewable nameplate capacity to its system.

## **Canada lynx draft recovery plan available for public review and comment**

**A 60-day public comment period closes on January 30, 2024**

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, December 1, 2023

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking public input on a [draft recovery plan](#) for the lower 48 distinct population segment of Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), informed by an [updated species status assessment](#). The Canada lynx lower 48 DPS includes populations in northern Maine and

northeastern New Hampshire, northeastern Minnesota, northwestern Montana and north Idaho, northcentral Washington, and southwestern Colorado. Researchers have also documented

Canada lynx in the Greater Yellowstone Area of northwest Wyoming and southwestern Montana. Federal agencies manage a significant portion of these lands.

Canada lynx are native to North American boreal forests and depend heavily on snowshoe hare populations, their main prey. Lynx have unique adaptations for moving through deep snow, such as their snowshoe-like paws and long legs. Under the Endangered Species Act, a DPS is a portion of a species or subspecies' population or range and is described geographically instead of biologically.

In 2000, the Canada lynx DPS was designated as threatened under the ESA mainly due to insufficient regulations and protections. The Service and conservation partners at state and federal agencies have made progress in creating science-based conservation measures to address these issues. Currently, the primary obstacle to the long-term conservation of this DPS is the projected impacts of global climate warming on boreal forest habitats and the species depending on them, including lynx and snowshoe hares.

Recovery plans are non-regulatory documents required by the ESA that serve as a road map toward ensuring a species' long-term survival in the wild. Recovery plans outline site-specific management actions that contribute to species recovery, describe the time and cost estimates for implementing those actions, and outline measurable criteria for delisting.

This announcement marks the beginning of a 60-day public comment period for the public to submit comments through January 30, 2024, at [CanadaLynxRPCComments@fws.gov](mailto:CanadaLynxRPCComments@fws.gov). The Service welcomes input from the public, federal, Tribal, state, and local governments, as well as other stakeholders. The Service is particularly interested in information about existing threats, ongoing management initiatives, and other factors related to implementing the proposed recovery actions outlined in the plan.

The draft recovery plan and its associated documents, including the notice of availability, species status assessment report, and recovery implementation strategy, can be found at <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3652>. For more information about recovery plans, please visit <https://www.fws.gov/program/recovery/recovery-plans>.

The Service anticipates publishing a final recovery plan within one year.

## **North American wolverine receives federal protection as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act**

**The Service seeks public comment on an interim 4(d) rule promoting measures tailored to the wolverine's conservation needs.**

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, November 30, 2023

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced its final rule to list the distinct population segment of the North American wolverine in the contiguous U.S. as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The Service is also issuing an interim rule under ESA section 4(d) tailored to the wolverine's conservation needs that exempts take related to research activities, take incidental to lawful trapping for other species, and take resulting from forest management activities associated with wildfire risk reduction in the contiguous U.S.

"Current and increasing impacts of climate change and associated habitat degradation and fragmentation are imperiling the North American wolverine," said Pacific Regional Director Hugh Morrison. "Based on the best available science, this listing determination will help to stem the long-term impact and enhance the viability of wolverines in the contiguous United States."

In September 2023, the Service updated its 2018 species status assessment for the North American wolverine with an [addendum](#) that reflects new information since 2018. The addendum evaluated updated information on climate change, habitat connectivity, trapping, snow, population density, and impacts on genetic diversity, as well as considered changes in regulatory mechanisms and conservation measures. The North American wolverine is a medium-sized carnivore found within the Northern Rocky Mountains and North Cascade Mountains in the contiguous U.S. and alpine regions, boreal forests, and tundra of Alaska and Canada. Wolverines are snow-adapted, cold-climate, territorial animals with large home ranges.

In 2013, the Service proposed to list the North American wolverine in the contiguous U.S. as threatened under the ESA. In 2020, after reevaluating the wolverine's status, the Service determined listing the wolverine was not warranted. In 2022, the District Court of Montana vacated that decision, requiring the wolverine to be reconsidered for listing under the ESA. The proposed and final rules and the comments received on the proposed rule are available [here](#) on the Federal Register, Docket No. FWS-R6-ES-2023-0216.

The Service requests comments or information from other concerned federal and state agencies, Tribes, the scientific community, or any interested party concerning the interim 4(d) rule. A 60-day comment period begins Nov. 30, 2023 and comments must be received by Jan. 29, 2024. The

proposal and information on how to submit comments can be found at <https://www.federalregister.gov> by searching Docket No.FWS-R6-ES-2023-0216. For more information see the FAQ document here: <https://www.fws.gov/question-answer/us-fish-and-wildlife-service-announces-final-rule-list-north-american-wolverine>

## **Upcoming Legislative Meetings:**

### **Local Government Interim Committee**

**Next Meeting is Scheduled for January 23-25, 2024**

**Where: State Capitol & Zoom**

For more information go to: [committee website](#)

### **Revenue Interim Committee**

**Next Meeting is Scheduled for January 22-23, 2024**

**Where: State Capitol Room & Zoom**

For more information go to: [committee's website](#).

Contact committee staff, [Megan Moore](#), with any questions.

### **Water Policy Interim Committee**

**Next Meeting is Scheduled for January 16-17, 2024**

**Where: State Capitol & Zoom**

An agenda and materials will be available at <http://leg.mt.gov/water> For more information, contact Jason Mohr, committee staff, at 406-4444-1640 or <http://jason.mohr@legmt.gov>.



## **Environmental Quality Council**

**Next Meeting is Scheduled for January 18, 2023**

**Where: State Capitol Room & Zoom**

Please use this link to check in for more information:

<https://leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/>

## **Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee**

**Next Meeting is Scheduled for January 18, 2024**

**Where: State Capitol & Zoom**

For more information go to:

<https://leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/etic/meeting-info/>

### **Upcoming Events/Dates:**

May 28-30, 2024

Montana Stockgrowers MidYear Meeting  
Miles City, MT

June 12-13, 2023

Treasure State Resources Association Annual Meeting  
The Forge Hotel, Anaconda, MT

*If you don't want to receive the TSRA Newsletter, please let me know. If you want to share with others in your company or organization, please do so. The mission of the Treasure State Resources Association is to promote and enhance the Montana Way of Life through responsible resource development.*