

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 32

INTRODUCED BY J. DOOLING, J. COHENOUR, D. BARTEL, P. TUSS

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A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF THE FEASIBILITY OF DEVELOPING SURFACE AND GROUND WATER STORAGE IN MONTANA; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 69TH LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, Montana is a headwaters state; and

WHEREAS, the ability to develop new uses and expand existing water uses for Montana’s citizens depends on the development and use of engineered and natural water storage; and

WHEREAS, capitalizing on opportunities to enhance surface and ground water storage through the state will directly address water supply challenges; and

WHEREAS, engineered and natural storage can effectively supply water to meet multiple demands, such as municipal and recreational; and

WHEREAS, the evaluation of existing water storage projects capacity and available water needs to be quantified; and

WHEREAS, funding for water storage in the state is extremely limited; and

WHEREAS, the capacity for ground water storage has not been fully developed in the state; and

WHEREAS, the balance between development of new water rights and the protection of existing water rights must be maintained, and storage provides a viable solution; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that Montana fully understand storage opportunities as a means to provide increased food security for the state, increase agriculture production, and provide mitigation water to offset adverse effects from new water uses.

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

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate the Water Policy Interim Committee, subject to

1 section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to examine issues related to water storage in the
2 state.

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the study examine:

4 (1) existing storage infrastructure, including the volume, timing, use, and availability of stored
5 water;

6 (2) engineering and water rights assessment of operations and maintenance, current conditions,
7 future modifications for irrigation, the opportunity to increase storage, and hydropower options;

8 (3) impacts of natural and engineered storage on aquatic resources as well as water quality and
9 quantity related to drought, high water temperatures, and evaporation and options to mitigate these impacts;

10 (4) the distribution of storage projects throughout the state;

11 (5) the type of storage projects, including surface water storage and ground water storage;

12 (6) opportunities for engineered and natural surface water and ground water throughout the state,
13 including private, state, and federally owned projects;

14 (7) a long-term funding strategy, including state and federal cost share, to develop new projects or
15 enhance existing projects; and

16 (8) the analysis of opportunities for the development of irrigation and other uses at Tiber Dam,
17 including but not limited to the feasibility of ownership transfer to the state, options for contracting water, or
18 administration by other means.

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
20 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
22 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2024.

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
24 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 69th Legislature.

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