

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN ENERGY POLICY

FOR THE STATE OF MONTANA -- HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

April 16, 1977

Energy Extraction

1. The federal government should lease no more coal in Montana until a federal law is passed defining a policy on reclamation, including the role of state reclamation laws which are at least as stringent as federal regulations.
2. The Department of State Lands should adopt rules and regulations for coal leasing procedures, including further definition of the selective denial criteria found in Section 9 (50-1042, R.C.M. 1947) of the Strip and Underground Mine Reclamation Act.
3. The Coal Conservation Act should be supported and strengthened.
4. Continued research in the area of revegetation should be supported and any weakening of the Montana Strip and Underground Mine Reclamation Act should be opposed.
5. There should be no reduction of the current coal severance tax.
6. Future oil and gas exploration with adequate safeguards should be encouraged.
7. The Department of Health and Environmental Sciences should develop uranium mining procedures; similar action should also be taken by the federal government.
8. The moratorium on uranium solution mining should be extended until the Board of Health and Environmental Sciences adopts rules regulating this process.
9. The state should utilize and appraise where possible and practical the opportunities for direct use of the earth's heat in agriculture, industrial processes, and the heating and cooling of buildings. The use of such heat through public information, zoning laws, building codes, financial incentives and data collection should be encouraged.
10. The state should make every effort to protect the important and productive alluvial valley floors in Montana.

Energy Conversion

1. A renewable energy data collection program should be established in the governor's energy resource policy office.

2. The state should permit and encourage shifts from natural gas and oil to coal where environmental standards can be met.
3. Large-scale radioactive waste disposal in Montana should be opposed.
4. Actions which improve the conversion efficiency of large-scale and small -scale energy and industrial facilities should be encouraged.
5. The state should not provide financial support and should otherwise remain neutral in construction of a coal gasification plant in Montana at this time.
6. State agencies should actively pursue federal funding for alternative energy research and development.
7. Every effort should be made to minimize adverse transboundary impacts to Montana from energy developments outside the state; Montana should give the same consideration to its neighboring states and provinces.

Siting of Facilities

1. Industrial facilities which would have a significant impact on the communities in which they are to be located should come under the review provided by the Major Facility Siting Act. Appropriate state agencies should continue to monitor the environmental, social, and economic impacts of all facilities approved.
2. In reviewing applications for energy facilities under the Major Facility Siting Act, decisions should be based primarily on Montana's needs, with allowances made for interstate utilities operating in this state. Public need for the product to be manufactured should not be considered in reviewing applications for facilities that do not generate energy.
3. Hearing proceedings and decisions made under the Major Facility Siting Act should be expedited to avoid costly and unnecessary delays.
4. Physical criteria should be established as soon as possible for a siting inventory to identify areas unsuitable for major facilities.

Energy Conservation and Public Participation

1. The Department of Administration, as the central authority for enforcement of energy conservation provisions in the state building code should quickly adopt uniform standards for energy conservation in public buildings.
2. Energy conservation and alternative energy income tax incentives should be provided for expenditures for constructing or installing a recognized nonfossil form of energy generation or a capital investment in a building for energy conservation purposes.

3. The state should expand its home weatherization program for citizens of Montana; where practical, weatherization programs should be consolidated within the Department of Community Affairs. Utility companies are encouraged to establish programs, provided for under current law, for low-interest weatherization loans.

4. The state should consider the life-cycle cost of state buildings and vehicles with emphasis on energy conservation throughout the life of the building or vehicle.

5. Local school districts should implement energy conservation by developing curricula for conservation education in the classroom and by conserving energy in school buildings and school transportation systems.

6. Solid waste management should be analyzed as a means of conserving energy.

7. The executive branch of state government should inform the public on the facts surrounding energy issues, with particular emphasis on energy conservation, and should develop and apply effective means for including an informed public in the energy policy process. The AERO program should be commended as an excellent example of involving the public in these issues.

The Montana legislature should act to insure the participation of Montana citizens in, and interim review of, executive branch decision-making on energy issues.