

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 935

2 INTRODUCED BY M. THIEL, B. CARTER, S. MANESS, R. MINER, G. OBLANDER, G. PARRY, J.

SCHILLINGER

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5 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A STUDY OF DEPARTMENT SUSPENSION OR  
6 CLOSURE OF NEW GROUND WATER APPROPRIATIONS IN THE FOX HILLS-HELL CREEK AQUIFER;  
7 PROVIDING FOR A FEASIBILITY STUDY OF GROUND WATER AVAILABILITY; PROVIDING REPORTING  
8 REQUIREMENTS; APPROPRIATING FUNDS; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A  
9 TERMINATION DATE."

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11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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13        NEW SECTION. Section 1. Fox Hills-Hell Creek aquifer -- temporary suspension of action on  
14        permits -- temporary suspension of action on permits -- groundwater GROUND WATER study. (1) In order to  
15        balance the need for continued development of Montana's water and for protection of existing water rights in  
16        the Fox Hills-Hell Creek aquifer, the department may SHALL suspend action on a class of applications or may  
17        close an aquifer source and refuse to accept a class of applications, or both, for a permit to appropriate ground  
18        water from that source pursuant to this part.

19 (2) Pursuant to subsection (1), the department may suspend or close permit applications to  
20 appropriate ground water from the Fox Hills-Hell Creek aquifer within department administrative boundaries  
21 39E, 39FJ, 39G, 39H, 40D, 40E, 40P, 40Q, 40R, 40S, 42A, 42C, 42J, 42K, 42KJ, 42L, and 42M if the proposed  
22 appropriation is 3,000 gallons a minute or more EXCEEDS THE PERMIT EXCEPTIONS PROVIDED IN 85-2-306.

23 (3) In order to balance the need for continued development of Montana's water and for protection  
24 of existing water rights in the Fox Hills-Hell Creek aquifer, the department may suspend action on a class of  
25 applications or may close an aquifer source and refuse to accept a class of applications, or both, for a permit to  
26 appropriate ground water from that source pursuant to this part.

27 (2) Pursuant to subsection (1), the department shall suspend or close permit applications to

**Amendment - 2nd Reading/2nd House-tan - Requested by: Willis Curdy - (S) Committee of the Whole**

- 2025

69th Legislature 2025

Drafter: Jason Mohr,

HB0935.003.001

1 appropriate ground water from the Fox Hills-Hell Creek aquifer within department administrative boundaries  
2 40P, 42M, and the portion of 40S east of the Redwater River if the proposed appropriation exceeds a permit  
3 exemption provided by 85-2-306.

4 (3) The bureau of mines and geology shall complete a feasibility study on ground water availability  
5 FROM THE FOX HILLS-HELL CREEK AQUIFER in the department administrative boundaries listed in subsection (2)  
6 39E, 39FJ, 39G, 39H, 40D, 40E, 40P, 40Q, 40R, 40S, 42A, 42C, 42J, 42K, 42KJ, 42L, AND 42M. THE STUDY MAY

7 INCLUDE:

8 (A) THE COMPILATION AND UPDATE OF NEW GEOLOGIC AND HYDROGEOLOGIC DATA;  
9 (B) A LIMITED FIELD COLLECTION OF WATER LEVELS AND PRESSURE FOR WELLS WITH HISTORICAL DATA;  
10 (C) A PRELIMINARY WATER BUDGET FOR THE FOX HILLS-HELL CREEK AQUIFER; AND  
11 (D) A PRELIMINARY MODEL TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTS OF PUMPING ON WATER LEVELS AND PRESSURE.

12 (4)(2)(4) THE BUREAU SHALL REPORT THE PROGRESS AND RESULTS OF ITS STUDY TO THE WATER  
13 POLICY INTERIM COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED IN 5-5-231, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 5-11-210. THE COMMITTEE SHALL  
14 CONSIDER THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE FOR DEPARTMENT  
15 SUSPENSION OR CLOSURE OF NEW GROUND WATER APPROPRIATIONS FROM THE FOX HILLS-HELL CREEK AQUIFER.

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17 NEW SECTION. Section 2. Transfer. By June 30, 2025, the state treasurer shall transfer \$5,000  
18 \$50,000 FROM THE GENERAL FUND to the ground water assessment account in 85-2-905.

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20 NEW SECTION. Section 3. Appropriation. There is appropriated \$5,000 \$50,000 from the general  
21 fund to the bureau of mines and geology for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, for a feasibility study  
22 pursuant to subsection (3) of [section 1(1)(3)].

23

24 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Codification instruction. [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an  
25 integral part of Title 85, chapter 2, part 3, and the provisions of Title 85, chapter 2, part 3, apply to [section 1].

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27 NEW SECTION. Section 5. Effective date. [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

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**2                    NEW SECTION. Section 6. Termination.** [This act] terminates June 30, 2027.

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