

full_name	company_or_affiliation	comments
Larry Campbell		MEPA analysis should begin to evaluate impacts to climate change. Timber sales (including 'good neighbor' projects) need to receive much greater attention. Logging burns the candle at both ends...removing sequestration at the same time as releasing greenhouse gases. Calculations of sequestration recovery need to consider that climate change is coming on much faster than regeneration can occur. Judging from the rate of change in the past 10 years we may not have much time to make a difference.
Shaun Wilson-Woodrow		I want carbon dioxide and other planet warming gases treated like regulated pollutants.
Tasmine Harrington		Born and raised in Montana. I was born in Great Falls, so I'm familiar with the refinery aspect-the smell and air quality could be choking and cause health issues even back then in the 80's and 90's. Also being near the river, the impact on the environs could be seen. I now live in Butte, which of course is the largest Superfund site and also the most poisonous water pit in the US. By not updating our EPA and DEQ regulations when considering the extended lives of Montanans versus easy and quick ways for money and and energy, we risk the health of all, and the quality of life for future generations. For a state that relies heavily on farming and ranching, as well as our vast history of wildlife and land access, it behooves the state to update all regulations to consider those impacts in the future, and to also take into consideration any public comment from citizens potentially impacted by said projects.
Christopher J Thompson	Synchronicity: Massage, Health & Wellness Center	I am writing to provide comments on the proposed updates to the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) as requested. The suggestions below are aimed at modernizing MEPA, enhancing its analysis on greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts, and improving the effectiveness and consistency across state agencies. Modernization of MEPA: Digital Accessibility: -Ensure that all MEPA documents, processes, and databases are accessible online to both the public and relevant agencies. -Implement a digital platform that can automate some of the routine environmental review processes, and enable online public comments and engagements. Updating Guidelines: -Update and modernize the guidelines to include contemporary environmental concerns such as climate change, sustainable land use, and water management. -Inter-agency Collaboration: -Foster better coordination among various state, local, and federal agencies to ensure a comprehensive approach to environmental review and decision-making. MEPA Analysis of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Impacts: -Comprehensive Assessment: -Establish clear guidelines for a comprehensive greenhouse gas and climate impact assessment, covering both direct and indirect emissions. -Climate Mitigation and Adaptation: -Require projects to have a climate mitigation and adaptation plan which outlines measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and cope with climate impacts. Monitoring and Reporting: -Incorporate a system for continuous monitoring and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts. -Improving Efficiency and Consistency across State Agencies: Streamlined Process: -Streamline the MEPA review process by reducing redundancies, clarifying guidelines, and promoting a one-stop-shop approach for environmental review. Training and Capacity Building: -Organize regular training programs and workshops for state agencies to ensure that they are updated with the latest MEPA guidelines, best practices, and technical skills required for effective and efficient environmental review. Standardized Metrics: -Develop standardized metrics and indicators for assessing environmental impacts, which will promote consistency and comparability across different projects and agencies. These suggestions aim at ensuring that MEPA remains a robust tool for environmental protection and sustainable development in Montana. It's crucial that MEPA evolves in response to contemporary environmental
Laurel Urlacher		Hello, I am writing to please ask that the new ruling Held v. Montana be honored and that MEPA must consider environmental impacts and climate change when permitting future projects. I am a young person who is deeply concerned about the future of our home. My husband and I have decided not to have children as we are uncertain of what kind of world they would grow up in. I am not alone in these fears, and I ask that they be considered.
Jason Krumbeck		MEPA needs to include an analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts on all projects. Additionally, this should consider future mitigation costs of all projects. For example, mitigation costs per ton of CO2 released could be included in calculations upfront for overall cost to the ratepayers and taxpayers.
Janice A Jamruszka-Wilson		There should be no changes to the MEPA act. Montana law makers and other Montana voting residents were prescient when they voted for and installed the present laws according to constitutional mandate. Climate change effects are in our own backyard and we are positioned to enforce them and set a precedent in the nation. I say support them as written!

Kirk Stoner	Stoner Children LLC	<p>I am a fourth generation Montanan with the sixth generation of my family still living in Montana. I am a retired rural physician with a strong family history of farming and ranching.</p> <p>I feel that the science of the environment and climate have matured dramatically over the past fifty years. Like any science, it is not exact but through a process of peer review it's capabilities are improving by leaps and bounds. Many of the models used early in the evolution of the science have proved to be quite accurate considering the infancy of the science fifty years ago. Actually the changes predicted are happening faster and having more intense effects than originally predicted.</p> <p>We have a state Constitution that guarantees a healthy environment to our citizens. The MEPA gives the citizens a direct path to the state governmental decision making that often effects the environment. It is imperative that this citizen input be strengthened and that the science available to the DEQ be used in all decisions that may effect the environment of Montanans and our neighbors in different states or countries.</p> <p>The DEQ has expertise in the science that is needed to make judgments and must be empowered to use this science in evaluating all building permits that may effect the environment of Montanans. I see no reason that his cannot begin immediately. The DEQ decisions must be made public when they are available and construction must await a final DEQ report. The MEPA must be strengthened to include public notification of building permits and the DEQ report on those permits with a 2 month waiting period between the final public notification of a DEQ report being available and the initiation of construction. The public notification needs to be placed weekly in local papers as well as being posted publicly at DEQ headquarters and the state website for at least three weeks.</p> <p>There needs to be financial and/or incarceration penalties for evading the MEPA as well as restitution requirements for owners of violating companies and any state employee who fraudulently violates the act.</p>
Steven Stieler	Self	<p>The MEPA is an outstanding accomplishment of scientist's realization of a state that has to be protected at all costs. Climate change is REALITY and Montana needs to set an example as the "Last Best Place". We have to record any and all emissions that are released into our environment and prevent events from happening that cast a negative effect on our landscape. We need to stop drilling and digging holes in the ground and we need to stop the "profit over people" and "profit over the environment" attitudes. We have an obligation as stewards of the land to keep Montana special and to use science over politics to keep our state clean and our wild, public lands free of trash and pollutants. Montana is ranked 6th in the US and more than 100 countries for being responsible in emitting tens of millions of tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year. It's time for state agencies to lead with scientists and stop letting cowboys and ranchers dictate our way of life. They don't own the state. ALL Montanan's deserve DEQ to be responsible and do what is right to provide a CLEAN AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT for every Montanan which includes our tribal natives. DEQ should participate and be directly involved more with our tribal leaders and Native Science. Fossil fuels are derogating our water, soils, air quality and our ecology of the state. We have an opportunity to invoke clean energy into our policies to provide more higher paying job opportunities for a new generation of environmental stewards and protect this state before it's lost forever. DEQ has a responsibility to lead by scientific example and be the leaders not the followers. It's time for REALITY to govern our environment and not backward cowboy, rancher, archaic ideas poisoning our way of life. Please take this seriously because a clean and healthy environment is all we have left in our great state and we are going to ensure it stays that way.</p>
Mike Mershon	Montana Wildlife Federation	<p>Considering previous reforms to MEPA (which has occurred over a dozen times in the past 25 years) have led to decreased public participation, reduced disclosure and less rigorous analysis, I am urging caution in further reforming MEPA. However, if we are going to further "modernize MEPA" than please take into consideration how highly regarded our outdoor heritage is here in Montana. Montanans often give up opportunities available across the nation in exchange for the enjoyment afforded to us by a clean and healthful environment. So ideas that threaten our fish, game and environment also threaten the very foundation of existence for many Montanans.</p> <p>So I ask that you honor those of us who call Montana home by immediately taking into consideration climate change and green house gases impacts on our fisheries, wildlife habitat and the outdoor economy which relies upon said healthy habitats. Let's utilize the tools available to us like the federal SC-GHG to analyze these impacts today.</p>
Valerie Harrington		<p>Montana has a duty to protect its citizens from the effects of the climate crisis, particularly its youngest citizens. MEPA should reflect this responsibility and commit to stronger restrictions, including eliminating fossil fuel extraction in Montana, as fossil fuels are the number 1 cause of climate warming.</p>
Dawn Brintnall		<p>The time to act on climate is NOW. Direct and indirect effects of bowing to corporate interests will become ever apparent unless we change the tides. Climate must be considered with each application, clarity and public opportunity for comment is vital, and the DEQ must comply with these basic needs.</p> <p>As a current healthcare provider and future physician in this great state, it is my duty to speak up for policies and inequities that have the potential to harm health. A healthy Montana starts with clean air, pure water, and a nontoxic environment. Renewables are a great start that not only contributes to the previous needs, but will save Montana big on its bottom line as well as create jobs. In fact, switching to renewables will reduce annual total energy costs for Montanans by \$6.3 billion per year; 69.6% savings (Held. V Montana Finding of Fact # 275).</p> <p>The correct function of MEPA is critical to protecting the future of our gorgeous state and the health of our future generations.</p>
Rob Sisson	International Joint Commission	<p>MEPA should be a backstop for the citizens of the State of Montana especially when the Legislature passes unconstitutional laws like HB 599. MEPA should provide a comprehensive analysis of environmental threats caused by any action requiring a permit. For example, the proposed TMC Black gravel pit in Gallatin Gateway...under HB 599, you cannot consider the State's own Dept of Transportation's study on US-191, or USFWS or MTFWP analysis of wildlife, migration corridors, etc. Not to mention, HB 599 depends on the applicant's science! Government exists to protect its constituents. Corporations only exist because the people of a state wish to make conducting business more efficient--it is a privilege granted to a group of persons to make business more efficient by their fellow citizens under law. It is not a trump card to mow over the interests of citizens...human beings...who must live with the consequences of decisions made on the basis of maximum profit. MEPA should balance the environmental interests and needs of citizens with the need to conduct business...but the citizens should always come out on top.</p>
Trevor Beard		<p>MEPA needs a longer term view of its work, greenhouse emissions individually have small impact on our lives today. These greenhouse emissions cumulatively will affect our grandchildren unimaginably. The financial burden of these accumulated greenhouse emissions are not being properly assessed, investment now will pay off if some climactic change is averted. If MEPA could better forecast long term financial benefits of proper mitigation, perhaps smart incentives could be devised. There is a strong business positive aspect to proper long term greenhouse emissions financial assessments, smart investment and mitigation now is a money maker in the future.</p>

Todd Tanner	<p>Montanans have a constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. First and foremost, MEPA should guarantee that right. State agencies should consider the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of proposed projects. Projects that are at odds with our basic and essential right to a clean and healthful environment must be denied under MEPA.</p> <p>Climate change should be a core component of the MEPA process. As demonstrated by the Held v. Montana decision, Montana's promotion of, and reliance on, fossil fuels are at odds with our right to a clean and healthful environment. MEPA should require the State of Montana to deny new fossil fuel development projects — regardless of whether the fossil fuels in question are used in state or shipped outside our borders — and prohibit the use of fossil fuels in new electricity generating facilities here in Montana.</p> <p>There should be strict, substantive and enforceable civil and criminal penalties if industry or government fails to comply with MEPA.</p> <p>The DEQ should use accepted and up-to-date scientific methods to analyze the climate impacts associated with each and every project it considers.</p> <p>Any analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts should include the current social cost of carbon as designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.</p> <p>State agencies can become more thorough, balanced, efficient, and consistent by basing their decisions on science, facts, MEPA, other applicable laws and Montana's Constitution, rather than political expediency.</p> <p>The fact that Montana's state agencies promote fossil fuels and ignore climate change — which was demonstrated clearly during the Held v. Montana trial — is inexcusable and must end immediately.</p>
John Oetinger	<p>"streamlining" amounts to taking shortcuts, which I am opposed to when it comes to environmental reviews. Please continue with rigorous reviews. There is no rush. Get it right (better right than quick). Take into consideration the overall world impact of any decisions, as per the Held v Montana ruling, as well as the local impact.</p>
R G	<p>Please protect our air, land, water and wildlife. Montanans want the DEQ to uphold Montana's Constitution, protect our environment, and uphold our rights. Please stand up to the short term "political winds" of the moment and focus DEQ's policy on science, regulation of development, energy, and upholding our citizens' right to a clean air, healthy environment, and reducing carbon emissions for a stable climate.</p>
William H. Clarke	<p>DEQ and other state agencies have the tools they need to analyze the impacts of proposed projects, such as power plants, refineries, and coal mines, on the climate. DEQ should use the science and economic analyses that have already been developed to do this analysis. The federal social cost of greenhouse gasses (SC-GHG) is a tool that is readily available and shows that significant harm is already occurring.</p> <p>There are numerous environmental, health, and economic reports by credible experts, such the Montana Climate Assessment and economic reports by Dr. Thomas Power, regarding the climate impacts on Montana agriculture and the outdoor economy, detailing the environmental and financial harm to various sectors of Montana's economy and public health from greenhouse gas emissions</p>
JL Angell	<p>DEQ must start analyzing climate impacts immediately. DEQ should stop stalling and do as the court required under the youth climate trial, Held v. State of Montana. The crisis is urgent, DEQ must follow the constitution, and that means protecting Montanans' right to a stable climate. That is what is required by law and has been affirmed should have always been how government proceeded. Failing to do so now would be a breach of any oath or written commitments that came with the job of reviewing these comments or making other decisions for government.</p>
Julie Chapman	<p>Please, stop stalling and start NOW to do what the court ordered in Held v. State of Montana: analyze climate impacts immediately. You already have the tools you need to do this for proposed projects (power plants, coal mines, etc.). You should use the science and economic analyses - like the SC-GHG - to inform your work.</p> <p>There are many reports already out there regarding the climate impacts - the environmental and financial harms - to Montana agriculture and our outdoor economy. (See: Montana Climate Assessment).</p> <p>Our environment, our wildlands and wildlife, our outdoor recreation, our farmers, and future generations all depend on a livable climate. PLEASE TAKE ACTION NOW. I want to live in Montana - not a northern version of hot, arid southern Utah -- in the future.</p> <p>TAKE ACTION NOW TO ANALYZE CLIMATE IMPACTS AND LEAVE US A LIVABLE PLANET!</p>
David Patenaude	<p>Hello,</p> <p>Any attempt by DEQ to avoid analyzing climate change is stalling and avoiding what is required of the agency under Montana's constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment and Held v. State of Montana.</p> <p>DEQ and other state agencies have the tools they need to analyze the impacts of proposed projects, such as power plants, refineries, and coal mines, on the climate.</p> <p>DEQ should use the science and economic analyses that have already been developed to do this analysis. The federal social cost of greenhouse gasses (SC-GHG) is a tool that is readily available and shows that significant harm is already occurring.</p> <p>There are numerous environmental, health, and economic reports by credible experts, such as the Montana Climate Assessment and economic reports by Dr. Thomas Power, regarding the climate impacts on Montana agriculture and the outdoor economy, detailing the environmental and financial harm to various sectors of Montana's economy and public health from greenhouse gas emissions.</p>

Mark Canright	<p>Greetings! I am a young person, who cares greatly about protecting our environment. Thank you for all that you do To protect our environment, let's keep working together to succeed. And, left to reduce our reliance upon polluting fossil fuels, and transition more to renewable energy. Creates thousands of jobs, achieves energy independence, and helps us keep our air and water clean.</p> <p>DEQ and other state agencies have the tools they need to analyze the impacts of proposed projects, such as power plants, refineries, and coal mines, on the climate.</p> <p>DEQ should use the science and economic analyses that have already been developed to do this analysis. The federal social cost of greenhouse gasses (SC-GHG) is a tool that is readily available and shows that significant harm is already occurring.</p> <p>There are numerous environmental, health, and economic reports by credible experts, such the Montana Climate Assessment and economic reports by Dr. Thomas Power, regarding the climate impacts on Montana agriculture and the outdoor economy, detailing the environmental and financial harm to various sectors of Montana's economy and public health from greenhouse gas emissions. Thank you for your time and consideration! Have a great day.</p>
Will Swearingen	<p>I'm writing in response to your request for public comments on how to consider the environmental, economic, and social impacts of proposed projects that could harm the air, land, and water under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). These proposed projects include refineries, coal mines, and coal plants.</p> <p>Despite disparaging comments that it is "merely procedural," MEPA is a critical component of environmental permitting and public participation in Montana. This is because it requires state agencies to consider the various impacts (environmental, economic, social, and cultural) of proposed projects before their approval. And it also gives the public the opportunity to comment on anticipated impacts from these projects. Any changes to MEPA must ensure that it explicitly fulfills the government's obligation to maintain our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment as well as the public's constitutional right to know and to participate.</p> <p>As required by the constitution, and in accordance with the recent Held v. Montana court decision, climate change must be robustly considered in the MEPA process. The state has the obligation to deny permits in order to protect the public from environmental harm, including the harm now occurring from climate change. As the Held v. Montana trial illuminated, climate change is already causing profound impacts on Montanans' health, economy, and environment.</p> <p>DEQ already has the tools, knowledge, and ability to analyze and estimate climate change impacts that will result from proposed projects. Currently available tools include the federal government's social cost of greenhouse gasses (SC-GHG) analysis). There is no need to wait several years until the DEQ's proposed stakeholder group concludes in late 2024, the 2025 legislature weighs in, and the Supreme Court rules. In fact, a stakeholder group is unnecessary for developing a robust process for DEQ to analyze climate impacts. Establishing such a group runs counter to moves in the legislature and by the Governor to reduce red tape and bureaucracy.</p>
J Hillery Daily	<p>I ask that all DEQ consider the environmental and economic impacts of all proposed projects that harm the air, land, and water under the Montana Environmental Policy Act. Environmental concerns, particularly those related to and caused by climate change, are of critical importance. DEQ should do as the MT court required under the youth climate trial, Held v. State of Montana. The crisis is urgent, DEQ must follow the constitution and protect our right to a clean and healthful environment and a stable climate. DEQ and other state agencies already have the tools they need to analyze the impacts of proposed projects, such as power plants, refineries, and coal mines, on the climate.</p> <p>DEQ should use the science and economic analyses that have already been developed to do this analysis. The federal social cost of greenhouse gasses (SC-GHG) is a tool that is readily available and shows that significant harm is already occurring.</p> <p>There are numerous environmental, health, and economic reports by credible experts, such the Montana Climate Assessment and economic reports by Dr. Thomas Power, regarding the climate impacts on Montana agriculture and the outdoor economy, detailing the environmental and financial harm to various sectors of Montana's economy and public health from greenhouse gas emissions.</p>
Daryl Dammel	<p>I think Montana should obey the Montana Constitution by providing a clean environment..The environment should take precedence over polluting industry and profits. Republicans are ruining the state so that we can no longer be called the Last Best Place.</p>
Alexei Desmarais	<p>Ecology Project International</p> <p>I mainly wanted to submit a comment exhorting MT DEQ to include climate change impacts in the analysis of proposed projects. Climate change is a real and present threat, that is already negatively impacting Montana's economy and ecosystems, and the health of MT residents--as shown by numerous environmental, health, and economic reports by credible experts, such the Montana Climate Assessment.</p> <p>There are already existing scientific and economic analyses that have been developed to help guide this process--it would not require DEQ to develop any new tools or analyses. Montana could look to other states and federal programs who are already leading the way in integrating climate impacts into their environmental review process.</p> <p>And it is therefore MT DEQ's constitutional responsibility to include climate impacts in their environmental assessment of proposed projects, in order to protect the public from environmental harm such as the harm occurring right now from climate change.</p>
John Rodwick	<p>Please do not ignore the impact of climate change, greenhouse gases and environmental degradation in your analysis of projects. The kids have spoken and the courts agreed so you should not ignore global warming.</p>
Melanie West	<p>Montana Whitewater</p> <p>N/A</p>

Jack Venrick	None	<p>I am responding to an email I received from the Citizens For A Better Flathead to "tell MT DEQ that it must consider and address the climate crisis in its planning and policy decisions".</p>
		<p>So called "climate crisis" is a lie created by the eco extreme groups and those who benefit from the so called "alternative energy" businesses. This lie is also a globalist agenda by the UN and the New World Order to drive local state Citizens off their own public and private property and force them into "sustainable development" smart cities living in a cracker box riding bicycles using projected fear.</p>
		<p>Man made carbon dioxide gas is only .117% or .0017 of the total green house gases. The remaining 99.9% is natural. https://www.freedomforallseasons.org/GlobalWarmingMythsEmail/Carbon%20Dioxide%20Caused%20By%20Humans%20is%20.00117%20of%20Total.pdf .</p>
		<p>Government institutions, corporations and the liberal media monopoly have created another lie to sustain themselves. There is no truthful basis that we are in a climate crisis. The climate and the species are always in a natural evolutionary change driven largely by the sun solar radiation and sunspot activity.</p>
		<p>The man made catalytic convertors for automobiles has done more to solve big city pollution problems than any green extreme group hollering and waving signs for climate change. The last 8000 some years we are in an overall cooling period - https://www.freedomforallseasons.org/FreedomFromManCausedGlobalWarmingMyths.htm.</p>
		<p>Check out my near 20 years of research on below links to become free from all the global to local myths created to take your property, wages and unalienable rights away from your free choice. https://www.freedomforallseasons.org/FreedomFromManCausedGlobalWarmingMyths.htm https://www.freedomforallseasons.org/FreedomFromEnvironmentalExtremism.html https://www.freedomforallseasons.org/FreedomFromAlternativeEnergyMyths.htm https://www.freedomforallseasons.org/FreedomFromEndangeredSpeciesMythomania.htm https://www.freedomforallseasons.org/FreedomFromTaking.htm All research is here - https://www.freedomforallseasons.org/</p>
		<p>Every Montanan needs to stand up and kick out all the green extreme groups and outside interests who are creating false fears using junk science and engineering to drive us from using our own abundant resources given to us by God!</p>
		<p>Thank you for this opportunity to share my 20 years of research and networking with rural property owners.</p>
Ruth Swenson		<p>Science, economic analysis, reaching out to other states, and relying on climatic change experts are tools to analyze the impacts of fossil fuel extraction, fossil fuel combustion and transportation and fossil fuel refining on climate change.</p>
Beth Covitt		<p>Climate change must be robustly considered in the MEPA process, and DEQ has the tools they need to analyze the climate impacts of proposed projects now. DEQ should use the science and economic analyses that have already been developed to do this analysis. The federal social cost of greenhouse gases is a readily available tool. Any change to MEPA must stand up to, and conform with, constitutional requirements. MEPA needs to be strengthened, not weakened, and public disclosure and participation opportunities must be maintained. Thank you for protecting our clean and healthful environment that will sustain people and the panoply of living organisms that Montana is home to into perpetuity.</p>
Morgan DeWattau		<p>Why are these young activists rights more important than mine? It is easy being a green activist living at your parents home, not paying your cost of living and basically spunging of others. Instead of government bodies giving into populist opinions and agreeing that EV batteries and nuclear energy is "clean", these young activists and general population should stop buying a glutony of product that creates the whole supply chain circle of green house emissions increase. When these young activists eat avocado, they should learn how much water and energy it takes to produce them and how avocado industry is destroying whole areas and natural habitat for wild life around avocado plants in poor places like Mexico. Why are they awarded a court win when they polute with their many mobile phones, sneakers, clothes, make up, 10 different face cleansers and so on. By buying a supposedly cheaper product made in Bangladesh and transported here, there is more GHG produced then if that product would be grown locally. If they want to make a difference, find better solutions first, not complain and ruin everyone life by complaining. This judge really dissapointed me as that person clearly has no idea about costs of zero emissions.</p> <p>In my view, one solution to cut green house gases would be moderate consumption, reorganize supply chain transport and limit the number of transport truck numbers on the road. Even EV trucks are generating GHG and even worse polution with battery manufacturing. It is not only gas emmission, but other particles like tires, corroded parts, glass, that also get transfered into air and create polution. Train transportation should be utilized more as it can carry more goods and it does less poluting, but in 25 years after my MBA, main commercial transportaion is still a tractor trailer.</p> <p>I am asking everyone, for example, why do we need oranges being flown from South Africa, Morocco, avocados transported from Mexico, Chile, mangos from Brazil and so on? I grew up just fine on apples, watermelon, grapes, preserved fruits in the winter. Less consumption will also lower obesity rates as in my view, large body mass needs more food and energy that indirectly increases GHG. We all know high percentage of obesity in U.S.A.</p> <p>Controlled population is another, no matter how much optimization will be done, earth can support only a finite amount of living beings. Economy, growth, job creation assumes endless population increase and that is not sustainable.</p> <p>Lastly, instead of free drug injection sites and naxolon kits, use the funds to manage forests better instead. I wonder how many fires were started by self centered drunk, high, or simply malicious characters that we all are now paying for.</p>

Kenneth Hansen	<p>The exception of 10 acre-feet water usage for new water well permits is not responsible for water management that do not take into account previous water usage permits issued for existing wells. There should be clear guidelines on current water well usage by the current neighbors and an inquiry if the water well levels are dropping. Current registered water well usage given historically should be prioritized and protected. The burden should not be on the current neighbors to prove their water well usage that is dropping requires them to drill new deeper wells because of new permits given to new neighbor wells that depletes the current drill depth of existing wells.</p> <p>The inquiry into the protection of DNRC for existing water wells in a development area that is drilling new wells was just for the current water users to "Just drill a deeper well" is totally inappropriate and an undo economic burden on current water well right holders. New wells costing \$70 a foot with well depths up to 700' in our area plus the cost of installing a new well pump with water pipes and electric cables is not protecting current water rights granted to historical users.</p> <p>Existing water users should be prioritized and protected. New water users should be required to show they will not harm current water users. To just continuing to issue new water permits under the 10 acre-feet exception without protecting current water users is not justified. Burden on funding should be on the people seeking new water usage.</p> <p>Get rid of the 10 acre-feet exception for granting new well water permits if granting new permits can affect current well users. Study how the water levels are dropping by usage of existing wells before issuing new permits. Our well water table is dropping an average 1' per year. Our well pump depth when the well was drilled in 2001 was 75 feet below the water level. When I last measured it in 2022 the pump was 50 feet below the water level. So from new wells being drilled and current usage by surrounding neighbor pumps our water level drops about 1 foot a year. For the DNRC to just say "plan on drilling a deeper well in the future" is not appropriate planning by the DNRC for a Drought Management Plan.</p> <p>Global Warming will only make matters worse as the feast and famine with water supply makes water unavailable or when available causing flooding and runoff that damages public and private property.</p>
Alena Furlong	<p>I am writing to ask the MDEQ to uphold the July order issued in Held v. Montana, which requires the MDEQ to consider the climate impacts associated with its actions. A stable climate is a critical aspect to Montanans' fundamental right to a clean and healthful environment. The MDEQ needs to start analyzing climate impacts now and act accordingly to help protect our air, land, water and other environmental resources. This is literally your job and mission statement as posted on your website: "Our mission is to champion a healthy environment for a thriving Montana. " An update to the MEPA is not needed to do this.</p> <p>Energy companies in Montana need to be moving to renewable resources and held accountable for the pollution and damage they are doing to the environment. Regulatory processes such as permitting for construction and mining projects needs to have/be held accountable to environmental reviews/recommendations. There must be repercussions (such as denied permits) when industry or the government fail to comply with MEPA.</p> <p>It is my understanding that the MDEQ currently has the tools, knowledge and ability to analyze the climate change impacts associated with projects. Punting this analysis until after the stakeholder process is a stall tactic. The MDEQ should be analyzing climate impacts of proposed projects such as refineries, coal mines, and coal plants, with currently available tools (such as the federal government's social cost of greenhouse gasses (SC-GHG) analysis), even while finding other "modern" ways to act in protection of the Montana environment.</p> <p>I am certainly not an expert in this field, but the MDEQ is supposed to be. And there are many groups/professionals available to assist the MDEQ if needed (such as MEIC). I'm honestly not really sure why this "stakeholder" comment process is even being done, unless it is truly an attempt to delay the inevitable. Climate change is real and having significant negative impacts for Montana and the world. The sooner we start to address these issues, the healthier we all will be.</p> <p>Hopefully moving forward the MEPA can do what it really was intended to do. Thank you for your work.</p>
Mackenzie Cole	<p>We don't need any more stalls, streamlining, or other fake excuses to start implementing climate analysis and taking action with MEPA. All the tools are available, you need to buck up and take action. We need climate assessment and we need a DEQ that prioritizes emission reduction. Stop BSing and get to it.</p>
Brent Morrow, MS, MPA	<p>Self employed</p> <p>You must address the climate crisis now! ALL projects should be reviewed based on how climate change will be effected.</p>
Julie R. Howard	<p>Citizens For A Better Flathead</p> <p>DEQ and other state agencies have the tools they need to analyze the impacts of proposed projects, such as power plants, refineries, and coal mines, on the climate. DEQ should use the science and economic analyses that have already been developed to do this analysis. The federal social cost of greenhouse gases (SC-GHG) is a tool that is readily available and shows that significant harm is already occurring.</p> <p>There are numerous environmental, health, and economic reports by credible experts, such the Montana Climate Assessment and economic reports by Dr. Thomas Power, regarding the climate impacts on Montana agriculture and the outdoor economy, detailing the environmental and financial harm to various sectors of Montana's economy and public health from greenhouse gas emissions</p>

Amy Darling

Any changes to MEPA must assure that it still explicitly fulfills the government's obligation to maintain and improve the constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment as well as the public's constitutional right to know and participate. In order to preserve the integrity of the MEPA process, and not turn it into a paper exercise, MEPA cannot be rendered into a procedural, voluntary, non-substantive process. There must be repercussions when industry or the government fail to comply with MEPA.

Specifically, I would like to advocate for the following actions and considerations:

1. Climate change must be robustly considered in the MEPA process. It is causing profound impacts on Montanans' health, economy and environment, as found by the court in the Held decision. In weighing alternatives under MEPA, moving beyond fossil fuels will not only save Montanans billions of dollars in energy costs, but also improve health outcomes for all populations — but especially those most vulnerable to negative environment-related health issues.
2. Calls to reform MEPA center around its modernization, when in truth, MEPA has been "streamlined" and "modernized" more than a dozen times over the last 25 years. The significant changes to MEPA in 2011 resulted in less rigorous analysis and public disclosure, reduced public participation opportunities, and a reduced ability for the public to challenge agency decisions in court. However, any change to MEPA must stand up to, and conform with, constitutional requirements. Notably, two of the changes from 2011 have been found to be unconstitutional by Montana courts.
3. DEQ currently has the tools, knowledge and ability to analyze the climate change impacts associated with projects. Punting this analysis until after the stakeholder process is a stall tactic. When asked by the court in Held whether DEQ could analyze climate impacts in the MEPA process, DEQ stated, "I do believe we could do this kind of analysis, yes." Now DEQ seems to be saying that it can't comply with the court decision until its proposed stakeholder group concludes in late 2024, the 2025 legislature weighs in, and the Supreme Court rules. Instead of "kicking the can down the road," DEQ must comply with the district court decision and analyze climate impacts of proposed projects such as refineries, coal mines, and coal plants, with currently available tools (for example, utilizing the federal government's social cost of greenhouse gasses (SC-GHG) analysis).
4. A stakeholder group is unnecessary for developing a robust process for DEQ to analyze climate impacts. As the legislature and Governor move to reduce red tape and to eliminate boards and committees, the DEQ seems to be moving in the opposite direction.

Thank you for your consideration in this extremely important matter for Montanans' futures.

Valerie Hansen

The exception of 10 acre-feet water usage for new water well permits is not responsible for water management that do not take into account previous water usage permits issued for existing wells. There should be clear guidelines on current water well usage by the current neighbors and an inquiry if the water well levels are dropping. Current registered water well usage given historically should be prioritized and protected. The burden should not be on the current neighbors to prove their water well usage that is dropping requires them to drill new deeper wells because of new permits given to new neighbor wells that depletes the current drill depth of existing wells.

The inquiry into the protection of DNRC for existing water wells in a development area that is drilling new wells was just for the current water users to "Just drill a deeper well" is totally inappropriate and an undo economic burden on current water well right holders. New wells costing \$70 a foot with well depths up to 700' in our area plus the cost of installing a new well pump with water pipes and electric cables is not protecting current water rights granted to historical users.

Existing water users should be prioritized and protected. New water users should be required to show they will not harm current water users. To just continuing to issue new water permits under the 10 acre-feet exception without protecting current water users is not justified. Burden on funding should be on the people seeking new water usage.

Get rid of the 10 acre-feet exception for granting new well water permits if granting new permits can affect current well users. Study how the water levels are dropping by usage of existing wells before issuing new permits. Our well water table is dropping an average 1' per year. Our well pump depth when the well was drilled in 2001 was 75 feet below the water level. When I last measured it in 2022 the pump was 50 feet below the water level. So from new wells being drilled and current usage by surrounding neighbor pumps our water level drops about 1 foot a year. For the DNRC to just say "plan on drilling a deeper well in the future" is not appropriate planning by the DNRC for a Drought Management Plan.

Global Warming will only make matters worse as the feast and famine with water supply makes water unavailable or when available causing flooding and runoff that damages public and private property.

Donna Williams	Thank you for hosting these listening sessions. This process needs improvement. The fact that children have to sue the state to defend a right guaranteed by our constitution shows that these procedures aren't working. We have not been heard.	
	For example, we might be told to comment only on the impact of digging a trench to lay pipe from point A to point B. Meanwhile, we're told we can't consider the unholy amount of tar sands bitumen that would flow through that pipe from Alberta to the Gulf. That's like asking if the hypodermic needle is sterile before administering a lethal injection. These rabbit-hole conversations leave us feeling like our concerns won't be heard.	
	<p>1. Therefore, my first suggestion is: BROADEN THE SCOPE OF THE CONVERSATION. Actively solicit viewpoints from everyone, not just industry experts. I see no possible way to meet the overarching Intent and Purpose of Title 75 (MCA 75-1-102) without constant consideration of carbon emissions. Maybe we don't need to rewrite code, but adhere more closely to it. I think MCA 75-1-103 could have prevented Held v. Montana had it been followed more closely. Just because goals are lofty is not a good reason to abandon them.</p> <p>2. An ADEQUATE EA or EIS MUST CONSIDER GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS.</p> <p>That may seem daunting. I can only offer these ideas for streamlining that process to be more thorough, balanced, efficient, and consistent.</p> <p>3. Start with better policy. UPDATE MEPA TRAINING FOR POLICYMAKERS.</p> <p>Include a link or a copy of the executive summary of the latest IPCC report in the MEPA training packet. Also include the Findings of Fact written by Judge Kathy Seeley in the Held v. Montana case. (https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/23909019/20230814-held-v-montana-victory-order.pdf).</p> <p>Add them to the "Information Sources and Agency References" section of the "Guide to the Montana Environmental Policy Act."</p> <p>4. In addition to fiscal notes, TEST NEW LEGISLATION AGAINST A CLIMATE SIMULATOR, even if it's only the little EN-Roads climate calculator built by Climate Interactive.</p> <p>5. USE AVAILABLE PEER-REVIEWED SCIENCE. Thousands of scientists' research is already calculated, collated, and summarized in the IPCC reports. Use their calculations.</p> <p>6. SET A STANDARD CONSISTENT THRESHOLD, instead of trying to calculate the impact of each project. There is one simple threshold for carbon emissions recommended by thousands of scientists. Unfortunately, it's zero. Simple, but not easy. We'd need zero emissions in order to stay within the standards set by MEPA, because every additional amount worsens climate change. But, if zero emissions seems an unreasonable threshold to start with, then start with a higher threshold, and work toward zero in the future. Or divide projects by type, and start emissions caps on most impactful.</p> <p>7. START WITH THE BIG-TICKET ITEMS. A moratorium on all new fossil fuel infrastructure, transport, and extraction projects would help.</p>	
Gil Jordan	Retired	You have the science, and it is clear. Time's a wastin'. Why waste time with more review? Act now based on the science that is crystal clear, not to mention the daily news of climate disaster here and world-wide. What are you waiting for, the tipping point from where there is no return?
Ted Mead	In order to modernize MEPA it is imperative that all human actions that are causing climate change to be rigorously evaluated with the intent of limiting greenhouse gas emissions and any climate impacts. Any analysis of these impacts must look at both short term (5 yrs.<) and long term (5 yrs.) effects as well as reviewing any alternatives to the proposed actions.	
Roy O'Connor	Saroc	<p>Regarding state agencies being more balanced, efficient, and consistent, I feel all MEPA documents, meeting records, input processes, and relevant analysis must be available via an online digital portal which is easily accessed by Montana citizens.</p> <p>I would strongly suggest MEPA should take into account climate change and how a permit that would allow for pollution would affect our air, water, land, and climate. Scientists have proven that CO2 additions to our atmosphere causes the warming of the atmosphere and changes in our climate. I ranch and farm in Montana, and we can no longer rely on spring rains, winter snows keeping our irrigation waters available, and fires occurring only every 20 years or so. We now face drought and fires almost every year. We and MEPA cannot allow industries and polluters to make money off poisoning us and our environment. Permit them only if they prove they do not pollute, or that they will install a form of pollution capture that will insure our rights to a clean and healthful environment for all Montanans now and in the future.</p>
Nicholas Fitzmaurice	Montana Environmental Information Center	<p>The constitution charges DEQ, as an agent of the state, to take into consideration the potential climate impacts of projects undergoing permitting processes. DEQ has asked the public "What should an analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts include?" The process for analyzing climate impacts associated with various projects is straightforward. 14 other states already use the social cost of carbon to assess greenhouse gas emission climate impacts, including Colorado, Nevada, and Washington. Additionally, the social cost of carbon has been federally recommended for use in NEPA environmental reviews, as well as in federal agency budgeting, procurement, and other decision-making. Agencies such as the Department of Transportation and the U.S. Postal Service are already utilizing the metric.</p> <p>Incorporating climate impacts into your analyses is actually quite simple. The federally calculated social cost of carbon is currently estimated at about \$200 per ton of CO2 emitted, which can be directly applied to estimated greenhouse gas emissions from a project. Furthermore, the US Energy Information Administration has carbon dioxide emissions coefficients by fuel source readily available. Simply establish the type of fuel and volume to be consumed in a given project, then apply the coefficient to determine total emissions. For projects that don't directly emit from a point source, just add a couple of steps. First, you'll need to determine the approximate energy needs for a project, then you determine the fuel sources for that energy, and from there you can extrapolate emissions using the EIA coefficients. A project running heavy machinery, for example, could apply the diesel CO2 coefficient of 22 and a half pounds of CO2 per gallon of fuel combusted.</p> <p>Fugitive emissions are an issue that will require further analysis, but tracking emissions from fuel sources is a critical aspect of assessing climate impacts. These calculations provide necessary and valuable estimates from which to properly weigh the costs and benefits of a given project. The DEQ can use this information to deny permits when better, lower-impact project alternatives are available.</p> <p>Decarbonizing the Montana energy system is no doubt a transition of great proportion, but it can and must be done. Regulators and engineers throughout the system must adopt open minds to embrace the tremendous possibilities of what could be. You have had decades to incorporate climate impacts into your work, and postponing action further is causing severe damage to Montana and its citizens – the challenge of rapidly overhauling your analysis procedures is one of your own making. By continuing to put off assessing climate impacts through this performative information-gathering process, you are wasting public funds, ignoring the very real and dire consequences of your actions, and actively violating your constitutional requirement and the constitutional rights of the Montanans you serve.</p>

Ruth Swenson	DEQ should have the resources and knowledge to analyze climate impacts of projects. If not there are many experts and other states that are already doing this. The district court decision was clear in directing all fossil fuel extraction, transportation, refining and burning are to be analyzed for climate impacts. Calling for a "stakeholder group" to weigh in on the district court decision is a stalling.
monica perez-watkins	Climate change must be robustly considered in the MEPA process. It is causing profound impacts on Montanans' health, economy and environment, as found by the court in the Held decision. In weighing alternatives under MEPA, moving beyond fossil fuels will save Montanans billions of dollars: "Converting from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy would eliminate another \$21 billion in climate costs in 2050 to Montana and the world. Most noticeable to those in Montana, converting to wind, water, and solar energy would reduce annual total energy costs for Montanans from \$9.1 to \$2.8. billion per year, or by \$6.3 billion per year (69.6% savings). The total energy, health, plus climate costs savings, therefore, will be a combined \$29 billion per year (decreasing from \$32 to \$2.8 billion per year)
John Rundquist	<p>It is hard not to be cynical about this round of listening, given that similar listening efforts by DEQ have resulted in weakening MEPA (the Montana Environmental Protection Act). It's also discouraging that this "listening" is happening following the assault on environmental rules by the last legislature and during the administration of a governor with a cultish anti-science belief that the earth was created 6000 years ago.</p> <p>I don't wish to belittle the many great DEQ employees who are dedicated to good science and good governance, and beyond my cynicism, I have a cautious hope that ultimately good science and appropriate regulation will prevail to fulfill our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. For this to happen though, the forces pushing profits over air, water and climate degradation, will have to take a back seat to a new economy with sustainable prosperity.</p> <p>So, to answer the agency's three questions, the following are my thoughts:</p> <p>What changes, if any, are needed to modernize MEPA?</p> <p>The current environmental review processes and policies have the DEQ captive to the industries they are intended to regulate. MEPA analysis should be completed by DEQ staff rather than the applicant or their consultant. To facilitate this further, employment rules should be developed that prohibit DEQ staff from employment by the industry they have been responsible for regulating, for at least 5 years after leaving employment by DEQ.</p> <p>What should a MEPA analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts include?</p> <p>Require a full EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) for any project that may cause increased climate greenhouse emissions. Conversely, provide expedited review for projects reducing our reliance on fossil fuels or reducing greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>What opportunities exist for state agencies to be more thorough, balanced, efficient, or consistent?</p> <p>This is the wrong question. "Balanced, efficient, consistent" are the corporate lobbyist code words to worm their way into weakening rules to make it easier to profit while polluting our planet and poisoning us. The right question is: What opportunities exist for state agencies to better follow the Montana Constitution, laws and promulgated rules?</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this disturbing day when the high temperature is expected to be a full 15-20 degrees above the historical average in a year that is the hottest on record worldwide, undeniably due to human caused climate change.</p>
Gael Bissell	<p>I am a retired wildlife biologist who worked for this fine state for 31 years in Kalispell and I am very familiar with MEPA and the public's right to know what actions we are proposing, why, and what the effects of that decision and alternatives may be on the environment. I authored numerous MEPA documents. MEPA is probably one of the most profound and important laws in Montana as it holds government to a high standard of disclosure and honesty. Although you may consider MEPA to be procedural, I can say it is way more than that. It was one of the most important tools that we, as state agency employees, used to disclose what we are proposing and why to the public. Communication and sharing often complex proposals was a positive thing for both the agency and the communities. The public appreciated our honesty, the detailed information, and their opportunities to comment.</p> <p>It makes absolutely no sense to have MEPA consider only direct environmental effects of our actions on air and water quality or wildlife, for example, but not on how those actions can affect the climate or greenhouse gas emissions. The changing and more erratic climate/weather patterns are clearly affecting our air quality, water abundance as well as plant diseases, the economy, wildlife and our communities. Climate change is the elephant in the room and many corporations and legislators would like you to pretend that huge elephant isn't there so we can continue to do as we have the past. We need to come into the 21st Century and consider all the effects of our actions on the environment including climate change. We need to analyze, and disclose those impacts using the best available science that is clearly available today. DEQ's role should be to facilitate agencies' analyses of their proposed actions on the climate and provide help as needed. The elephant must be seen. We already have set greenhouse gas emission goals for the state, why not compare proposed actions to those goals in MEPA analyses?</p> <p>I remind you that Flathead Lake and Flathead River were over flood stage in 2022 due to high snow packs but cooler spring weather allowed for a prolonged high runoff as opposed to a big flood. Our and our neighbors' properties were under extra 6 feet of water for 3 months that summer, a very weird and rare occurrence. This year, there was a solid snow pack, but due to unusually high temperatures and virtually no June rain, there was not enough water to fill Flathead Lake leaving it 2 feet below full pool and costing millions to local businesses. The entire Columbia basin is in drought and looking for water. It's this water that powers electricity in the Pacific NW. The impacts of climate change are real, divisive, and scary. Climate change is the elephant in the room and MEPA must require agencies to seriously evaluate and disclose how proposed</p>

Susan Kronenberger	<p>It is imperative that all proposed projects be analyzed with the effects it would have on climate. We are now in crisis time and must assure that we as a society are making every effort to swiftly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This fact has been well established though expert scientific research conducted by the United Nations (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEQ has the tools to analyze the impacts of proposed projects, such as power plants, refineries, and coal mines, on the climate. • DEQ should use the science and economic analyses that have already been developed to do this analysis. The federal social cost of greenhouse gases (SC-GHG) is a tool that is readily available and shows that significant harm is already occurring. • There are numerous environmental, health, and economic reports by credible experts, such the Montana Climate Assessment and economic reports by Dr. Thomas Power, regarding the climate impacts on Montana agriculture and the outdoor economy, detailing the environmental and financial harm to various sectors of Montana's economy and public health from greenhouse gas emissions.
William H. Geer	<p>350 Montana</p> <p>Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) is a critical component of environmental permitting and public participation in Montana. MEPA affords the public the opportunity to comment the environmental, fish and wildlife, economic, social and cultural impacts of proposed projects before their approval. Any changes to MEPA must ensure that it still explicitly fulfills the state government's obligation to maintain and improve the constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment as well as the public's constitutional right to know and participate.</p> <p>Climate change must be robustly considered in the MEPA process because it is causing profound impacts on Montanan's health, economy and environment, as clearly found in the Held v. Montana court decision. Moving beyond fossil fuels will save Montana and the world up to \$21 billion dollars by the year 2050.</p> <p>MEPA has been streamlined more than a dozen times over the last 25 years. The significant changes to MEPA in 2011 resulted in less rigorous analysis and public disclosure, reduced public participation opportunities, and a reduced ability for the public to challenge agency decisions in court. Nevertheless, any change to MEPA must stand up to and conform with constitutional requirements.</p> <p>The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has the knowledge, tools and ability to analyze the climate change impacts associated with projects. Punting this analysis until after the stakeholder process is a stall tactic because a stakeholder group is not necessary for developing a robust process for DEQ to analyze climate impacts. As the Legislature and Governor work to reduce red tape and eliminate boards and committees, DEQ is moving in the opposite direction.</p>
Alison Reintjes	<p>I want the Montana DEQ to immediately comply with the Held vs. the State of Montana decision by considering climate impacts when issuing permits. This should go into effect now without any delay. To often our public institutions are protecting industry ahead of public health and the environment. Moving beyond fossil fuels also holds long term economic benefits.</p>
Cameo Flood	<p>NA</p> <p>My job for 30 years until I retired this year was to write federal environmental impact statements (and MEPA for over 20 years). There are many valuable and important parts of the process that maximize the goodness of projects, but overall, the MEPA process and the federal NEPA process it is based on are an extraordinarily inefficient methods to get the results of minimizing impacts. By inefficient, I mean expensive and time consuming while providing little benefit.</p> <p>The good parts are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defining, in detail, the proposed project and the need for it. Making sure proponents (including state agencies) have put the thought and planning into their projects. • Analyzing impacts and taking the time to minimize them to the smallest degree then publishing this information for public comment. Taking public comments and carefully considering them. • Writing binding decisions where the environmental protection and impacts can be monitored, enforced, measured, and published. <p>Parts that are expensive and inefficient:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public involvement processes that do not result in informed public comments or encourage mass commenting on issues not relevant to the project impacts or mitigation. • Writing a document that is "bulletproof" with detailed and nitpicky reviews. We have lost the point of disclosing impacts in the search for perfection on writing and publishing. • Spending far too much effort documenting what is not going to happen. <p>MEPA got off course when the output became the degree of impact instead of focusing on the impacts and mitigating them with public comment. Stop writing "MEPA documents". Simply, get a good project description, analyze impacts, mitigate, publish for public comment, amend the project as needed to reduce impacts or improve the analysis, write a binding decision document. For public comment, impacts could be displayed in a table with the area of concern, mitigation, regulatory thresholds, impacts to compared to the threshold. With the internet, the method of analysis and findings could be posted for those interested in a detailed review.</p> <p>Lastly, for greenhouse gas and climate, the only useful option is to disclose the emissions from the new project (or removal of emissions, if that is possible) and not try to analyze the impacts on climate as there are no</p>
Russell Lawrence	<p>The Montana Department of Environmental Quality has one job, and that is to ensure that Montanans today and into the future may enjoy the clean and healthful environment to which they are constitutionally entitled. The MT DEQ needs to be the fierce advocate for environmental quality, period. Industry and those who would potentially degrade the environment, for any reason including profit or simple neglect, have their own advocates, and it is not the DEQ's job to speak for them. The Department of Commerce, for example, has its own narrow focus, and the balance is provided not by DEQ accommodating industry, nor by Commerce accommodating environmental concerns -- it's provided by having both agencies advocating their interests.</p> <p>I believe the Montana Environmental Policy Act, if it needs modernization at all, needs to recognize the new realities that we now face, and climate change is only one of them, though it's the driver of many others. MEPA needs to recognize the wide-ranging effects of climate change, and how each aspect of environmental degradation affects every other aspect of environmental quality. Analyses need to look not just at immediate effects, but at possible related effects over time and distance. Greenhouse gases do not remain where they are generated, and MEPA needs to recognize that gases and other climate inputs generated in Montana have effects that are widely distributed over time and geography. Thus, gases generated in Montana contribute to worldwide effects that may, in turn affect Montana's water quality and quantity. Water pollution created by coal and natural gas production may have health effects not only in Montana, but downstream, including not just surface water but groundwater as well.</p> <p>I don't want to hear about any qualifiers: "Montana only produces .00000x of whatever pollutant we're talking about, and so our contribution is insignificant and doesn't need to be mitigated." Every bit of CO2, methane, and every other greenhouse gas, is significant, and everybody needs to do our share. Montana needs to be a leader.</p> <p>I am less concerned with Montana DEQ being thorough, balanced, and efficient, and more concerned with the agency acting with urgency and agility to comply, as quickly and completely as possible, with the Held decision and whatever else it takes to ensure a QUALITY ENVIRONMENT for my heirs and myself.</p>

Ann Karp	Sideways Gaze Art & Sign	<p>I would like to advocate for as proactive and forward-thinking a standard as possible for weighing climate change and its effects, when considering approval or denial of any projects proposed to the DEQ.</p> <p>The ruling in Held v Montana suggests that we don't need any more comment periods or delays to implement this. DEQ and other state agencies have the tools you need to analyze the impacts of proposed projects, such as power plants, refineries, and coal mines, on the climate.</p> <p>Please use the science and economic analyses that have already been developed to do this analysis. The federal social cost of greenhouse gases (SC-GHG) is a tool that is readily available and shows that significant harm is already occurring. MEPA must assure that it still explicitly fulfills the government's obligation to maintain and improve the constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment as well as the public's constitutional right to know and participate.</p> <p>I want DEQ to take into account not only current Montana residents, both human and other species, but also our offspring for generations to come. Many of the environmental costs of projects that contribute to climate change will be paid in the future - sometimes the near future - and we need to think about the people and others living then. We need to consider them to be as important as we consider ourselves today.</p>
Bruce T Bender		<p>Any changes to MEPA must assure that it still explicitly fulfills the government's obligation to maintain and improve the constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment as well as the public's constitutional right to know and participate. Climate change must be robustly considered in the MEPA process. It is causing profound impacts on Montanans' health, economy and environment, as found by the court in the Held decision. DEQ currently has the tools, knowledge and ability to analyze the climate change impacts associated with projects. A stakeholder group is unnecessary for developing a robust process for DEQ to analyze climate impacts.</p>
David Patenaude		<p>Any changes to MEPA must assure that it still explicitly fulfills the government's obligation to maintain and improve the constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment as well as the public's constitutional right to know and participate. In order to preserve the integrity of the MEPA process, and not turn it into a paper exercise, MEPA cannot be rendered into a procedural, voluntary, non-substantive process. There must be repercussions when industry or the government fail to comply with MEPA. Further, as required under the constitution and noted by the court in Held v. Montana, the state must have the ability - and, indeed, has the obligation - to deny permits to protect the public from environmental harm such as the harm occurring right now from climate change.</p>
Bret Luedke		<p>Thank you for taking the time to review my comments. I am a Montana native and over the past 60+ years have seen and experienced the negative changes in Montana's landscapes and climate due to the mining and burning of fossil fuels. I am providing these comments in the hope they can lead to productive changes that will reverse these negative impacts I've experienced in my lifetime.</p> <p>While I'm thankful for the benefits Montanas have received from the energy provided by fossil fuels, it is simply time to accept and acknowledge their significant negative consequences. We have the technologies we need to transition to a clean energy future and MEPA needs to be updated to recognize and promote this transition.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To preserve the integrity of the MEPA process, any changes must maintain and improve the constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment for all Montanas. Additionally, the public's constitutional right to know and participate must be maintained.2. The impacts of climate change must be thoroughly considered in the MEPA process. These must include the true costs of mining, processing, transporting and burning fossil fuels on the health, economy and environment of Montana and the world.3. In the effort to "modernize" MEPA, DEQ needs to ensure MEPA does not become a simple procedural, voluntary and non-substantive process. Any changes must stand up to, and conform with, constitutional requirements.4. DEQ has acknowledged the tools exist to analyze climate change impacts on proposed projects. DEQ, should immediately begin to use these tools and comply with the district court decision in Held vs. Montana to analyze climate impacts of proposed projects.5. DEQ should develop and implement processes within MEPA that will consolidate and speed up the process of reviewing and permitting new power transmission lines and clean renewable energy projects such as wind and solar.6. DEQ should develop and implement processes within MEPA that will allow for 5, 10 and 20 year look ahead planning to analyze and approve infrastructure that will be needed to meet the future needs of Montanas. For example, analyze and approve specific areas for development of wind and solar and the power transmission lines that will be needed to carry the power to where it is needed. <p>Finally, I would like to thank DEQ for reaching out to Montanas and soliciting feedback. However, I would emphasize the tools and information already exists to immediately move forward as directed by Held vs. Montana. There is no need to wait for the legislature or the appeal process to play out before moving forward. Every day of delay only contributes to the negative consequences we and future generations of Montanas will be forced to endure as Montana's landscapes and climate change for the worse.</p>

William Clarke	<p>1. Climate change must be robustly considered in the MEPA process. It is causing profound impacts on Montanans’ health, economy and environment, as found by the court in the Held decision. In weighing alternatives under MEPA, moving beyond fossil fuels will save Montanans billions of dollars: “Converting from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy would eliminate another \$21 billion in climate costs in 2050 to Montana and the world. Most noticeable to those in Montana, converting to wind, water, and solar energy would reduce annual total energy costs for Montanans from \$9.1 to \$2.8. billion per year, or by \$6.3 billion per year (69.6% savings). The total energy, health, plus climate costs savings, therefore, will be a combined \$29 billion per year (decreasing from \$32 to \$2.8 billion per year), or by 91%.” (Held, Finding of Fact # 275)</p> <p>2. Calls to reform MEPA center around its modernization, in truth MEPA has been “streamlined” and “modernized” more than a dozen times over the last 25 years. The significant changes to MEPA in 2011 resulted in less rigorous analysis and public disclosure, reduced public participation opportunities, and a reduced ability for the public to challenge agency decisions in court. However, any change to MEPA must stand up to, and conform with, constitutional requirements. Notably, two of the changes from 2011 have been found to be unconstitutional by Montana courts.</p> <p>3. DEQ currently has the tools, knowledge and ability to analyze the climate change impacts associated with projects. Punting this analysis until after the stakeholder process is a stall tactic. When asked by the court in Held whether DEQ could analyze climate impacts in the MEPA process, DEQ stated, “I do believe we could do this kind of analysis, yes.” Now DEQ seems to be saying that it can’t comply with the court decision until its proposed stakeholder group concludes in late 2024, the 2025 legislature weighs in, and the Supreme Court rules. Instead of “kicking the can down the road,” DEQ must comply with the district court decision and analyze climate impacts of proposed projects such as refineries, coal mines, and coal plants, with currently available tools (for example, utilizing the federal government’s social cost of greenhouse gasses (SC-GHG) analysis).</p> <p>4. A stakeholder group is unnecessary for developing a robust process for DEQ to analyze climate impacts. As the legislature and Governor move to reduce red tape and to eliminate boards and committees, the DEQ seems to be moving in the opposite direction.</p>
Mary Ann Dunwell	<p>Montana State Senate, District 42, Helena/East Helena</p> <p>Please follow the court order that permanently enjoins HB 971 and part of SB 557, requiring the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality to consider climate externalities in permitting and elsewhere in your enforcement and other work. Drop the state’s appeal to the MT Supreme Court of the District Court’s decision. Those laws are unconstitutional and hamstring MEPA, the public and litigants. Restore our beloved, socially and environmentally protective Montana Environmental Policy Act. Your responsibility is to protect and improve our clean and healthful environment.</p> <p>I also ask that you proactively implement a climate mitigation and carbon emissions reduction strategy, especially involving large industrial emitters. One easy emission reduction is to deny permits that would significantly increase industrial pollution like the Laurel natural gas plant proposal. Another is to step up permitting of renewable energy facilities, reduce red tape, and maximize climate action opportunities from President Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act like emissions reduction grants.</p> <p>Please consider supporting a bill I’ve sponsored session after session and plan to again in 2025—Montana Climate Action Act. It was expertly written by then Legislative Environmental Policy Analyst Sonia Nowakowski— now DEQ Administrator for Air, Energy & Mining Division—along with the Montana Environmental Information Center. We heard the bill as HB 193 in the 2019 legislative session, HB 150 in 2021, and SB 532 this past session.</p> <p>The bill implements a fee on the highest carbon polluters to incentive voluntary emissions reductions and that pay for their damage to date to our environment and climate. It creates special revenue funds for Montana DEQ and Dept. of Commerce to remediate and mitigate damage to our air, water, and communities. Giving us the opportunity to build on former Governor Schweitzer’s “Restoration Economy.” And very important, the climate action act lays out an emissions reduction requirement over a decade or so for these industrial polluters— a policy implemented and monitored by DEQ.</p> <p>Also, please influence and support other climate and environmentally protective legislation. Oppose any legislation that degrades human health and the environment.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of my plea to save MEPA, our climate, and our state.</p>
Carole Jorgensen	I will send my written comments and recommendations directly since this is an important issue and will take more than 3000 characters.
Mark Canright	<p>Greetings! I am a young person and caring citizen who really cherishes our natural world. Thanks for all that you do, and please let's work together to safeguard our beautiful wildlife and lands in our state. Specifically, I hope that you will please support investing in renewable energy, such as solar and wind. This creates thousands of jobs in the energy sector, helps us achieve energy independence, and keeps our air and water clean. It's also very wise to move away from our reliance upon outdated and polluting fossil fuels. Therefore, I ask you respectfully to support solar wind and other renewables, while opposing the development of new fossil fuel pipelines or other fossil fuel infrastructure, such as that that is related to coal. Call harms our Communities, and our environment , and we would be very wise to transition away from coal please. Thanks again, and I hope you have a great day!</p>
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Dustin Ogdin	<p>DEQ's stated mission is to "champion a healthy environment for a thriving Montana," and robust implementation of the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), including comprehensive climate pollution analysis, is essential to upholding that mission and complying with Montana law.</p> <p>The Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) was passed in 1971 to level the playing field in favor of the public's right to know and right to participate in major state actions. MEPA came largely in response to Montana's disturbing history of environmental degradation resulting from outsized, often overtly corrupt, industry influence. MEPA has served Montana's communities, preventing or mitigating much of the excessive environmental harm that preceded its passage. Over the past 52 years, however, MEPA has been both complicated and weakened by industry influence.</p> <p>Any changes to MEPA implementation should re-balance the law toward the public interest, honoring MEPA's original intent. Criteria regarding MEPA and climate pollution analysis should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Robust and expansive environmental reviews for all major state actions with decisions prioritizing the prevention, mitigation, or elimination of damage to Montana's environment, which includes the health of our climate. - Any changes to MEPA implementation must prioritize transparency and greater public access to decision-making processes, including good faith challenges to MEPA decisions. Challenging MEPA decisions should not result in financial penalties or significant financial obligations for any challenger acting in good faith. <p>As regards climate pollution analysis, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Climate analysis should include impacts from the entire life cycle of all projects. This includes the construction, operation, and maintenance as well as the use, consumption, storage, and transportation of any fuels, goods, or services associated with the project. -Climate analysis should include all greenhouse gas pollutants including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases. -DEQ is required to immediately come into compliance with Montana law, which the recent Held v. Montana ruling clearly states must include climate analysis. This analysis from DEQ is urgent, especially given the increase of climate-fueled disasters including wildfires, floods, droughts, and associated harm to Montanans' health, quality of life, and economy.
Dan Struble	<p>Changes to MEPA should be strengthened to protect the people and places that need it most. By centering the most vulnerable populations and environmentally sensitive areas in decision making, we can create a livable future for all Montanans and species we share our home with. Greenhouse gasses should be treated on par with all pollution.</p> <p>Prioritize Vulnerable Populations: Changes to MEPA must prioritize the wellbeing of all community members, including children, seniors, tribal nations, individuals with health issues or disabilities, and marginalized communities. This inclusion extends to giving a voice to other-than-human beings, such as wildlife, insects, forests, grasslands, fish, and more.</p> <p>Rigorous Climate Analysis: Comprehensive climate analysis must be an integral part of MEPA, encompassing the entire lifecycle and supply chain of projects. The entire lifecycle includes phases from the initial gathering of raw materials until the point at which projects are decommissioned and all residuals are returned to the earth. This includes extraction, transportation, construction, operations and maintenance and all jobs and supplies needed for the project. The DEQ does not need to create anything new, and can utilize existing scientific and economic tools, such as the federal social cost of greenhouse gasses.</p> <p>Accountability for Non-Compliance: There must be clear consequences for industries or government entities that fail to comply with MEPA regulations. Montanans should not bear the brunt of environmental damage caused by irresponsible actions that lead to increased natural disasters, crop and grazing grass losses, increased wildfires, and harms to public health and our natural amenities.</p> <p>Expand Public Participation: MEPA must foster greater public involvement in environmental decision-making, ensuring that the voices of all stakeholders, particularly those from vulnerable population groups, are heard and considered. We must not compromise rigor or public participation for efficiency and streamlining.</p> <p>Uphold obligation to maintain the constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. Changes to MEPA must assure that it fulfills the government's obligation. Citizen rights have slowly eroded in favor of industry interests within MEPA, and we need to rebalance this law in favor of protecting the interests of everyday people, our unique ecosystems, and each and every species that we share our home with.</p>
Mark Kevin Talt	<p>None</p> <p>Montana is special, not only for our citizens that call Montana home but for our out of state guests who spend millions visiting our pristine state. We should never lose that focus. Reading the "River Horse" recently reminded me of how our landscape across the US has already changed, been damaged by poor decision making even before environmental groups and agencies were created. Planning did not consider the long term implications that a growing's population combined with a lack of understanding of the consequences of unchallenged growth would have on our environmental future. Our climate, land and water are all at stake !</p> <p>Now it is critical that we all focus on climate analysis and make it an integral part of MEPA, encompassing the entire lifecycle and supply chain of projects. Everything from the raw materials we extract from our land, to how we decommission the extraction and return our land to the wilderness. And for those few corporations who cut corners and leave our land highly toxic or damaged there should be clear consequences spelled out in the beginning to those companies who leave our land damaged and even beyond repair within a reasonable time period.</p> <p>My greatest concern is our government and agencies moving too quickly to greenlight projects that should have public comment and discussion on the pros and cons of projects that might or could lead to damaging our environment. Keep in mind, this is not the industrial corridor of Ohio or even New York, this is Montana a national treasure that we should all enjoy....citizens and visitors alike. We know what Montana should be and want to keep it like it is for all to enjoy....a clean and healthy environment!</p>
Craig Hayes	<p>landowner</p> <p>Balance wildlife habitat and increased need for connectivity with encroaching timber operations. The USFS and BLM people need a dose of environmental reality.</p>

Annette Beaver		I am writing to state that MT DEQ should (must!) include climate change impacts in the analysis of proposed projects. MEPA is one of the most important regulations/processes that protects our land, people, and future. Uphold the July order issued in Held v. Montana!
Emily Berg		I think any changes should be in the direction of giving more weight to harmful environmental consequences and better enforcement.
David Patenaude		<p>Changes to MEPA should be strengthened to protect the people and places that need it most. By centering the most vulnerable populations and environmentally sensitive areas in decision making, we can create a livable future for all Montanans and species we share our home with. Greenhouse gasses should be treated on par with all pollution.</p> <p>Prioritize Vulnerable Populations: Changes to MEPA must prioritize the well-being of all community members, including children, seniors, tribal nations, individuals with health issues or disabilities, and marginalized communities. This inclusion extends to giving a voice to other-than-human beings, such as wildlife, insects, forests, grasslands, fish, and more.</p> <p>Rigorous Climate Analysis: Comprehensive climate analysis must be an integral part of MEPA, encompassing the entire lifecycle and supply chain of projects. The entire lifecycle includes phases from the initial gathering of raw materials until the point at which projects are decommissioned and all residuals are returned to the earth. This includes extraction, transportation, construction, operations and maintenance and all jobs and supplies needed for the project. The DEQ does not need to create anything new, and can utilize existing scientific and economic tools, such as the federal social cost of greenhouse gasses.</p> <p>Accountability for Non-Compliance: There must be clear consequences for industries or government entities that fail to comply with MEPA regulations. Montanans should not bear the brunt of environmental damage caused by irresponsible actions that lead to increased natural disasters, crop and grazing grass losses, increased wildfires, and harms to public health and our natural amenities.</p> <p>Expand Public Participation: MEPA must foster greater public involvement in environmental decision-making, ensuring that the voices of all stakeholders, particularly those from vulnerable population groups, are heard and considered. We must not compromise rigor or public participation for efficiency and streamlining.</p> <p>Uphold obligation to maintain the constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. Changes to MEPA must assure that it fulfills the government's obligation. Citizen rights have slowly eroded in favor of industry interests within MEPA, and we need to re-balance this law in favor of protecting the interests of everyday people, our unique ecosystems, and each and every species that we share our home with.</p>
Rick Whitman		Montanans have a constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. MEPA is a crucial tool to protect that right. MEPA should be strengthened and not "improved" with changes that weaken it. This law is for the people of Montana. Let's keep it that way.
Larry D Ratray	Larry Ratray	It is easy to recruit a group of people to comment when your looking at a "Feel Good" topic. When the public goes "Aww, Poor Baby". That does not mean that it is the right course. It is amazing the power of a judge, and how easy it is to find one who will follow along with an idea. This has been appealed to the Supreme Court and we should not be changing courses until the Courts have ruled. Montana does not want to follow the mentality of California that has ruled that they will only have new electric cars in a few years when they don't have sufficient power to keep the lights on now. They are tearing out dams and saying they needed to move to "Renewable Power" when dams give us electricity and the by product is water that has a minute increase in temperature. We should be looking at ways to increase the output of dams instead of destroying the landscape and killing thousands of birds with wind farms that create more pollution in the construction process. We have to look at the entire process to know the right direction. We have to acknowledge that we need to keep the lights on and that means we have to accept our limitations until there is an alternativte. Being responsible means keeping the heat on and accepting that means using what we have to use to accomplish that
Sarah Dakin	Gateway to Glacier Trails	<p>I was a student at the University of Montana when the Constitutional Convention(Con Con) was held and MEPA was born. It was a grand accomplishment for the state. Montana had been driven, since it's inception, by businesses that were mostly extractive industries. There was little thought for the welfare of citizens and/or the environment. The Con Con recognized our history and through the creation of MEPA they sought to repair some of the damage that had historically occurred.</p> <p>MEPA is integral to the health and wellbeing of all Montana, human and environment. It is designed to follow the science. An example of this is what occurred in Columbia Falls near the Aluminum plant. Deer and trees in the vicinity of the the plant were found to be deformed and ill. The cause was determined, by scientists, to be fluoride poisoning. The plant was then required to use best practices, to clean emissions by installing scrubbers in their exhaust systems.</p> <p>We know science evolves and we expect DEQ to stay up to date on up to date best practices. Take the politics out of the process and follow the science. That is what the courts have continued to say and that is what we are entitled to.</p> <p>MEPA does not stop industries from activities, it just requires them to not damage the environment and follow best scientific practices. It has been done in the past and should continue.</p>
Janet Lindow		The state constitution states, " 1) The state and each person shall maintain and improve a clean and healthful environment in Montana for present and future generations." It is imperative the state passes and maintains laws that protect our environment and resources. Instead of pandering to those who want to make money at the cost of everyone's health and future, Montana laws should protect our land from sprawling/unplanned development, mining, fracking, and other practices that harm all residents and future generations. I strongly support strict legislation that protects public lands, guarantees access to public lands, protection of the other animals that share the land, reduces all types of pollution, and encourages clean energy. Global warming has incontrovertible evidence. It is time Montanans do more to protect the future.
Al Pendergrass		My general concern with the MEPA process and the DEQ in general is the dismissal of the impacts on climate change of the decisions being made. While it is clear that climate change is the greatest challenge facing civilization today, the DEQ is more concerned with appeasing the various extraction industries that contribute so much to the crisis and the climate change deniers in state government. The scientific evidence is clear on climate change and the DEQ should be making science-based decisions. As recently upheld in court, our state constitution requires you and all branches of government to work to protect our environment. My children deserve a future.

Lisa Bay	Lisa Bay Consulting (retired)	<p>For 40 years I served as an environmental and natural resource consultant, including conducting review and preparation of MEPA documents for industrial clients. Notably, in this context, I helped prepare portions of the Zortman-Landusky EA, and was the team leader for the preparation of the ASARCO Rock Creek EIS. In my past experience, it has not been the inadequacy of MEPA that fails to protect the environment, but lack of its rigorous application, and associated political processes. Please recall: we citizens of Montana are now paying millions of dollars a year in perpetuity to treat acid mine drainage at the Zortman-Landusky mine.</p> <p>What if any changes are needed to modernize MEPA? MEPA remains Montana's best environmental firewall. Suggestions that it needs overall 'modernization' concern me, because attempts have been made in the past, under the same banner, to weaken it in favor of industry, or to have MEPA amendments thrown out in court as unconstitutional. One change that needs to be made immediately is to incorporate the effects of climate change within a MEPA analysis.</p> <p>What should a MEPA analysis of GHG emissions and climate impact include? Incorporate the Social Cost of Carbon (SCC) methodology into MEPA so that Montana is in compliance with the law and our constitution. The SCC is a monetary estimate of the damage done by each ton of carbon dioxide that is released into the air. At last count 15 states are applying SCC calculations to projects associated with industry, transportation and building construction, indicating a general consensus that this is the current best approach for such calculations. We don't need a lengthy working group process to do this; our respected counterparts in other states are already implementing this best practice. https://costofcarbon.org/states</p> <p>Second, MEPA should include reference to, or incorporate methodologies from the Montana Climate Assessment 2017 for use as best-available climate science in assessing impacts. Appendices in the Assessment are tailored to addressomg Montana-specific impacts.</p> <p>What opportunities exist for state agencies to be more thorough, balanced, efficient or consistent? I have outlined the opportunities to be more thorough in my previous comments. If we're serious about amendments to strengthen the analysis of project impacts under MEPA, I'm all in. The cumulative effects of popuation growth, climate change, reduced overall water quality, and habitat degradation and loss in Montana are only increasing over time. We have only one Montana, and we'd better be evermore vigilant that we're truly protecting it, as enshrined in the Constitution. I fear words like 'balanced' (assumes an implicit right to develop) and 'efficient' (eufemism for speeding up the review process to decrease development costs). Extractive industry needs to abide by the people's will: Here in Montana, we protect our air, land, and waters for future generations.</p>
Michele Dieterich		<p>Global warming effects must be analyzed, considered, and disclosed to the public during the MEPA process. Global warming/climate change is the single most threatening factor to our Montana way of life and that of future generations. The Held vs Montana decision made that quite clear.</p> <p>MEPA must not only consider the effects to climate, it must also consider alternatives that reduce fossil fuel use and in so doing reduce future environmental and health costs brought about by climate warming.</p> <p>MEPA is constantly being reformed. It has had enough "streamlining" and is hardly recognizable from the original document that was designed to make sure the environment, human health, and natural resources are protected. Streamlining has basically been to circumvent the law and allow large corporations to pollute with abandon. Two changes in 2011 were found to be unconstitutional. There is a need to bolster protections in MEPA, especially those concerning effects to climate. Any changes must comply with our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment.</p> <p>There are sufficient methods for analysis of climate impacts. The DEQ has them and must use them. Please see a comment made by the US EPA on the South Plateau Area Landscape Treatment logging project which outlines just a few of the ways to assess climate impacts https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/Letter/3927544?project=57353. Climate impacts must be considered for refineries, pipelines, coal mines, rare earth mineral mines. For starters use the tools listed in the comment letter above and the Federal government analysis for the social costs of greenhouse gases (GHGs).</p> <p>Stakeholder groups take the public out of the conversation. They are handpicked for a particular outcome and the mediators that have been hired to oversee the process out of the University of Montana seem to push for a predetermined outcome by hand choosing information shared and summarizing without really listening to participants. Stakeholders are prejudiced because they have a financial stake in the outcome and pressure to make that happen, Even the environmental organizations are paid via grants and those grants would disappear should they actually make the hard demands necessary to protect our natural resources and the climate. Instead let the public be involved and listen to their thoughts on projects instead of shutting them out of the process by creating a stakeholder group and forcing an outcome.</p>
Frances Stewart		<p>This thinly veiled attempt by the MT Department of Environmental Quality to undermine the Montana Environmental Policy Act flies in the face of the very mission of the MTDEQ itself. With mounting pressures on the natural resources of Montana, we the people of this state need more, not fewer, guarantees of protection for the quality and health of our air, water and land that we and all living creatures need to survive. Common sense and survival tell us that to sacrifice the quality of any of the things we need for basic survival is pure madness. We the people deserve a seat at the table to protect us from the toxic waste that large extractive corporations leave behind, when it is the corporations who should be forced by law to clean up their messes. It is beyond me why we need to point out these truths to the very agency tasked with our protection and health. MEPA should be made stronger and corporations made more accountable for all their actions.</p>
Linda Young		<p>I attended the public hearing on MEPA in Helena on Oct 18th to learn more about the MEPA process and concerns of those in attendance. Roughly 38 people spoke, and 34 of them urged DQE to start to implement the Held ruling immediately; with deeply held concerns expressed about climate change and its impact on current and future residents of the state. Three speakers expressed concerns about MEPA, including NWE, who serves shareholders, not the citizens of our state. I want to express my strong conviction that DEQ should vigorously conduct the MEPA process with climate and other environmental considerations first and foremost. The citizens of our state have over and over again confirmed their support for a clean environment, and it is a constitutional right. I urge you not to be half hearted or luke warm in your efforts due to fears of the state legislature reducing your funding. We need leadership now and expect our professional experts and administrators to lead the way.</p>
Barbara Schroeder		<p>I wish I did have a creative solution to offer, but for now I can offer only my support for the recent Held decision and for changing from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. Thank you.</p>

Donald T Harris

MEPA should be modernized to include the impact of greenhouse gases, their affect on climate and our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment.

The trial of Held vs MT, Peter Erickson, from the Stockholm Institute of Environmental Studies testified that, "Montanas greenhouse emissions are equivalent to Argentina (population 47 million), Pakistan (population 248 million) or the Netherlands (population 18 million). This compares to the population of Montana being 1.14 million. It's obvious that Montana contributes a disproportional amount of greenhouse gases.

Montana has 3 coal powered generating facilities, 2 cement companies that use coal and 8 natural gas generating plants.

Of all these, I would like to talk only about one, Coalstrip.

Rosebud mine supplies Coalstrip with coal and a pamphlet titled Rosebud's tour fact sheet states "Coalstrip 3 & 4 uses 36 thousand tons of coal per day," that amounts to 72 million pounds! Train cars holds 100 tons of coal and there are 120-135 cars per train. Coalstrip burns the equivalent of 3 of these per day, 100 tons every 4 minutes!

What happens to this 72 million pounds of coal? Coal ash left behind which is toxic, but the bulk goes in the air consisting of CO2, and NOX, which are greenhouse gases along with SO2, mercury and other heavy metals and fly ash, all of which are harmful to nearly all forms of biology. The question isn't how does this harm, but how does this NOT harm. These emission cause physical and psychological harm. They violate our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environmental.

The list of harm includes and is not limited to asthma, allergies, brain damage, heart problems, cancer, neurological disorders and premature death.

Greenhouse gasses lead to increased smoke from more frequent wild land fires, higher temperatures, extreme weather events, increased allergens, and prevent people from outdoor activities and exercise. These all cause physical and psychological harm. Therefore, and once again, greenhouse gases are violating our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment.

NorthWestern Energy/Coalstrip is the single largest emitter of greenhouse gasses in Montana. They apparently have no incentive to decrease their carbon footprint.

If NothWestern Energy were required by law to be carbon neutral by say 2030, it would be done. It is technically and economically feasible.

Since greenhouse gases have a detrimental impact on our climate and health, MEPA needs to be updated to include greenhouse gases in order to protect our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment.

Montana has a unique and exciting opportunity starting with the recent ruling on Held vs State of Montana. The next step is to regulate greenhouse gases under MEPA.

Thomas Elpel

We need more comprehensive environmental review of proposed projects in Montana to protect resources and conserve taxpayer dollars. Here in Pony, Montana, we witnessed firsthand what happens when state agencies approve a project with inadequate environmental review. A gold ore processing mill (not a mine) was approved with shoddy review standards. The result was that the state had to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to clean up hazardous chemicals and recontour the site after the company declared bankruptcy. Decades later, the industrial building is still half-standing, its steel girders contorted by the wind. Fiberglass insulation contaminated the air we breathe for years. Knapweed from the site blows seeds all over our town, adding never-ending work and cost to deal with the problem. This situation was totally avoidable, as were numerous other follies that were approved with inadequate oversight. With a steadily increasing population in Montana, poorly conceived projects will be more numerous and more impactful. Please tighten MEPA to better protect people, the environment, and our taxpayer dollars.

Abby Huseth

I've been lucky to call myself a Montanan for the past decade. I'm a parent of two young boys. I was pregnant with my oldest, who's now 5 and a half, during the awful, smoky summer of 2017. If you were there, you know how scary that was.

I'm so proud and grateful for the youth plaintiffs in the Held v. State of Montana case, who spoke for my children and defended their right to a clean and healthful environment - which includes a safe climate.

As a parent of toddlers, I know stall tactics when I see them. They have the capacity to do what's being asked...they just don't really want to. I can't help but feel like that's exactly what's happening here. DEQ has the ability to analyze climate and greenhouse gas emissions impacts today, using established and widely accepted protocols like the Social Cost of Carbon. But they have not done it.

I also know that stalling does not change reality, and it's always best to change course, take responsibility, and do the right thing as soon as possible. Or as they say at my son's kindergarten, "Stop, Think, Do the right thing."

From my understanding, MEPA is not broken, and the law of the land requires DEQ to consider climate TODAY. MEPA is a crucial tool for regular Montanans to have the opportunity to have a say in decision making that impacts our communities, and we need to have the full picture of the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions of every proposed state action in order to make informed, responsible decisions.

Please step up and start considering climate impacts within MEPA today, as the court requires - to preserve a livable future for my kids and for all of us.

Hugh Zackheim

The question posed by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality is how Montana state agencies should administer the Montana Environmental Policy Act. The answer is that the State must undertake a comprehensive presentation and thorough analysis of the consequences of possible courses of action for proposed permit decisions and other agency actions. And the scope of that analysis must include all resources, including climate and the social/economic costs of climate change.

That's the only way DEQ can satisfy both of its constitutional obligations: to comply with citizens' right to know what their governing is doing and to ensure that state agency actions provide Montanans with their constitutionally guaranteed clean and healthful environment.

Unfortunately, recent years have been marked by a legislative assault on these constitutional rights of Montana citizens. While Montana's environmental laws were once the national standard for wise stewardship, we now see a race to the bottom when it comes to protecting water and air quality, mine reclamation requirements, land use decisions and a host of other resource management issues.

But despite attempts to weaken our environmental and right-to-know laws, the Montana Constitution remains in effect, and continues to empower Montanans to assert their right to know and their right to a quality environment.

So do we need to spend our time "updating" the Montana Environmental Policy Act? The answer to that is a flat "No". Instead DEQ and other state agencies simply need to administer MEPA in a manner that fully meets their constitutional obligation for full disclosure of governmental actions and consequences, and for providing a clean and healthful environment. Those are bedrock rights of Montanans, and the Montana Environmental Policy Act is a crucial way to secure, not short-circuit, those rights.

Remy Sexton Park High School Green Initiative

I'm a senior at Park High School in Livingston. I'm giving a public comment today because I can't vote yet, and this is the only way I can participate in legislation, such as MEPA, that affects my future. If MEPA is eliminated, I won't even have the chance to exercise my right to speak out on these issues.

The proposed reduction of MEPA's environmental guardrails is an attack on my constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. Thus, climate change must be a priority when considering the future of the MEPA process. The Held v. Montana decision definitively points to the fact that climate change is a real, pressing, tangible issue here in Montana and that it threatens our way of life. No matter your relationship with or use of the land, the importance of preserving the place we inhabit is a core Montana value that nearly everyone can agree upon. If MEPA truly is "the peoples' law," it will prioritize the values of the people. In addition, getting rid of or adjusting MEPA for the sake of convenience threatens to reverse one of the biggest judicial climate success stories in history. Held v. Montana was a landmark case that set an example for the rest of the nation and the world in both the power of youth activism and acknowledging the impacts of climate change. Lessening MEPA's jurisdiction undermines the clear demands of Held v. Montana and stifles the youth voices that spoke out in the landmark case.

I refuse to watch Montana become unlivable just to alleviate paperwork for state agencies. MEPA has been streamlined since its inception, and now is not the time to continue stripping back its power. The rigorous environmental analysis that MEPA should require would help reduce fossil fuel emissions and the over-expansion that fuels climate change. MEPA should be specific, rigid, and should hold institutions in power accountable for any deviations from it. If there aren't repercussions for agencies disregarding the MEPA guidelines, the repercussions will fall on my generation's shoulders when the mountains no longer hold snow, our endangered wildlife goes extinct, and the sun is invisible through the smoke. We will have to deal with the consequences when it's too late. So please decide to hold Montanans responsible. Thank you for your time.

Alecia Larson Advisor - Park High Green Initiative

The Park High Green Initiative is a student led organization that strives to provide climate conscious youth with the tools to advocate for increased environmental action. By using the implementation of creative solutions, our organization develops sustainable infrastructure throughout our community and beyond.

My name is Alecia Larson and I have been the advisor of this dynamic group of young people for 7+ years. To them, the environment and associated climate crisis is the largest battle they will face during their lifetime. We just had two of our senior leaders give verbal comments, but would like to add some more thoughts.

- Our environment affects everything. It is our tourism, our economy, our recreation, our agriculture. Without being able to have a say in what happens to our environment, we lose control of those aspects.
- Isn't getting rid of this getting rid our right to free speech and our constitutional right to a clean environment?
- The DEQ should follow the Held v. State of Montana ruling and protect our right to a clean and healthful environment.
- Although there are a lot of procedural steps to take (in general) to get things done through the state government, in the case of MEPA and the environment, it is completely warranted and necessary to take extra steps.

Gordon Levin	As an individual citizen of Montana	<p>The Held V State of Montana lawsuit focused on the use of MEPA as the legal vehicle for ensuring Montanan's Constitutional Right to a Healthful Environment. The Montana Legislature had passed a law to exclude the analysis of the effect of greenhouse gasses within Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements conducted under MEPA. The Held decision struck down that limitation. DEQ is now holding listening sessions to get public comment on the MEPA process and how to "modernize or modify" MEPA.</p> <p>From a brief reading of the MEPA regulations, it appears that MEPA is written to direct the actions of State Agencies by providing policy direction the operation of State Agencies and to provide Environmental Assessments and and Environmental Impact Statements to support evaluation for permitting of activities, both public and private. Which is to say, State permitting agencies may use MEPA evaluation to determine if proposed activities requiring permits meet the requirements of Montana's Environmental rules and laws.</p> <p>Independent of Montana legislatures desire to head off analysis of effects of the release of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, there are no rules or laws limiting or controlling the release of greenhouse gasses except for the uncontrolled release of methane from gas wells.</p> <p>It would seem that the Held decision will require more in the way of administrative rules to control and reduce the release of greenhouse gasses in addition to requiring analysis of the impacts of the release of greenhouse gasses under MEPA.</p> <p>I agree with the court that Montana environmental law should be modified and implemented in such a way to require the reduction in the release of greenhouse gasses. We need to take a hard look at permitting new long term activities that expect to release greenhouse gasses and find alternatives that can minimize or eliminate the release of carbon into the atmosphere.</p> <p>One approach to move society and all of our businesses in the direction of reducing the release of greenhouse gasses is to institute a permit system. In the same way that the National Pollutant Discharge and Elimination (NPDES), under the Clean Water Act, and eventually the MPDES permit system implemented by the State of Montana, permitting quantifies the releases and by virtue of the name of the permit system, focuses on the elimination of the releases. Pointing out through permitting the millions of pounds of carbon that we are releasing will assist in redirecting our use of new technologies that are available right now, that we can use as we retire energy generation, transportation, and heating systems that are heavy polluters.</p>
Lefteris Gasparakis	Park High Green Initiative	<p>Hello, my name is Lefteris Gasparakis and I am a proud member of the Park High School Green Initiative . I have lived in Montana for most of my life and I have grown to really enjoy the beautiful environment that this state has to offer. However, removing the MEPA would cause me to no longer have this freedom. I would no longer be able to go outside and have the reassurance that what I am standing on feels protected. Removing this act could have a significant toll on the Montanan economy, which is already ranked 48th in the United States. Tourism is the most crucial part of our economy and getting rid of MEPA would reduce the tourism we have. All of the aspects to our spectacular environment could be harmed: the water, the air, the animals. These animals that define our state would feel threatened because they could lose the habitat they own if the government took complete control. Our voices would be rendered as irrelevant and nothing is stopping them to destroy our environment. It could remove our unalienable right to the freedom of speech and our right to view government documents.</p>
Richard Fiorita	Self	<p>Chris Dorrington and DEQ need to do their job and conduct MEPA reviews that consider climate change effects when approving projects. The public demands that you follow the law and thank god reason has prevailed to require DEQ do just that. Our glaciers our melting in my lifetime and action is required NOW to help slow the grind of climate change. Biodiversity is the primary need that should be the result of all MEPA reviews and that includes analysis of the effects of climate change on biodiversity. Our legislators in their 2011 and 2023 efforts to remove climate change analysis by state agencies conducting business was clearly the wrong choice given all the effects we see around us; melting glaciers, warmer waters, fish in peril, shifting habitats, on and on. I don't live in a bubble that says I don't need to consider climate change just because the Montana legislature deems this is not good for business? I have never been so concerned about the health of my environment than the past decade. Please follow the law and begin the anyalysis Chris Dorrington and DEQ needs to do their job and conduct MEPA reviews that consider climate change effects when approving projects. The public demands that you follow the law and thank god reason has prevailed to require DEQ do just that. Our glaciers our melting in my lifetime and action is required NOW to help slow the grind of climate change. Biodiversity is the primary need that should be the result of all MEPA reviews and that includes analysis of the effects of climate change on biodiversity. You are required to follow the law and consider climate change in all DEQ MEPA analysis so get to work, the state is paying you well and I am watching what you do!</p>

Alysha Goheen	Families for a Livable Climate Volunteer	<p>The MEPA process must continue to include climate change considerations</p> <p>I share this comment in writing in addition to my in person comment at the Missoula event not so much as content expert but as a lifelong Montanan, a concerned citizen, and as a parent of two children. Two young people, who inspire me everyday with how they stand up for what is important to them and with their hopes for the future.</p> <p>My daughters, at ages 11 and 13, are well aware of climate change and the risks it poses to them and all the people, animals, and ecosystems on the planet. I am sure your children or other young people in your lives are aware of this too – as with the storms, forest fires, draughts, and extinctions there really is no way for us humans to put our heads in the sand any longer.</p> <p>That is why my whole family, and so many others from around the country, were so impressed by the bold young people who stood up and advocated for our all futures in the Held vs. Montana lawsuit. This ruling was clear in setting legal precedent for the fact that climate change provides a threat to Montanans’ right to a clean and healthful environment.</p> <p>Now it is on DEQ to also acknowledge that climate change is happening and that our MEPA implementation needs to take into account this reality – that even the children of our state understand must be our top priority. You must take leadership as quickly as possible to ensure that DEQ uses your expertise, available tools, and oversight responsibilities to hold private entities accountable for their emissions and the long term impact they have on us all.</p> <p>I get that the MEPA process on many levels is complicated – but in the bigger picture it is simple. The purpose of the act, according to the 2019 state MEPA handbooks is so “Montana can anticipate and prevent unexamined, unintended, and unwanted consequences rather than continuing to stumble into circumstances or cumulative crises” –well the impending climate crisis could not more clearly fit this mandate. As noted by others here tonight you can take action now – you need to start now – with no excuses, stalling, or delays.</p> <p>You most certainly don’t want to go down in history as not taking into account citizens’ dire concerns or bureaucratically dragging your feet in what is needed during this most unprecedented time in history. My family, like so many others in this room and across the state, implore you to do what my 11 year-old asked me to share with you tonight: “Wake up, move forward, and do the right thing.”</p>
Randy Setter		<p>I believe that the Montana DEQ . Which means the Department of Environmental Quality. It does not mean the Department of look the other way. When considering projects that affect our environment. Listening sessions are a stall tactic. While the current administration. Appeals the Held case . Montanas environment is what makes our state such a great place. Please do your jobs and protect our way of life which is our environment. Thank you for your time.</p>
Noreen Breeding		<p>MEPA does not need modernization. The basic law, 75-1-102, is clear and applicable at any date. Previous reforms which have led to decreased public participation, reduced disclosure and less rigorous analysis should be repealed.</p> <p>A MEPA analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts must include just that, a thorough quantification of emissions and clear statement of impacts. The effects of greenhouse gas emissions are well documented. Every project should be analyzed for climate impacts and these impacts quantified in terms of human health, environmental health, and economic factors.</p> <p>If state agencies are not thorough, balanced, efficient, and consistent, they are not doing their job. Every MEPA analysis is an opportunity for DEQ to demonstrate these qualities. If the agency lacks the resources to produce quality work, its director must find a way obtain these resources rather than produce inferior products. Increased public involvement and serious consideration of public comment provide opportunities for DEQ analysis to be more thorough and balanced.</p> <p>The Held decision struck down the law (SB971; 75-1-201 2.a.) prohibiting consideration of greenhouse gas emissions. It did not require changes to MEPA. These hearings are an unnecessary charade by DEQ to avoid following the letter and spirit of MEPA law.</p>
Gordon Whirry		<p>MEPA is the bedrock of our environmental protections and has been essential to preserving our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. However, some industry lobbyists and Republican legislators have managed to water it down over the years. I believe this harmful trend should be reversed and that it should be strengthened in light of the dire threats to our planet and way of life. The Held trial decision has clarified this importance and the responsibility the State has to fully evaluate the impact of state approvals. The science is clear and DEQ has the ability to assess the outcome. I see no need to delay or further compromise this legallv required analysis.</p>
Frances Goff		<p>Climate analysis should include impacts from the entire life cycle of all projects. This includes the construction, operation, and maintenance as well as the use, consumption, storage, and transportation of any fuels, goods, or services associated with the project.</p>
ann fuller		<p>Unfortunately our Republican representatives have eliminated laws that would protect Montana citizens from pollution from extractive institutions. The people need laws and people to safeguard them from being taken advantage in regards to having clean air, water and food because a bunch of representatives want to make more money and bypass laws that inhibit their progress in getting what they want instead of what the people need. We need environmental laws that will ensure a safe place to live and bring up a family that eats food free of pesticides, glysohate and other harmful products that we are unaware of. We are entitled to clean air and water as mentioned in our constitution. The Republican people in congress that killed environmental laws that protect us is disgusting and the fact that they made fun of the youth that protested and won their case against those laws being broken, is a clear sign that our elected officials are not working for us but have chosen to work underhandedly for their own benefit. Save environmental laws to protect our right to clean air, water and food</p>

Peter Landres

Regarding your request for comments from Montana residents on “modernizing” MEPA, and the 3 questions you explicitly seek input on, I offer the following comments.

1. What changes, if any, are needed to modernize MEPA? The only thing that is needed to “modernize” MEPA is for the DEQ to implement the letter and spirit of MEPA and the recent Montana court decision requiring the state to consider greenhouse gases and climate change in all DEQ decisions. The MT legislature has already changed MEPA in several ways, all of which diminished the intent of MEPA to ensure long term social and ecological health for Montanans. Now, the only “modernization” that is needed is to fully incorporate long term potential social, economic, and environmental impacts of climate change in DEQ analyses; to increase public disclosure of these potential effects; increase opportunities for citizen participation and input into DEQ decision processes; and increase the opportunities for the public to challenge agency decisions in court.

2. What should a MEPA analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts include? To comply with and fulfill the intent of MEPA, DEQ should be analyzing the long term social, economic, and environmental effects of greenhouse gas emissions and the long term ecological and social effects of the impacts from these emissions. Today, it appears that DEQ prioritizes short term economic gain to individual businesses and corporations at the expense of the long term health of Montanans and our environment. In stark contrast to what DEQ seems to be doing today, MEPA and the Montana state constitution demand that DEQ prioritize the long term benefits to our environment. In particular, DEQ must seriously consider the long term economic costs of all actions that directly produce or indirectly contribute to the production and release of greenhouse gas emissions. In almost all cases there are alternatives that produce lower amounts of greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the long term adverse impacts of these emissions on our environment, and these alternatives should be analyzed and then seriously taken into account in all decisions. Most likely, robust and fair analyses of alternatives would result in reducing production and use of fossil fuels, thereby benefiting our Montana environment, and these alternatives would in the long run be better for the health of Montana residents and reduce our cost of living.

3. What opportunities exist for state agencies to be more thorough, balanced, efficient, or consistent? DEQ already has the tools and expertise to conduct thorough, balanced, efficient, and consistent analyses of proposed actions. The Montana state constitution merely requires that a healthy environment be an explicit consideration in all analyses of potential project impacts, and this means that DEQ must take into account the long term impacts of greenhouse gas emissions on the environment in implementing a modern MEPA.

Scott M Hancock

Red Lodge Dark Skies

I am writing you to urge you to commit to and demonstrate strong support for MEPA and the use of comprehensive climate pollution analysis in your decision-making efforts on all relevant energy, mining, and related land and water projects within the state of Montana. I attended in person your listening session in Billings on October 2 but I passed on speaking to allow others the time to express their views.

Thank you for taking the time and effort to schedule the listening sessions although we had to scramble to attend given the short notice for the Billings meeting. Any DEQ changes to MEPA analysis of projects must make full public access to the decision-making process a very high priority - transparency is essential. That public access and challenges to DEQ’s MEPA decision-making should not burden good faith challengers with undo costs and monetary obligations.

The argument has been presented that DEQ is striving to “streamline” the process of MEPA analysis. I maintain that “streamlining” essentially waters down evidence-based analysis, cuts citizen comments out of the process, and allows corporate entities to shape and control the decision-making.

DEQ climate analysis under MEPA is essential as we all face serious climate-related personal, institutional, and economic disruption such as wildfire, drought, flooding etc. Our Montana way of life is being severely impacted and threatened. The Held v Montana decision mandates that DEQ must comply with Montana law by considering climate pollution in all of its analysis and decisions. This analysis should include the effects of all greenhouse gases including methane, nitrous oxide, fluorinated gases, and, of course, CO2. These greenhouse gases are produced at nearly all phases of Montana projects, and their cumulative climate impacts throughout the full

life of all projects - no matter how many decades into the future.

I am a resident of Carbon County and my two year old grandson lives only several miles downwind of the new Laurel methane plant on the banks of the Yellowstone River. At his age, he is incapable of commenting on this project, and his grandparents have not had the opportunity to raise their objections to this short-sighted project. His health may be affected for years to come by this improperly analyzed and vetted operation.

MT DEQ must join the modern era and comprehensively start considering greenhouse gas impacts under MEPA. Montana citizens deserve to understand and comment on your decision-making through MEPA - and those decisions must take climate impacts into consideration on all projects subject to DEQ analysis.

Thank you for your listening sessions and for carefully considering my comments.

clinton nagel	Gallatin Wildlife Association	<p>To be clear, MEPA must allow for the analysis of all greenhouse gas emissions and address the climate impacts from emissions on all proposed projects, even those impacts which may occur outside the project area. Analyses should not only include carbon dioxide, but all potential harmful emissions known to exist from the project. This analysis must also include a reasonable analysis of mitigation measures, should the project go forth necessitating such action.</p> <p>MEPA must also allow for ample notification of the public, not just a brief pronouncement in the newspaper, but in a way that garners the public’s attention. Once that is done, the comment period must be extended in duration long enough to give the public ample time, and reasonable time to respond. Environmental assessments and environmental impact statements must include alternatives that provide options, varying set of actions that provide a varying set of impacts. The questionable practice of providing a “No Action” and Preferred Alternative” do not suffice as reasonable choices. Those two choices do not provide the people with an understanding of the project, instead it actually denies them a choice.</p> <p>Again, we would like to reinstate our concerns that the state legislature and the Governor must not and should not recommend any changes to MEPA that weaken the original intent of the right of Montanans to live in a clean and healthy environment. To do so is a violation of the people’s trust. Climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, carbon sequestration, etc., must be viewed on a local, regional, and global scale. Emissions and impacts must be viewed on a cumulative basis, over time, and in the mindset that local impacts affect global impacts and cannot be justified as being separate and apart from the world as we know it.</p> <p>Finally, GWA wants to impress upon DEQ that MEPA analyses must also include impacts to the local and regional ecology, the biodiversity, the health of plants and wildlife. There will obviously be an indirect impact on these living things because of a warming world, as climate changes affect precipitation norms, but there should be a recognition that those changes in and of themselves will affect survival of wildlife as some species have brief tolerance zones of temperature, stress, and ability to find adequate forage. This is one of the primary rationales of GWA’s submission of comments. We advocate for wildlife and their habitat and for their right to exist. A warming world can be a death sentence to their existence.</p> <p>It is for this reason and for the reasons of all living beings that we need to be wise stewards of our resources and lands and understand the science as we know it of our planet. In that regard, we urge a strong and vitalized MEPA. Thank you for the opportunity to respond.</p>
Barbara Gulick	Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council	<p>DEQ is required to immediately come into compliance with Montana law by analyzing climate pollution. The recent Held v. Montana ruling clearly states that state agencies must include climate analysis within environmental analyses and impact statements.</p> <p>Climate analysis from DEQ is urgently needed given the increase of climate-fueled disasters including wildfires, floods, droughts, and associated harm to Montanans’ health, quality of life, and economy.</p>
Peggy Trenk	TSRA	<p>The Treasure State Resources Association would like to thank the Department for taking public input concerning how best to update the Montana Environmental Policy Act. As we stated in one of the public listening sessions, MEPA should continue to be used as an important and valuable tool for gathering data and gaining a better understanding of a proposed activity. Where authorized by the underlying permitting statute, that information can then be used to address concerns about impacts to the environment within the permitting process itself. As has been made very clear over the years, MEPA is procedural and cannot be used to directly deny or condition permits. Whatever reforms are considered in the coming months should keep that basic tent intact.</p> <p>We would like to see this discussion address whether more can be done to limit what needs to be reviewed under MEPA. That is not because potential impacts should be ignored - that is never an option -- but rather because the review may be redundant or unnecessary given the commonalities in some regulated activities and/or because a thorough has already been completed. For example, permitted activities that require renewal of an existing permit may not need to be subject to MEPA review if the existing permitted activity has received previous MEPA review, the permitted activity has not substantively changed, and the impacts of the permitted review have not been observed or noted to be any different than were found to be the case in the previous MEPA review.</p> <p>The agency and/or stakeholder group might also consider whether MEPA is applied consistently by different divisions of DEQ and by different agencies. For example, is there clear enough guidance as to when public review of an environmental assessment is required? It's also possible review of projects that require multiple permits could benefit from more communication and coordination in terms of how MEPA review is done. Whether that requires an actual change in the rules, or just more consistent application of the existing rules could be addressed in that discussion.</p> <p>We understand this process is just getting started and will look forward to providing more input as it progresses. In the meantime, thank you for your consideration of these comments.</p>
Mark Nicholson		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any changes to the implementation of MEPA should increase the public’s access to any and all decision making process. 2. Good faith challengers to MEPA decisions should not face financial penalties or financial obligations. 3. DEQ needs to include be in complete compliance with the Montana constitutional guarantee to a clean and healthful environment. 4. Any project’s potential for the transportation, use, storage, production and leakage of any and all greenhouse gases and any and all of their effects needs to be part of any MEPA analysis. 5. Any project’s MEPA analysis needs to take in to account the complete life of the project from construction through operations and to eventual removal.
Christine Deveny		<p>As a former chair of the Montana Board of Environmental Review it was clear that the MEPA had become weakened and muddled by changes to the Act over the years, mostly on the behalf of energy and other extractive industries. The best remedy is to simply revert MEPA to the way it was originally enacted in 1971 with its intent of fully considering environmental and other impacts of proposed projects before those projects are approved or denied. With the district judge’s clear ruling in the Held v Montana case DEQ doesn’t need to “modernize” or “streamline” MEPA in order to begin immediately considering climate change in their project review efforts. Climate change is occurring in Montana and there is scientific documentation of the significant harm it is causing. DEQ staff are capable of conducting the science-based work needed to document climate change impacts. This work needs to be and must be DEQ’s priority. Thank you</p>

<p>Carrie Jazwiecki</p>	<p>Changes to MEPA should be strengthened to protect the people and places that need it most. Greenhouse gasses should be treated on par with all pollution.</p> <p>Prioritize Vulnerable Populations: Changes to MEPA must prioritize the wellbeing of all community members. This inclusion extends to giving a voice to other-than-human beings, such as wildlife, insects, forests, grasslands, fish, and more.</p> <p>Rigorous Climate Analysis: Comprehensive climate analysis must be an integral part of MEPA, encompassing the entire lifecycle and supply chain of projects. The entire lifecycle includes phases from the initial gathering of raw materials until the point at which projects are decommissioned and all residuals are returned to the earth. This includes extraction, transportation, construction, operations and maintenance and all jobs and supplies needed for the project.</p> <p>Accountability for Non-Compliance: There must be clear consequences for industries or government entities that fail to comply with MEPA regulations.</p> <p>Expand Public Participation: MEPA must foster greater public involvement in environmental decision-making.</p> <p>Uphold obligation to maintain the constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. Changes to MEPA must assure that it fulfills the government's obligation.</p> <p>As a resident of Park County and a human being experiencing the environment I live in, I AM NOT in favor of less rigorous analysis and public disclosure, reduced public participation opportunities, and a reduced ability for the public to challenge agency decisions.</p>
<p>JACK HANSON</p> <p>none</p>	<p>Changes to MEPA implementation should prioritize transparency and greater public access to the decision-making process, including allowing plenty of room for good faith challenges to MEPA decisions by ordinary citizens. Indeed, a challenge to a MEPA decision by a citizen or citizen group acting in good faith should NEVER result in financial penalties or significant financial obligations for the challenger.</p> <p>Climate analysis by DEQ should include impacts from the ENTIRE LIFE CYCLE of any project evaluated. This includes the construction, operation, and maintenance as well as the use, consumption, storage, and transportation of any fuels, goods, or services associated with the project. Climate analysis by DEQ should look at ALL greenhouse gas pollutants associated with a project, including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gasses. DEQ should comply with Montana law – the Montana Constitution – by analyzing the full range of climate pollution associated with any project up for evaluation. We citizens of Montana deserve nothing less.</p>
<p>Tom Kresan</p>	<p>The DEQ should immediately consider climate impacts in environmental analyses under the Montana Environmental Policy Act and comply with the order from Held v. State of Montana. DEQ should analyze and disclose climate impacts of projects under its jurisdiction under the Montana Environmental Policy Act. The public and state agencies should understand the impacts proposed projects may have on our environment and climate. Please immediately comply with the court's decision in Held v. State of Montana.</p>

Ellen Pfister	<p>DEQ Hearing on MEPA Documents in light of Held v. Montana and the Montana Constitution.</p> <p>MEPA and other environmentally protective laws were passed in the early 1970's, when it was naively thought that laying out the things that could damage the physical world would cause regulators to take the proper actions to protect that world. Most MEPA actions have devolved into checklist EA's easily done from a Helena office divorced from the physical world. Unless an action might manage to kill a few people, the action does not have a noticeable effect and is good to go.</p> <p>It is fine to "tier on to" EIS'es thirty years old and more. Just do a check list EA. In the last 30 years climate change has become more noticeable, and the Held case has brought it to the fore. MEPA has functioned like a process for putting on make-up on a corpse. I would say that most of the projects for which an EIS has been done are all ready corpses. Climate change is just going to ensure that we join the natural places that we have killed as just one more corpse.</p> <p>Humans are pretty good survivors, but we do not survive excessive heat that well. We are meant to function at "Goldilocks" temperatures. The temperatures that climate change will bring are well above our favorite temps, even allowing for normal highs. That's why we like air conditioning, and that is probably what has brought us to this point, the search for a perfect comfort, irredamngardless of what happens to anything else.</p> <p>DEQ and other state agencies do have tools to do the analysis for climate change. DEQ has primacy on coal mine regulation, but they have turned the execution of the law for which they have primacy into a joke, permitting one mine plan into five permits so far, each one individually, but killing 20 sections. One permit has turned into death by a thousand cuts. Is there any reason that we should think that DEQ will do better on climate change analysis?</p> <p>Where there is money involved that an EIS might affect, is that agency likely to decide in favor of the natural world and a stable climate or money? A mere listing of the things that could happen if one takes a certain action is no deterrent to doing the action. For instance, we once had a law called the Major Facilities Siting Act, which called forth reams of lists of things that could happen with siting the Colstrip Power Plants.</p> <p>There were some things on those lists that should have been denied on just plain common sense; but the administrator of the law did not do that. The law gave him no decision point, so he made no decision.</p> <p>While there are tools that the various agencies could use to evaluate Climate Change, unless there are some standards for the agencies to use, I don't think they will make wise decisions, because it is too hard for an individual administrator to make a decision against money, regardless of who dies.</p> <p>I dare these agencies to prove me wrong.</p>
David Patenaude	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate change must be robustly considered in the MEPA process. It is causing profound impacts on Montanans' health, economy and environment, as found by the court in the Held decision. In weighing alternatives under MEPA, moving beyond fossil fuels will save Montanans billions of dollars: "Converting from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy would eliminate another \$21 billion in climate costs in 2050 to Montana and the world. Most noticeable to those in Montana, converting to wind, water, and solar energy would reduce annual total energy costs for Montanans from \$9.1 to \$2.8. billion per year, or by \$6.3 billion per year (69.6% savings). The total energy, health, plus climate costs savings, therefore, will be a combined \$29 billion per year (decreasing from \$32 to \$2.8 billion per year), or by 91%." (Held, Finding of Fact # 275) 2. Calls to reform MEPA center around its modernization, in truth MEPA has been "streamlined" and "modernized" more than a dozen times over the last 25 years. The significant changes to MEPA in 2011 resulted in less rigorous analysis and public disclosure, reduced public participation opportunities, and a reduced ability for the public to challenge agency decisions in court. However, any change to MEPA must stand up to, and conform with, constitutional requirements. Notably, two of the changes from 2011 have been found to be unconstitutional by Montana courts. 3. DEQ currently has the tools, knowledge and ability to analyze the climate change impacts associated with projects. Punting this analysis until after the stakeholder process is a stall tactic. When asked by the court in Held whether DEQ could analyze climate impacts in the MEPA process, DEQ stated, "I do believe we could do this kind of analysis, yes." Now DEQ seems to be saying that it can't comply with the court decision until its proposed stakeholder group concludes in late 2024, the 2025 legislature weighs in, and the Supreme Court rules. Instead of "kicking the can down the road," DEQ must comply with the district court decision and analyze climate impacts of proposed projects such as refineries, coal mines, and coal plants, with currently available tools (for example, utilizing the federal government's social cost of greenhouse gasses (SC-GHG) analysis). 4. A stakeholder group is unnecessary for developing a robust process for DEQ to analyze climate impacts. As the legislature and Governor move to reduce red tape and to eliminate boards and committees, the DEQ seems to be moving in the opposite direction.
Kasey Felder	<p>DEQ's mission "is to champion a healthy environment for a thriving Montana." As a born & raised Montanan I would like to see our right to a healthful environment put as a priority over corporate profit. I attended several 2023 legislative sessions, and it was quite appalling all of the handouts to corporations. MEPA is supposed to be for the people. The people of Montana need to be able to stand up for, or against, a project that might impact them. We need to have a say without being penalized otherwise it's just another corporate handout. MEPA and the DEQ need to look at the long-term impacts of any project as there are young generations following in our footsteps, The young people of Montana have a right to a clean and healthful environment as do the generations that will follow them. We need to break the mold and work towards leaving the Big Sky state cleaner than what we started with</p>
Richard Fiorita	<p>DEQ and Chris Dorrington MUST consider climate change impacts for future projects for which you oversee. I am very worried about our future due to the increase in CO2, methane, and other toxic particulates that enter out environment of which DEQ is responsible for permitting. Your job must now include monitoring these effects as they are damaging our air, water and soil for which we all need to survive.</p>
SGM Michael Jarnevic	<p>Unkown</p> <p>MEPA must include climate change in its examination of environmental policies. Ignoring the impacts of a changing climate will ultimately have terrible consequences for our beloved Montana--DEQ needs to act accordingly.</p>

Leslie Stoltz	<p>As a resident of Montana for over 45 years, I find it very concerning that our state officials are not concerned about insuring the integrity of Montana's water, air and landscape . Think about the number of visitors to this area and eventually, folks who have moved their lives to this state for a better quality of life due to the pristine nature of open space and clean environment. The DEQ needs to immediately consider climate impacts in environmental analyses under MEPA and comply with the order from Held v. State of Montana. We need to protect Montana from what is happening all around us.</p>
Dylan T Malloy	<p>Montana needs to focus on our environmental health now more than ever. Montana has a long history of projects that have been detrimental to the health of Montanan's (Eastern Montana Fracking, Colstrip Power plant, the U.S. Largest Superfund site in Butte, Libby asbestos exposures, etc.). We need the MEPA to be transparent to the public about developments that will affect the health of the local inhabitants and environment. MEPA should embrace challenges as a sign of good faith they are working for Montanan's and not green lighting any profitable project that comes along.</p> <p>Projects need to be wholistic and view the entire life cycle of all projects (construction, operation, maintenance, consumption, storage, transportation, greenhouse pollutants, etc.). We have seen how difficult it is to get people to take responsibility for clean ups as in Butte. The project to even get all parties involved and to agree on a plan was years in the making. We can't let companies, including the state, to get away with projects without considering the clean up, effects, and responsibility of their potential actions. And this needs to be done on the front end of project consideration, not the back end.</p> <p>All of this also needs to be publicly accessible. Transparency to the people. As a lifelong Montanan, we deserve to know what projects are being developed that could affect us and our environment that we recreate inso passionately.</p> <p>Climate analysis from DEQ is urgently needed given the increase of climate-fueled disasters including wildfires, floods, droughts, and associated harm to Montanans' health, quality of life, and economy.</p>
Susan Teitelman	<p>I'm writing to ask DEQ to analyze the impacts of climate change in the MEPA process. The science is clear that we are in the middle of a climate crisis: we're already experiencing devastating effects of climate change, which will continue to get worse. The right to a clean and healthful environment is enshrined in our Montana constitution. Upholding this right means evaluating the environmental and human health impacts of climate change through the MEPA process. DEQ currently has the tools, knowledge and ability to analyze these impacts associated with projects. Delaying these analyses until after the stakeholder process is irresponsible - we do not have time to waste. I urge you to consider the urgency of the climate crisis and do not delay any longer in evaluating climate impacts in the MEPA process.</p>
Michael Hudson	<p>Unless we act quickly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (by 50% in the next 7 years and 100% by 2050) we will all experience significant and potentially catastrophic consequences. More Montanans will die due to increase wildfire smoke, farmers will struggle even more with drought, our homes will be at increased vulnerability to wildfire, and our outdoor economy (one of the largest in the nation) will be dramatically impacted. The health and economic consequences will be real. Therefore, it is imperative that the DEQ IMMEDIATELY uses existing tools to assess and include the economic (\$185 per ton of CO2 emissions), social, health, and environmental impacts of greenhouse gas emissions for every project under it's review. This is an urgent issue, and the DEQ should delay no further -- you have the tools, legal authority, and resources to start now.</p>
Missoula County Missoula County Commissioners	<p>We would like to urge the state of Montana to include a thorough and robust analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts in their evaluation. Increased greenhouse gas emissions will have large economic impacts on our state, and without understanding a project's climate impacts, we cannot make a well-reasoned decision on whether or not the project should proceed. We recognize that these can be complex and challenging assessments, however we believe that the appropriate tools and resources exist right now to enable these types of evaluations.</p> <p>The Environmental Assessment stage can incorporate broadly accepted climate science, such as climate projections and climate impact calculators, to automatically trigger Environmental Impact Statements at certain thresholds or in sensitive airsheds or watersheds. Montana Climate Office datasets can be incorporated into assessments and used to identify thresholds. This is especially important so as to account for non-stationarity, or the concept that historical records do not accurately reflect what will occur in the future, particularly as climate drives increasing variability. Incorporating such variability into statistical analysis more regularly, or accounting for increased climate impacts more generally, would benefit local communities in planning for future resiliency.</p> <p>As part of modernization of MEPA, we recommend the state adopt use of a digital dashboard or GIS system to help the public access data and allow for integration of other data sets used in broader environmental context. This would help highlight overlapping permitting actions and decisions and allow the public and communities to take a holistic view of the range of existing projects on a watershed or airshed basis, regardless of department or division, as intended by MEPA. Such a system can also incorporate post permitting data to demonstrate a permitted entity is meeting permitting standards.</p> <p>We appreciate working hand in hand with DEQ to protect our water, air, climate, and communities. Incorporation of a greenhouse gas emission analysis, incorporation of current science and use of a digital dashboard or GIS system, are all improvements to the MEPA process that we would appreciate DEQ considering. Thank you for your consideration of our input. We look forward to work with DEQ to meet State and local goals for current and future citizens.</p> <p>Sincerely, Josh Slotnick, , Chair</p>

Vicki Watson	<p>Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the value & necessity of assessing climate impacts of state actions under MEPA.</p> <p>My name is Vicki Watson, I am an emeritus professor at UM where I have spent 40 years studying Montana’s watersheds & waterways and working for policies to conserve and restore them. I also taught Environmental Impact Analysis for many years.</p> <p>MEPA was passed with bipartisan support like our state constitution because Montanans recognize the need to ensure that state actions do not degrade our shared environment. And that all reasonable efforts will be made to minimize harm.</p> <p>Few things have greater impacts on our watersheds and waterways than do floods, droughts and extreme heat. In the Montana Climate Assessment (https://montanaclimate.org/), Montana’s climate scientists have provided strong evidence that such events are already more severe than in the past and are likely to become still more severe – with growing impacts on our economy, quality of life, and public safety. It is essential that every state agency, but especially DEQ, consider risks and impacts associated with increasingly severe climate events when making decisions about plans, permits and projects.</p> <p>To leave climate effects out of MEPA analysis would be like health care workers trying to help you manage your health, but avoiding any testing or discussion or actions focused on the greatest threats to your health – like smoking, heart disease, diabetes. We cannot ensure a clean and healthful environment in Montana without addressing, and mitigating and adapting to climate impacts.</p> <p>So, of course, climate analysis, adaptation, & mitigation must be a part of our MEPA analysis. And DEQ must lead the way and help other state agencies accomplish this critical task. I know it is a big task and that DEQ is short staffed. I will continue to advocate for better funding for DEQ to be able to better address this task and the many other critical services you provide to Montanans. But including climate impacts in MEPA analysis must happen now.</p> <p>Thank you for your service.</p>
David Patenaude	<p>Climate change must be robustly considered in the MEPA process. It is causing profound impacts on Montanans’ health, economy and environment, as found by the court in the Held decision. In weighing alternatives under MEPA, moving beyond fossil fuels will save Montanans billions of dollars: “Converting from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy would eliminate another \$21 billion in climate costs in 2050 to Montana and the world. Most noticeable to those in Montana, converting to wind, water, and solar energy would reduce annual total energy costs for Montanans from \$9.1 to \$2.8. billion per year, or by \$6.3 billion per year (69.6% savings). The total energy, health, plus climate costs savings, therefore, will be a combined \$29 billion per year (decreasing from \$32 to \$2.8 billion per year), or by 91%.” (Held, Finding of Fact # 275)</p> <p>2. Calls to reform MEPA center around its modernization, in truth MEPA has been “streamlined” and “modernized” more than a dozen times over the last 25 years. The significant changes to MEPA in 2011 resulted in less rigorous analysis and public disclosure, reduced public participation opportunities, and a reduced ability for the public to challenge agency decisions in court. However, any change to MEPA must stand up to, and conform with, constitutional requirements. Notably, two of the changes from 2011 have been found to be unconstitutional by Montana courts.</p> <p>3. DEQ currently has the tools, knowledge and ability to analyze the climate change impacts associated with projects. Punting this analysis until after the stakeholder process is a stall tactic. When asked by the court in Held whether DEQ could analyze climate impacts in the MEPA process, DEQ stated, “I do believe we could do this kind of analysis, yes.” Now DEQ seems to be saying that it can’t comply with the court decision until its proposed stakeholder group concludes in late 2024, the 2025 legislature weighs in, and the Supreme Court rules. Instead of “kicking the can down the road,” DEQ must comply with the district court decision and analyze climate impacts of proposed projects such as refineries, coal mines, and coal plants, with currently available tools (for example, utilizing the federal government’s social cost of greenhouse gasses (SC-GHG) analysis).</p> <p>4. A stakeholder group is unnecessary for developing a robust process for DEQ to analyze climate impacts. As the legislature and Governor move to reduce red tape and to eliminate boards and committees, the DEQ seems to be moving in the opposite direction.</p>
Margaret Schmidt	<p>DEQ stated in a court of law (Held vs. State of Montana) that is DOES has the capability to analyze climate change impacts created by projects. Therefore, DEQ should not drag its feet or pretend that this is too much to ask. What's more, converting to renewable energy in Montana would save \$29 billion per year in total energy, health and climate savings costs (Held vs. State of Montana, Finding of Fact #275). The Montana Environmental Policy Act must fulfil Montana citizens' constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. Climate impacts must be considered when reviewing projects.</p>
Patricia A Simmons	<p>Retired</p> <p>I don't understand why you merely can disclose impacts, but you have no authority to decline or approve a permit. This allows commercial, profit-making ventures to disregard the negative impacts and destroy habitat and other environmental damage.</p> <p>You also need many ways to get public input from a variety of interests, individually, NGO technical input; announced in a variety of ways so people have an opportunity to comment; and at least 90 days of comment time period.</p> <p>You need to respect and obey the Montana Constitution, and vigorously fight for a healthy environment, and require internal or external - the most knowledgeable and experienced analyses.</p> <p>Climate warming is in process and needs to be accepted as established, accurate and scientifically true. I just heard the Bozeman School Board say that they don't teach climate in the schools as requested by young people, because it is political. This is outrageous. You need to as an official agency for our environment, claim, state, educate, promote that climate warming and its impacts are true and make your objectives always include climate warming.</p> <p>You need to require all approved projects to pay current rates for bonding to adequately protect our environment so we, the public taxpayers, don't have to pay outrageous sums to repair the damage.</p> <p>You need compliance officers and/or contractors, whose job is to inspect every project during construction or installation and then through the life of the project.</p> <p>You cannot allow a project, whose owner does not meet the law for his previous projects, contrary to what Gianforte just did.</p> <p>Your agency's primary focus is to save, protect, repair, etc. our environment for the people and non human beings. It is not to help private companies/organizations make money and/or damage our precious environment in Montana.</p>
Emily McMeekin	<p>I have always had a connection to the state of Montana, as I grew up in the Pacific Northwest. I believe that we have a responsibility to our earth, to our communities, and to our families to recognize climate change. We, as Montanans, could be leaders in addressing how climate change is affecting our state... and I absolutely believe that the MEPA process should include climate change considerations. Thank you.</p>
David McMeekin	<p>I believe that the MEPA process should include climate change considerations.</p>

Catharine Carey	Climate change is the most important issue our country faces. It is essential for the future of life on our planet that we do everything possible to support clean energy sources and stop use of fossil fuels.
Don Jackson	<p data-bbox="682 103 1473 131">Retired Environmental Scientist</p> <p data-bbox="682 131 2534 185">What should a MEPA analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts include? I'm sure DEQ will receive numerous comments regarding fossil fuel extraction of coal, oil, and gas. But revisions to the MEPA analysis of greenhouse gas and climate impacts should NOT be limited to fossil fuel projects.</p> <p data-bbox="682 220 2610 298">I believe the DEQ should begin a revision of departmental processes to provide thorough examinations and environmental analyses to determine the quantities and types of emissions from the activities associated with ALL the resource projects that DEQ is responsible for permitting. Thorough EAs and EISs that examine emissions and climate impacts should be required for all types of mineral extraction not just coal, gas and oil. A complete analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts for new and amendment permit applications should be required for all hardrock and opencut mining projects.</p> <p data-bbox="682 334 2588 388">For example, an analysis for opencut mining would include the emissions from all the equipment and vehicles involved throughout the expected timeline of the mine activities. This would include, but not be limited to:</p> <ul data-bbox="682 391 1516 553" style="list-style-type: none"> soil & overburden stripping and stockpiling; extraction of the mineral; operating processing equipment (crusher, pug mill, screen, etc.); operating facilities (asphalt plant, concrete plant, wash plant) for producing product; transporting material to job sites; and reclamation activities, concurrent & final, associated with meeting post mining land uses. <p data-bbox="682 589 1857 667">The data is either or available or can be calculated for emissions and subsequent climate impacts for ALL projects that DEQ permits. The Department has competent scientists that can perform the objective analyses needed. Objective analyses are necessary to meet the findings in Held v. Montana.</p>
Don Jackson	<p data-bbox="682 719 1575 747">Retired Environmental Scientist</p> <p data-bbox="682 719 1575 747">What opportunities exist for state agencies to be more thorough, balanced, efficient, or consistent?</p> <p data-bbox="682 782 2610 859">When permitting projects a more thorough assessment of impacts to plant and animal species is needed to ensure that DEQ is providing due diligence in championing and maintaining a clean and healthful environment for a thriving Montana for present and future generations. Below is one of many examples that highlight how the DEQ Environmental Assessments for opencut mine permits are lacking in a thorough and balanced effort to assess how a clean and healthful environment is impacted.</p> <p data-bbox="682 894 1903 922">A more thorough assessment of impacts to plant and animal species is needed to ensure that DEQ is meeting the requirements of MEPA.</p> <p data-bbox="682 958 2596 997">I know from personal experience that the DEQ assessment of impacts to plant and animal species has been and continues to be woefully inadequate in its function to analyze the impacts of a proposed opencut mine action.</p> <p data-bbox="682 1000 2308 1027">The EA for the 2012 permitted Mantle Ranch Pit in Beaverhead County lists 6 species of concern in the vicinity of the site identified by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP).</p> <p data-bbox="682 1031 2580 1086">The EA states the following "Impacts: None of the listed species have been found on this site. Even if suitable habitat did exist on this site, the disturbance area would be small and large areas of similar or identical habitat surrounds the site. The possible impact to these species would be minimal."</p> <p data-bbox="682 1122 2588 1177">The problem with the older EAs is that the Impacts language is a "cookie cutter" statement made for virtually all sites. There was no factual or scientific basis to determine if the first two sentences are actually true. And no analysis was done to determine if the third sentence is true.</p> <p data-bbox="682 1213 2596 1312">The EA for the 2023 Hodgson Site in Flathead County lists 23 species of concern in the vicinity of the site identified by MNHP. The EA states the following: "Impacts: The project area is located in a semi-developed, rural to suburban. While potential habitat for threatened and endangered species may exist, the surrounding area is comprised of a mix of developed and large undeveloped spaces. DEQ does not have information as to whether observations of the listed species have been reported at this site. Even if suitable habitat did exist on this site, the disturbance area would be small and large areas of similar or identical habitat surround the site. The possible impact (including cumulative impacts) to these species would be short-term and negligible."</p> <p data-bbox="682 1347 2550 1403">The problem with newer EAs is that the Impacts language is a "cookie cutter" statement made for virtually all sites. As the DEQ does not have information or observations, there is no factual or scientific basis to determine if the last two sentences are actually true. The DEQ does not provide an analysis to determine if the statements are true.</p> <p data-bbox="682 1438 2099 1445">This is an unbalanced approach that minimizes the importance of plant and animal species to a clean and healthful environment. The DEQ can do much better!</p>

Don Jackson	Retired Environmental Scientist	<p>The EAs for Opencut Mine permits that propose a pond for the final post mining land use need a more significant and thorough analysis of the interactions and impacts of groundwater interface with surface water. For example the Concrete Materials opencut application for Lucht site OC#3561 proposes an large pond (approx. 65 acres) as part of final reclamation. The pond water would be fed by groundwater. The surface water that would evaporate reduces the volume of ground water resource. As the pond is likely to be there in perpetuity, it would be beneficial to know how much groundwater resource would be lost to the proposed action.</p> <p>The DEQ could collaborate with the Ground Water Information Program (GWIP) to assess and analyze the actual impacts of the new surface water bodies created from mining. An objective analysis of the impacts and reductions to groundwater would be beneficial to future generations that value a clean and healthful environment.</p> <p>https://www.mbgm.mtech.edu/WaterEnvironment/GWIP/main.asp#gsc.tab=0</p>
Bob Otten	Retired	<p>I am a retired fourth generation Montanan who worked with hourly electric loads and weather data during my 37 year career in the electric utility industry. I grew up on a farm/ranch near Lewistown that is still in the family. The following comments are limited to greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) emissions. Climate change is a very serious problem that can be mitigated by reducing or eliminating GHG emissions that occur when fossil fuels are used or burned.</p> <p>A major consideration during project evaluations should be that GHG emissions need to be reduced as quickly as possible while keeping the lights on and the economy functioning. It should be clear that a main policy goal is the reduction of GHG emissions to near zero over time.</p> <p>The total cost of carbon emissions over the life of a project needs to be included and weighed against economic benefits as part of a project evaluation. Hence, the total GHG emissions over the life of the project along with a social cost of carbon (available from several sources) will need to be part of an evaluation. Also, projects with significant GHG emissions should provide an analysis showing that there aren't workable and cost effective lower carbon alternatives.</p> <p>MEPA rules should provide clear guidelines and coordinate with other state agencies to ensure the project evaluation/approval process is clearly defined, efficient, and timely. MEPA should also encourage a fair middle of the road approach that pressures organizations to reduce GHG emissions as quickly as possible while recognizing that changing existing systems and infrastructure has costs and is dependent on available</p>
Brandon S. Lewis	Pangaea	<p>MEPA needs major revision to ensure the integrity of protection for Montana's environment. Below are some key areas to support outcomes that are accountable to the public trust and future generations that deserve to experience nature in its purest form.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Map out Montana's natural, scenic and historic treasures that exist on unprotected lands - The public must work from a map when we are protecting the environment or we will have to keep re-justifying value of the same area over and over for each new project. Yes we have national/state parks, national forests etc., but we don't have a clear or effective way to define the value of private property when it comes to enforcing good stewardship. This process must include public participation to identify key areas of importance to Montana's legacy. 2. A mandated EIA instead of a discretionary EA process which is actually a loophole for developers and DEQ to evade duty and due diligence towards protecting Montana's beauty and nature. Require independent environmental impact assessments for all projects within the mapped area or that significantly alter community, culture, and environmental conditions. The DEQ must not have discretion to complete haphazard EA checklist as they have done with the KOA Deep Well Ranch Regional Wastewater System. 3. Mandate a thorough, exhaustive and intensive public notice process that ensures neighboring property owners, local community members and Montana's have an opportunity for public participation. The current public notice process is more of an obligatory checklist item instead of a diligent and intentional effort to make sure the public knows about a project. The public should not have to hunt for public notices, they should be in our face so we can't miss them. 4. Enhance the decision making influence by the public when a project proposes any changes to the natural, scenic, and historic value of an area. All over the world, environmental laws are plowed over because they are not designed to allow the public to effectively challenge decisions or hold people accountable. The legal burden imposed upon citizens that want to oppose harm to the environment is significant enough to deter effective opposition unless an environmental non profit gets involved. Even then, there are limits and the power of wealthy developers or corporations can effectively drag things out until opposition resources are drained. 5. Have language in MEPA that requires environmental impact always considers the connectivity and continuity of whole ecosystems, not property lines. Nature does not consider property lines and effective environmental management considers the impact to an ecosystem. For example, the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is a part of, and supports, Yellowstone National Park.
Dusty Weber	Signal Peak Energy, LLC	<p>Signal Peak Energy, LLC (SPE) is submitting public comments in the form of a PDF letter (SPE MEPA Letter.pdf). This pdf was submitted to DEQ through the Montana file transfer system on Dec 1, 2023, before the end of business.</p>
Senator Denise Hayman	Montana Senator	<p>I have great concerns regarding the "modernization" of our laws protecting and implementing Article IX of our Montana Constitution. Under DEQ's leadership, under many governors, we have permitted numerous SuperFund sites, seen the loss of rivers and lakes and neglected ,too numerous to count, abandoned mining sites to name a few of our environment mistakes and disasters. Currently, we have been "discovered" and this pressure has permanent impacts. In my neighborhood, a new land owner (Elk Run) of approximately 20 acres is building a 1acre "pond" that could impact all the neighbors for miles. DEQ has never notified the neighbors or recognized this as a possible problem. This is just one of many examples of DEQ's lack of oversight and protecting the land and water we love So to get back to "modernizing" the process for approval and protection, I think we should use the rules and statues that have been developed already, be more transparent and work with communities who are impacted by these decisions.</p>
Michael Harris	Montana Department of Justice	<p>Request that any changes to MEPA be postponed until climate change constitutional challenges have been resolved by the court.</p>

Katrina Mann	<p>I am writing in regards to the project going on by Denny Creek Rd in West Yellowstone MT. Behing Diamond P Ranch.</p> <p>This is something we have been trying to bring to a stop because of the significant impact it has on our wildlife, streams,and drinking water. Construction has started on this massive project by KOA and Steve Linde. Already we are seeing a massive disturbance and the project is only begining. We have been here for over 20years and understand this area and the Yellowstone Eco system. It is our PLEA that our voices and concerns be heard by the DEQ and be a part of making crucial desisions for our futures.</p>
Travis Mann	<p>I am writing in regards to the project going on by Denny Creek Rd in West Yellowstone MT. Behing Diamond P Ranch.</p> <p>This is something we have been trying to bring to a stop because of the significant impact it has on our wildlife, streams,and drinking water. Construction has started on this massive project by KOA and Steve Linde. Already we are seeing a massive disturbance and the project is only begining. We have been here for over 20years and understand this area and the Yellowstone Eco system. It is our PLEA that our voices and concerns be heard by the DEQ and be a part of making crucial desisions for our futures.</p>
Steve W Krum	<p>MEPA is the people's law. The proposed MEPA review process is nothing more than a political tactic to allow projects to get started or even completed without proper review. The DEQ must comply with the HELD decision and analyze climate impacts of all projects. Your decisions have an impact further and wider than just the Yellowstone Valley, State of Montana, the entire world. The hottest year ever recorded and is getting exponentially worse.</p> <p>When we COULD replace fossil fuel burning energy generation we SHOULD, Laurel YGS. Where we should be converting to green energy then we MUST to protect the planet. This is what MEPA should and must protect us from, pure and simple greed. We have rights needed with MEPA; no review required.</p> <p>After the meeting I was questioning notification and was asked what a good distance for notification would be in the Laurel YGS. My response 300' is not enough, As the YGS is a huge project, everyone within the 4.5 miles of Laurel will be impacted and should be notified as this is a significant land use change and a serious environmental impact. Laurel YGS plant is classified as a Major Source of Hazardous Air Pollutants and Greenhouse Gases, and notices published both in the Billings Gazette and the Laurel Outlook.</p> <p>The permit was rushed through for the Laurel site once the Lockwood location was abandoned. Constitutional rights must be upheld, and MEPA left as is to ensure projects like these are NOT being pushed through without proper EIS review. It appears more effort being made by government and elected officials to keep the public out of the process rather than bring them in to voice their opinions and protect their rights early in the process. YGS, no EIS was completed. Why wasn't LDAR addressed from wellhead to plant and its potential impact on greenhouse gases? Two to Four percent of all gross methane production is leaked to the atmosphere, methane emissions are nearly double the greenhouse gas impact of burning of methane at the YGS. Environmental impact is more than double what is being stated in the DEQ project plans. BACT, why wasn't an ESP (Electrostatic Precipitator) required? There will be ~200 tpy of PM raining down on the environment and densely populated areas carrying carcinogens and other health impacting chemicals into the breathing zone of the people, animals and the environment. BACT is required and could prevent this exposure. No emission monitoring requirement? This plant is permitted to be out of spec on air quality/excess emissions for 524 days a year? BACT would have told the true story of emissions. Just an estimate of the noise from this plant, where is this data? Every piece of this plant makes noise, the data was inaccurate from the beginning, but never questioned. DEQ should have required more per MEPA. DEQ required no electronic monitoring in this plant just calculations from a desk, why? MEPA protects us, no review needed.</p>
Steve W Krum	<p>MEPA is the people's law. The proposed MEPA review process is nothing more than a political tactic to allow projects to get started or even completed without proper review. The DEQ must comply with the HELD decision and analyze climate impacts of all projects. Your decisions have an impact further and wider than just the Yellowstone Valley, State of Montana, the entire world. The hottest year ever recorded and is getting exponentially worse.</p> <p>When we COULD replace fossil fuel burning energy generation we SHOULD, Laurel YGS. Where we should be converting to green energy then we MUST to protect the planet. This is what MEPA should and must protect us from, pure and simple greed. We have rights needed with MEPA; no review required.</p> <p>After the meeting I was questioning notification and was asked what a good distance for notification would be in the Laurel YGS. My response 300' is not enough, As the YGS is a huge project, everyone within the 4.5 miles of Laurel will be impacted and should be notified as this is a significant land use change and a serious environmental impact. Laurel YGS plant is classified as a Major Source of Hazardous Air Pollutants and Greenhouse Gases, and notices published both in the Billings Gazette and the Laurel Outlook.</p> <p>The permit was rushed through for the Laurel site once the Lockwood location was abandoned. Constitutional rights must be upheld, and MEPA left as is to ensure projects like these are NOT being pushed through without proper EIS review. It appears more effort being made by government and elected officials to keep the public out of the process rather than bring them in to voice their opinions and protect their rights early in the process. YGS, no EIS was completed. Why wasn't LDAR addressed from wellhead to plant and its potential impact on greenhouse gases? Two to Four percent of all gross methane production is leaked to the atmosphere, methane emissions are nearly double the greenhouse gas impact of burning of methane at the YGS. Environmental impact is more than double what is being stated in the DEQ project plans. BACT, why wasn't an ESP (Electrostatic Precipitator) required? There will be ~200 tpy of PM raining down on the environment and densely populated areas carrying carcinogens and other health impacting chemicals into the breathing zone of the people, animals and the environment. BACT is required and could prevent this exposure. No emission monitoring requirement? This plant is permitted to be out of spec on air quality/excess emissions for 524 days a year? BACT would have told the true story of emissions. Just an estimate of the noise from this plant, where is this data? Every piece of this plant makes noise, the data was inaccurate from the beginning, but never questioned. DEQ should have required more per MEPA. DEQ required no electronic monitoring in this plant just calculations from a desk, why? MEPA protects us, no review needed.</p>
Nathan Bellinger	<p>Our Children's Trust, on behalf of the Held v. State of Montana Plaintiffs</p> <p>On behalf of the sixteen Youth Plaintiffs in the constitutional climate case Held v. State of Montana, CDV-2020-307 (Mont. 1st Jud. Dist. Ct.), Our Children's Trust respectfully submits these comments as part of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's ("DEQ") "MEPA Implementation Comment Portal and Public Listening Sessions." Comments are being submitted via email to deqmepa@mt.gov. Comments are also available at the following link: https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/vev901nunj08hodlaa59e/2023.12.01_OCT-MEPA-Public-Comments-FINAL.pdf?rlkey=9w9gxvmjmkxnqgrmrbmdi0r4&dl=0</p> <p>Please let me know if you have any issues accessing these comments.</p>

Rex Anthony Portmann	Diamond P Ranch	<p>Montana law requires the public to participate in major environmental decisions through MEPA and yet, recent projects in our area did NOT have notices sent to us nor to our nearby neighbors. MEPA are the laws that are suppose to make sure Montanans know about developments that impact our environment and include them, in the decision-making process, through the DEQ.</p> <p>We need mandates that insure thorough, exhaustive and intensive public notice process, to neighboring property owners and local community members, to guarantee our opportunity to public participation. We shouldn't have to hunt for public notices, regarding nearby developments.</p> <p>We need language in MEPA that requires the environmental impact always considers the whole ecosystem in the area, NOT just within the property lines! Nature does not recognize property lines. For example, our property and the property of our neighbor(s), all play a part in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, which also has connectivity to Yellowstone National Park</p>
Todd O'Hair	Montana Chamber of Commerce	<p>On behalf of the Montana Chamber of Commerce and our over 2000 members around the state, we thank the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for soliciting public comment on the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).</p> <p>While only some of our members go through the MEPA permitting process due to statutory requirements in their industry, all Montana businesses are impacted by regulations that effect our state's economy and the ability of industry to create jobs and economic prosperity. The health and wellbeing of our state depends on private industry's ability to construct, maintain, and operate a wide array of critical infrastructure projects. As such, a consistent, achievable regulatory framework is essential to allow for long-term planning to bring these projects to fruition.</p> <p>The business community understands its responsibility to the environment and the need to follow these laws as they are enacted by the Montana Legislature. Whether a permit is needed for a new subdivision for affordable housing, a large solar energy or natural gas project, or a large manufacturing facility, a predictable MEPA process can ensure these projects go forward with due consideration to environmental impacts and public input.</p> <p>The Montana Chamber's regular polling of voters shows Montanans believe businesses can be trusted to do the right thing when it comes to protecting the environment – 58% to 37%. The same poll had only 8% of respondents say the Legislature's top priority should be enacting stronger environmental laws. This B-Base poll is done by asking 600 Montana voters about a number of topics, and has a margin of error of 4%.</p> <p>Recent state district court cases currently on appeal have raised issues about the scope of DEQ's MEPA analysis and agency work. Some of these district court cases have temporarily blocked needed baseload power, tried to expand the scope of DEQ's environmental analysis beyond Montana's borders, and made conclusions that would set Montana apart as an outlier to the detriment of our ability as a state to be competitive with our neighboring states and employ Montanans with good-paying careers. As the Montana Supreme Court weighs how these cases will be ultimately decided, we urge caution in the DEQ making large changes to the MEPA permitting process that are not grounded in final disposition of cases or established parameters and regulations from the Montana Legislature.</p> <p>At any point when there are final opinions from the Montana Supreme Court, the Montana Chamber and business leaders are ready to be a part of any conversation that includes MEPA. It is only the Montana Legislature that is constitutionally empowered to develop regulatory frameworks to protect the environment and empower the private sector to create jobs and economic prosperity. Until that time, we applaud the DEQ for engaging with the Montana public and business as it fulfills its mission of championing a healthy environment for a thriving Montana.</p>

Darryl James	<p>As an independent consultant, I have been providing regulatory/environmental permitting services to public and private clients for 30+ years. I prepared dozens of EA's and EIS's for MDT in the 1990's, and authored many more MEPA and/or NEPA documents for various federal-aid road and bridge projects, energy, land use, natural resource, and other linear infrastructure development projects across the intermountain west.</p> <p>I would argue that MEPA, at its core, is still sound. The flaw in the current process lies in the manner in which the body of regulations around MEPA has been tortured and stretched to halt development irrespective of clear statutory language and the scientific analysis behind the individual actions coming before the state for review.</p> <p>MEPA is procedural. It establishes a manner in which to consider, disclose and invite public comment on potential impacts stemming from projects requiring a state action or permit. Statute clearly establishes this purpose and explicitly limits the authority granted to state agencies, stating that an "agency may not withhold, deny, or impose conditions on any permit or other authority to act." Rather, MEPA was intended to provide the legislature with the means to determine whether existing substantive environmental laws are adequate to address impacts to the environment from decisions made by state agencies.</p> <p>There are at least two key points laying the foundation for a workable environmental review process: one is that the analysis be based in sound science; second that the overall approach be balanced in the consideration of social, economic and environmental impacts. MEPA speaks about "productive harmony" between human needs and nature, and "balancing of the competing interests" of environmental preservation and land use to provide life's basic necessities. A third foundational point would be an opportunity for meaningful public comment.</p> <p>Legal challenges based on procedural flaws in the execution of MEPA analysis are common and expected. More recent challenges, however, have sought relief through the denial of permits. While this is expressly prohibited by the Act itself, Montana courts have been demonstrating a lack of restraint in recent years and have rescinded permits issued by state agencies. This trend in MEPA claims – as well as the subsequent ideologically-driven judicial activism – threatens the legitimacy and effectiveness of MEPA.</p> <p>Apparently the current written letter of the law is not clear enough and a re-stating of the purpose of MEPA may be in order. As the Department considers an "update" to MEPA, my clients urge a process centered on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientifically-based, objective analysis; • Balanced consideration of social, economic and environmental issues; • Confirmed recognition that MEPA is not intended to prohibit development or impacts, but rather to make thoughtful decisions; • Consistency and predictability; and • Judicial deference to agency decisions.
Caleb Oldroyd	<p>Buttermilk Country Cabins/Neighbor of Diamond P Ranch</p> <p>In regards to KOA's Deep Well Ranch Regional Wastewater System, I am writing to express my deep concern for the contamination of local drinking water, contamination of water source for fish, wildlife, and livestock, and grazing grounds around where the sewage is being sprayed. The detrimental impact that this could have on residence such as those at Diamond P Ranch and living down Denny Creek Road as well as us across the highway. The surge in traffic is also another huge concern as this will cause great danger to us and others who live out in our area. We have livestock who graze the ground and we also have a pond with fish and our livestock drink from Denny Creek and Buttermilk Creek.</p>
Katy Spence	<p>MEIC</p> <p>This petition was signed by 368 individuals and submitted via email:</p> <p>We, the undersigned, urge the Montana Department of Environmental Quality to immediately start analyzing climate change impacts in its review under the Montana Environmental Policy Act. The tools exist today for DEQ to begin analyzing and disclosing climate impacts of projects, and allowing public and state agencies to understand the impacts proposed projects may have on our environmental life support system, including our climate. Please immediately comply with the district court's decision in Held v. State of Montana and protect present and future generations from the devastating impacts of the climate crisis.</p>
Helen And Gregg Latimer	<p>we have had land in Hebgen Basin since Birth, and have been spending summers, and much time in the winters all of our lives. This decision to put an open waste project anywhere in this area is so tragic. it could change the smell, the beauty, the environment forever. Im shocked at the decision to go ahead with such a project. I thought everyone in this area loved it as much as I and my family do.</p>
Melissa A Hornbein	<p>Western Environmental Law Center</p> <p>I earlier submitted comments via email at deqmepa@mt.gov on behalf of the following organizations: 350 Montana, Citizens for a Better Flathead, Clark Fork Coalition, Earthworks, Families for a Livable Climate, Gallatin Valley Sunrise, Montana Chapter of the Sierra Club, Montana Environmental Information Center, Montana Health Professionals for a Livable Climate, Park County Environmental Council, Upper Missouri Waterkeeper, and Water for Flathead's Future in response to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's ("DEQ") solicitation of comments on implementation of the Montana Environmental Policy Act ("MEPA"). These comments exceeded the 3,000 character limit allowed by this form, and should be made publicly available along with comments submitted through this portal. Thank you.</p>