

Minnesota Environmental and Energy Update - May 13, 2011

Posted by [Eric F. Swanson](#) on May 13, 2011

Coal Moratorium Repeal

HF72/SF86, also known as the Coal Moratorium Repeal bill, passed out of the House, as amended, on a 76-54 vote. House author Rep. Mike Beard (R-Shakopee) amended the bill in the hopes the Governor will sign it into law. The bill as amended will now allow Minnesota utilities to import 2,500 megawatts from coal plants outside of Minnesota. However, the ban on building new coal fired plants in Minnesota remains intact. During concluding remarks Rep. Andrew Falk (DFL-Murdock) read a letter dated Mar. 11 from former Vice President Al Gore, who opposed the bill, saying that it takes the state a “step backward” and keeps Minnesota on a path to a “dirty energy economy.” Rep. Joe McDonald (R-Delano) responded by quoting President Obama from a Feb. 3, 2010, speech when he lauded new carbon capture and storage methods for coal fired electricity production. The bill now goes back to the Senate for its consideration of the House amendment.

Environmental Policy Omnibus

The state’s fishing opener this weekend provided momentum for the Senate to pass SF1115, focused on preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species. When the House took up the bill, however, it added a number of provisions, creating a much broader environmental policy bill. After adding 14 House bills in a delete all amendment offered by Rep. Denny McNamara (R-Hastings), the bill passed off the House floor 95-37. When reheard in the Senate this morning, an initial motion by author Sen. Ingebrigtsen (R- Alexandria) to concur with the House language met strong resistance. Sen. Ingebrigtsen noted that the hope had been the Senate would concur, giving the Governor the opportunity to sign the bill before tomorrow’s fishing opener.

However, due to the resistance to accepting the House language without lengthy debate, Sen. Ingebrigtsen accepted an amended motion to refuse to concur and the Senate unanimously agreed, sending the bill to conference committee.

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Ellen Anderson Not Recommended

On a party line vote of 8-6, a Senate committee refused to recommend former DFL Sen. Ellen Anderson for confirmation as Chair of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. During the hearing, Republican members shared concerns that Anderson would not be able to be objective in her new role, while DFLers praised her experience and knowledge of the issues facing the Commission. The Committee forwarded Anderson's nomination to the floor without recommendation. It is unclear if the full Senate will take up Anderson's appointment before they adjourn on May 23.