

It's the latest issue of the MountainTrue Raleigh Report. In this week's issue...Closing down coal, running behind on the budget and the magic growing bill.

Urgent Action Needed: The Magic Growing Bill

Last week the Senate Agriculture, Environment (AENR) Committee unveiled a substitute for a tiny bill, H44, Cities/Overgrown Vegetation Notice. That substitute had miraculously grown from simple, one-page bill to the Local Government Regulatory Reform bill with 18 sections limiting local authority and hampering environmental provisions.

Things with this bill are moving fast, so visit our [website](#) and call your legislators today to ask that they remove the worst provisions.

The new bill weakens riparian buffer rules, makes it harder to convert a road lane to a bike lane and more. A [fact sheet](#) from the N.C. Conservation Network lists the worst provisions of the bill, which passed out of committee on a voice vote. It has passed the Senate and will now return to the House for either concurrence or be sent to conference committee.

Join MountainTrue in Raleigh

Come with us on our next trip to Raleigh and see the legislative sausage making up close! We are headed back to Raleigh July 16th to meet with legislators about energy issues, environmental protections and other WNC issues. [Sign up today.](#)

Closing Down Coal

The Mountain Energy Act, which will help speed the closure of Duke Energy's Asheville coal-burning power plant, went to the Governor for his signature last week after speeding through both the state House and Senate.

The bill directs the Utilities Commission to reach a decision on a permit for the new gas electric generating turbines within 45 days of receiving Duke's application. It also allows the Asheville plant two exemptions from last year's state Coal Ash Management Act, giving Duke more time to shut down the coal plant while simultaneously building the new gas plant. One exemption allows Duke to bypass a state requirement that all Duke plants convert their ash handling to dry form by the end of 2019. The other exemption moves the deadline for closing the plants ash ponds from 2019 to 2022.

Approval of this legislation was led by Sen. Tom Apodaca in the Senate and Rep. Chuck McGrady in the House.

Apodaca in the Spotlight

Speaking of Sen. Apodaca...*The Charlotte Observer* and *The News & Observer* ran a largely gushing profile of our colorful state senator over the weekend. You can read the full piece [here](#). And take a few minutes to check out [MountainTrue's profile of Sen. Apodaca](#).

Running Behind on the Budget

With the state's new fiscal year set to begin July 1, the Senate ran out its version of the state budget on Monday. Look for the Senate spending plan to move through the chamber this

week – and House and Senate negotiators to begin the daunting task of reconciling the two plans.

For starters, the Senate's \$21.47 billion budget is half a billion dollars short of the House plan, which appropriated \$22.2 billion. Major differences include investments in state employee and teacher pay, as well as Senate-sponsored income tax reductions and changes in the way corporate income tax is calculated. And don't forget differences on Medicaid as well as other health policy.

The difficulty of reaching agreement on these – and many more – issues makes it almost a certainty that a final budget will not be in place by July 1. Instead, look for a stop-gap bill to keep government running, followed by more negotiations well in July and, perhaps, August.

Legislative Wrap Ups

Don't forget! MountainTrue is hosting a series of events to give you the skinny on all the environmental outcomes from this legislative. We'll also fill you in on priorities between sessions and ways you can get involved in holding our lawmakers accountable. Sessions are scheduled July 23 in Hendersonville, July 30 in Asheville and July 31 in Franklin. [Sign up today!](#)