Legislative Update from Michael Melius; current as of Friday, Feb. 12:

Code: SB = Senate Bill, HB = House Bill

Priority Bills:

SB 58: Provides for a real property tax exemption for renewable energy projects. Amended to include passive solar. Passed Senate 26-7, now goes to House State Affairs Comm., no date set. Keep talking this up to your representatives! State Affairs Committee representatives to contact in support of SB 58: Faehn, Noem, Boomgarden, Engels, Feinstein, Gosch, B. Hunhoff, Lucas, Lust, Rausch, Rave, Steele, Turbiville.

SB 161: Crude oil pipeline spill recovery bill. Assesses a 2 cent/barrel fee on crude oil piped through state, for a spill cleanup fund that will max out at $30 million. Senate State Affairs, no date set, possibly Feb. 19. Key committee senators needed for support: Knudson, Rhoden. Please contact senators in support of this bill!

Bills in Upcoming Committees:

Senate Transportation, Feb. 17, 7:45 am:

SB 175: Provides for registration and rules, trails and land rehab for off-road vehicles. GF& P to administer.

House State Affairs Feb. 18, 4:oo pm:

HB 1194, 1268, and 1263: All relating to wind easements and/or leases for wind development. The first two are good, protective of land owner rights, have bi-partisan sponsors. Last is all Republican, and removes the five year time limit to develop a lease, which protects landowners from being locked into long-term leases that go undeveloped.

House State Affairs, Feb. 17, 7:45 am:

HB 1218: Provides for statewide election of the Sec. of Agriculture. (State Affairs)

NEW Bill: SB 172:

This was “hoghoused” in committee this week, meaning the sponsor totally changed the original bill. This now specifies environmental upgrades for coal-fired power plants that qualify for tax exemption can include Clean Air/Clean Water Act requirements, other fed and state laws. This may actually be an improvement over current statue, or maybe not change it much at all. Proponents included lobbyists from Otter Tail Power and NW Energy.

Bills Passed:

HB 1202: Feb. 9. Provides for native prairie and Conservation Reserve Program lands to be taxed as grassland, not cropland. A good bill we supported in committee. Passed 48-21. Most opposition was from Sioux Falls, Huron, Rapid City reps. No Senate action yet.

SB 192: Modifies distributions from the wind energy trust fund based on township roads formula. Passed Taxation Comm., 8-0.

Bills Killed (i.e. referred to 41st day:)

HB 1121: Provided for a fee for access to School lands.
HB 1139: Penalties for trespass on ag land.
HB 1242: Required legislative approval for land purchases over 80 acres.

Bills Tabled in Committee:

HB 1208: Provides for two legislative reps on Game, Fish & Parks Commission.
HB 1153: Removes Governor's approval from railroad eminent domain process.

Other Bills, Still No Action:

SB 184: Reins in taxation authority for water development districts, apparently in response to excesses of the James River WDD. Excesses we're concerned about are environmental, such as tree clearing for farmland.

HB 1222: Frees up farmers' markets from onerous state regulations.

HB 1113: Adds prairie dogs, skunks, raccoons and beavers to the list of "injurious" animals that GF&P is to control.

HB 1114: Adds two "animal industry" representatives to the policy review committee for animal damage control, as well as reps from Fish & Wildlife Service and county commissioners assoc.