

# PUBLIC LANDS CONSERVATION IN THE TRUMP ERA: HOW THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES ARE HURTING WESTERN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES



**The Mountain Pact**

September 2019

Founded in 2014, [The Mountain Pact](#) is an effort to educate, mobilize, and empower mountain towns with outdoor recreation-based economies in the American West around federal policy. We work with local elected officials in over 50 mountain communities from all 11 western states to build resilience in the face of environmental stresses and their economic impacts through a shared voice on policies related to climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation.

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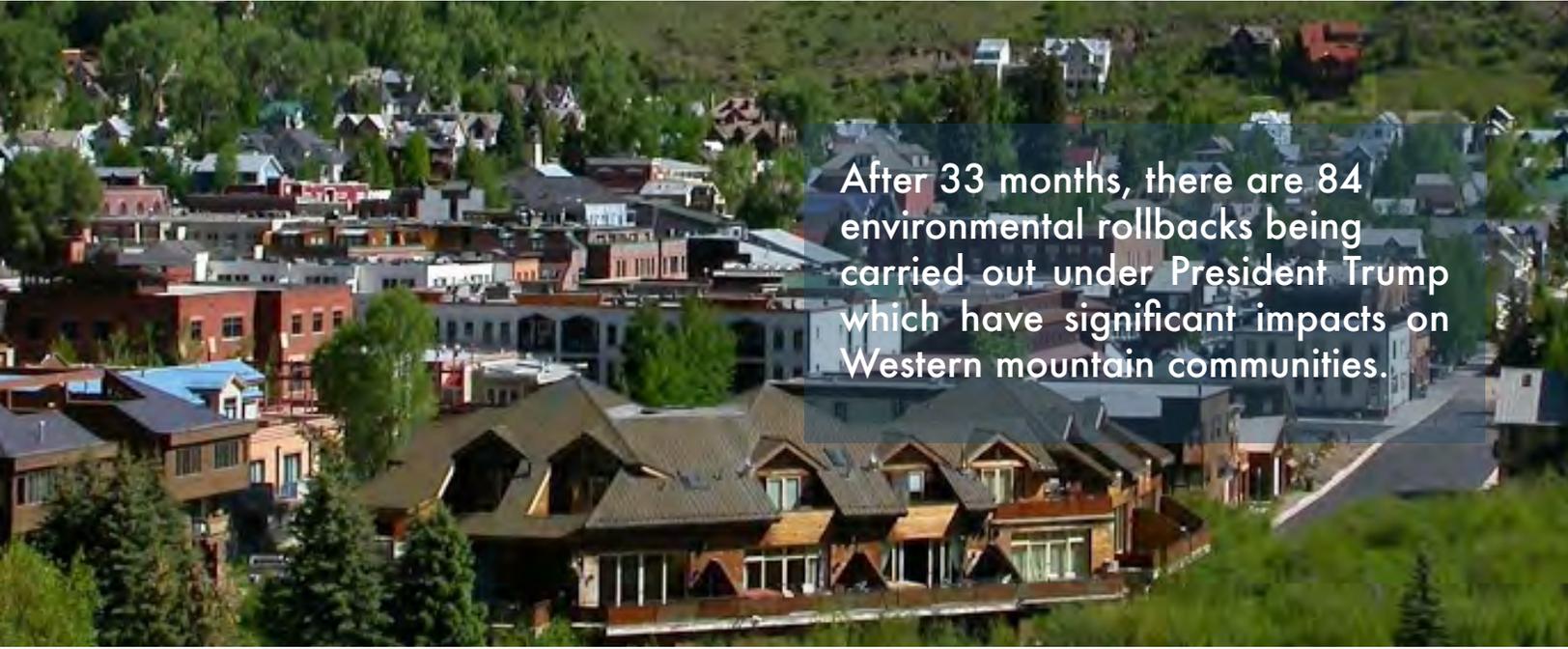
## INTRODUCTION

President Trump claimed in a [July 8, 2019 speech](#)<sup>1</sup> that his administration is “being good stewards of our public land,” reducing carbon emissions, and promoting the “cleanest air” and “crystal clean” water.

These claims are simply false. Instead, President Trump has made rolling back critical environmental protections a focus of his presidency. By asserting “energy dominance” on America’s public lands, appointing former extractive industry and anti-public lands leaders to head key environmental agencies, and refusing to adequately fund our public lands, this administration has made it clear that oil, gas, coal, and mining take precedence over outdoor recreation, wildlife conservation, clean air, and clean water.

As of September 2019, there are 84 [environmental rollbacks](#)<sup>2</sup> being carried out under President Trump which have significant impacts on Western mountain communities who depend on the national public lands out their backdoor. Public lands support the \$887 billion outdoor recreation industry as well as the economies and culture of mountain communities in the West. This report takes a look at how Western mountain communities have been impacted by the Trump administration’s harmful policies.

First, we present a general overview of key moments that have harmed public lands across the West. This is followed by a look at specific decisions that have impacted each of the 11 Western states.



After 33 months, there are 84 environmental rollbacks being carried out under President Trump which have significant impacts on Western mountain communities.



## “ENERGY DOMINANCE” ON WESTERN PUBLIC LANDS

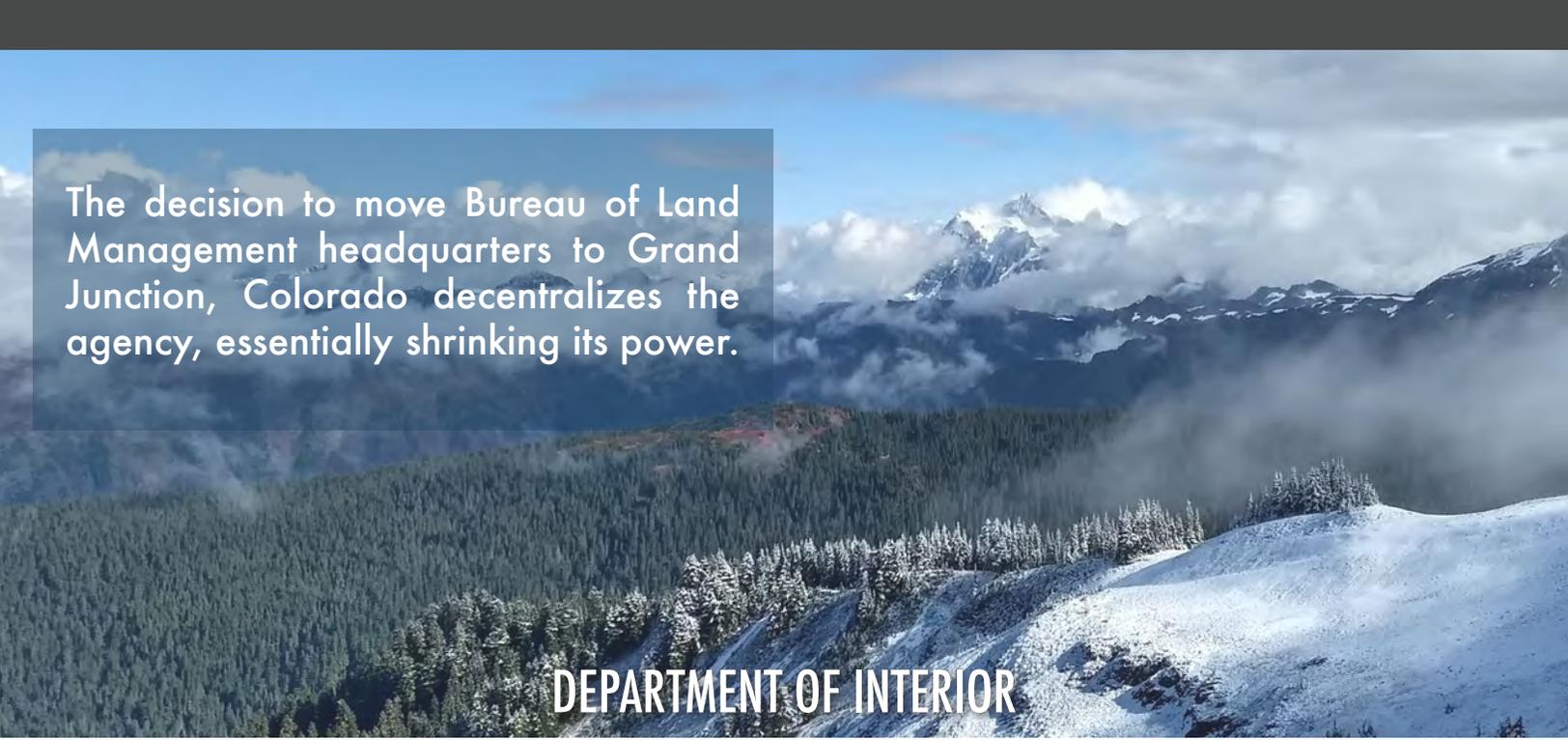
Following his election, President Trump immediately began destroying the environmental progress that had been made by the Obama administration. Here are just some key moments from the past two and a half years that have significantly harmed public lands through a focus on “energy dominance:”

- In March of 2017, President Trump coined the term “[energy dominance](#)”<sup>3</sup>. This term has been used to justify many Department of Interior (DOI) decisions that have overwhelmingly benefited the oil, gas, coal, and mining industries at the expense of our public lands.
- In April 2017, President Trump ordered then-Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to conduct a review of all national monuments over 100,000 acres that had been created since 1996. These national monuments had all been protected using the 1906 Antiquities Act, a bedrock public land conservation law signed by Teddy Roosevelt used equally by Republicans and Democrats to protect iconic places from the Grand Canyon to the Statue of Liberty. Many monuments identified for review were those with fossil fuel or mineral extraction potential.
- In January 2018, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) deemed public involvement in oil and gas lease sales an “unnecessary impediment,” reduced protest periods from 30 days to 10 days, and made public comment the discretion of BLM personnel (Instruction Memorandum (IM) [2018-034](#))<sup>4</sup>.

Essentially, this created an oil and gas leasing process where parcels could be placed up for auction with very limited notice or input from other users of public lands. In effect, speeding up the process by shutting the public out and limiting environmental review.

- From late December 2018 through much of January 2019, the U.S. government shut down for 35 days, the longest period in history, over a budget disagreement. During this shutdown, DOI chose to leave public lands, including national parks, open to the public without adequate staffing, maintenance, or facilities. This resulted in widespread and largely irreversible damage to many national parks. Yet at the same time, DOI chose to [continue issuing oil and gas leasing permits](#)<sup>5</sup> during the shutdown, deeming employees who could approve permits “essential.”





The decision to move Bureau of Land Management headquarters to Grand Junction, Colorado decentralizes the agency, essentially shrinking its power.

## DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

President Trump has repeatedly appointed agency heads that seem set on destroying the agencies that they are tasked with overseeing. Both the originally appointed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and DOI agency heads faced numerous ethics scandals and subsequently resigned under pressure. DOI leadership has been a revolving door with former industry executives and anti-public lands crusaders making major public lands decisions in support of their former clients and extreme ideologies.

Former Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke's successor, Secretary David Bernhardt, has been scrutinized regarding [several conflicts of interest](#)<sup>6</sup>. David Bernhardt worked behind the scenes as Deputy Secretary of Interior until his April 2019 confirmation as Secretary. Even as Deputy Secretary, Bernhardt faced questions regarding conflicts of interest. The former oil lobbyist has [made and facilitated numerous decisions](#)<sup>7</sup> that have directly benefited his former clients.

One way that Secretary Bernhardt has worked to undermine DOI is his attempt to restructure the BLM. Secretary Bernhardt announced that BLM headquarters, and 300 higher level BLM employees, would be [moving West](#)<sup>8</sup>.

The new headquarters are planned for Grand Junction, Colorado with several other satellite offices scattered across the West. This move decentralizes the agency, essentially shrinking its power. This news came out in conjunction with the appointment of an outspoken and self-proclaimed "Sagebrush Rebel" to [acting head of BLM](#)<sup>9</sup>. For decades, William Perry Pendley has advocated for the transfer and sale of federal lands to the states and private interests. This appointment leaves little question as to the Trump administration's and Secretary Bernhardt's intentions for our public lands.

Further, Secretary Bernhardt has been [working to weaken](#)<sup>10</sup> the Endangered Species Act (ESA) since his lobbying days when he worked for a California water district to reduce protections for an endangered fish, the Delta Smelt. New [revisions](#)<sup>11</sup> to the ESA weaken habitat protections and impose an economic analysis when considering listing a species. These revisions undermine the intent of the law and put many species and habitat conservation programs at risk. Secretary Bernhardt is putting the interests of his former clients above imperiled wildlife at a time when a [U.N. report warns](#)<sup>12</sup> that as many as 1 million species are at risk of extinction globally.



# THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND AND PRESIDENT TRUMP'S 2020 BUDGET

Since letting it expire in September 2018, Congress has been working to permanently reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). In March 2019, the historic [John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act<sup>13</sup>](#) was signed into law. This act includes extensive support for public lands including permanent reauthorization of the LWCF. However, even as Congress works to pass a bill that will fully fund the LWCF, President Trump announced a budget proposal that would provide essentially zero dollars for the fund. The LWCF is widely considered America's most successful conservation program, having provided funding for projects in every state and nearly every county in the United States.

The administration's [proposed Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2020 budget<sup>14</sup>](#) would reduce funding for DOI by 14%, the EPA by 31%, and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) by 15%, deeply slashing all public lands and environment funding.

Although many of the budget requests are unlikely to become reality, the proposal makes it clear that the Trump administration continues to prioritize corporate interests and extractive industries at the expense of all other uses of public lands. For example, the administration has proposed a \$60 million increase in fossil fuel development and research while deeply cutting renewable energy research and development (by 70%).



## IMPACTS TO MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES

What follows are just **some** of the anti-environmental and anti-public lands moves taken by the Trump administration. The list of disastrous impacts is long. Steps taken by the EPA to revoke the Clean Power Plan, weaken fuel efficiency standards, and revise methane emission regulations, as well as steps taken by the Forest Service to limit public input and science in National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews, have also greatly impacted the United States and mountain communities. Yet, due to such large scale environmental and conservation rollbacks carried out by the Trump administration which impact Western mountain communities and the public lands they rely on, this report highlights negative Department of Interior (DOI) and budget actions.

Most of the national issues discussed in this report have impacts that cross state lines and impact all communities. The impacts are broad and felt by many and cannot be confined to narrow geographical regions. All decisions made regarding public lands management impact mountain communities due to their proximity and dependence on public lands for recreation, tourism, and healthy air and water. To highlight specific community impacts, this report takes many of these broad decisions made under the Trump administration's "energy dominance" agenda and looks at how they have played out in each of the 11 Western states through three categories: Oil, Gas, and Coal; Land Management and Extraction; and Wildlife and Conservation. These specific impacts show the extent of the harm done.



## ARIZONA

others. It is unclear if they will include input from impacted communities by accepting public comment during its study period.

Department of Interior (DOI) has deemed uranium a “critical mineral” for “[economic national security](#)<sup>17</sup>” and some officials even went so far as to say that “[boundary adjustments](#)<sup>18</sup>” should be made to protected areas around the Grand Canyon to access mineral resources.

The Grand Canyon saw [6 million visitors](#)<sup>19</sup> in 2017, a number that may be impacted by uranium mining. Mining and a decrease in visitation would impact the economic as well as cultural and ecological health of nearby communities. Uranium mining has been linked to high rates of lung cancer and other diseases in miners and nearby communities. These [human health impacts](#)<sup>20</sup> must not be overlooked when considering the expansion of U.S. uranium mining.

Native communities have experienced these impacts [at an even higher level](#)<sup>21</sup>, where 4 million tons of uranium were mined between 1944 and 1986. When the mining boom ended, companies abandoned 500 mines, leaving the waste to leach into the soils contributing to much higher death rates due to uranium toxicity in the Navajo people. The proposed Grand Canyon mine would have the [same impacts](#)<sup>22</sup> to the Havasupai Tribe, an unacceptable consequence.

### **Land Management & Extraction - Uranium Mining**

The Grand Canyon and public lands in northern Arizona have been threatened by uranium mining for decades. In 2012, the Obama administration issued a 20-year ban on uranium mining in the area; a conservation effort that former Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke wrongfully [took credit for](#)<sup>15</sup>. President Trump broke with this position and signalled support for renewed uranium mining near the Grand Canyon and in a region included in the original Bears Ears National Monument.

Under pressure from the uranium mining industry, the Trump administration has been looking for ways to prop up the industry. On July 12, 2019, the President [issued](#)<sup>16</sup> an executive order creating a working group to make a recommendation regarding the future of domestic uranium production. The working group includes President Trump’s national security and economic policy advisors as well as Secretary Bernhardt among

### **Oil, Gas, & Coal**

Just months after the public comment limiting Instruction Memorandum (IM) 2018-034 was issued in 2018, [three parcels](#)<sup>23</sup> containing just over 4,000 acres of land in northeast Arizona were nominated for a September oil and gas lease sale. The parcels sit near Petrified Forest National Park near the confluence of Silver Creek and the Little Colorado River.

The nomination and subsequent National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review of potential impacts of the lease sale limited input from local voices. In August 2018, eight conservation organizations [filed a protest](#)<sup>24</sup> with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) stating that impacts to wildlife, groundwater, air quality, public health, and other uses of the public lands were not adequately considered due to a failure to complete a site-specific NEPA analysis and consider public input. Public input was not considered due to the voluntary nature of including public comment following IM 2018-034. This led to a unilateral BLM decision to lease the land, disregarding impacts to communities and the environment.

# CALIFORNIA

## Land Management & Extraction - Wildfire Funding

California experienced its deadliest fire season in 2018. With 1.8 million acres burned in the state, it was also the [most acreage burned](#)<sup>25</sup> in recorded history. Catastrophic wildfires such as these are on the rise due to rising temperatures and variable precipitation associated with climate change – and they aren't cheap to fight. Enormous amounts of resources were sent to California to fight these fires with local, state, and federal fire agencies fighting alongside each other. This arrangement is typical as fires don't often stick within jurisdictional boundaries.

However, this past year was different. When the State of California filed a \$72 million reimbursement request, the United States Forest Service (USFS) decided to [conduct an audit](#)<sup>26</sup> rather than fulfilling the request. California Senator Dianne Feinstein [sent a letter](#)<sup>27</sup> imploring the USFS to fulfill the reimbursement request, highlighting the need for a unified local-federal approach to fighting wildfires.

With the expansion of the wildland urban interface (WUI) Western mountain communities are particularly at risk for destruction at the hands of climate change fueled blazes. Researchers [found](#)<sup>28</sup> that in 2010 more than 30 percent of California's houses were in the WUI, including the entire town of Paradise that was destroyed in the 2018 Camp Fire. These communities need federal assistance to keep them safe.

President Trump's response to California's wildfires was to suggest California could benefit from better forest management ([like raking the forest floor](#)<sup>29</sup>). This, coupled with the administration's hesitance to reimburse the state's firefighting costs as a new potentially devastating fire season was fast approaching, makes it clear that this administration is ill-equipped to adequately manage and fund our National Forests or to help protect mountain communities.



## Wildlife & Conservation - The Government Shutdown

Much of the land area in Western states is made up of public lands. In California, about half of the state is federally managed, so when the government shutdown and left visitor centers, trailheads, and national parks unstaffed during one of the busiest times of the year, the [communities nearby felt that absence](#)<sup>30</sup>. Towns like Mammoth Lakes were left not knowing if collaborative projects would continue and how long nearby public lands would remain unstaffed.

For communities so intertwined with public lands management, the government shutdown impacted their economies, as well as the health of nearby public lands as many actions went unchecked. In Yosemite National Park, officials were forced to limit visitors due to garbage and human waste being disposed of improperly; and in Joshua Tree National Park all campgrounds were eventually closed due to illegal camping and toilets nearly reaching capacity. Although yet to be fully quantified, it is clear that this decision to leave National Parks open [added millions of dollars](#)<sup>31</sup> of maintenance needs to an already backlogged maintenance budget.



## COLORADO

### Oil, Gas, & Coal - The Methane Rule

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The Trump administration has been working hard to reverse the 2016 Methane and Waste Prevention Rule—a rule largely modeled after Colorado’s own successful [Methane Rule](#)<sup>32</sup>. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that is leaked, vented, and flared during oil and gas drilling operations. Not only does the gas contribute to poor air quality and adverse public health impacts, it also costs taxpayers as it should be captured and sold. The Trump administration announced their plans to roll back methane regulations on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, ensuring a future of dirtier air for all Americans.

Colorado communities, particularly those in the Four Corners region, are [still vulnerable](#)<sup>33</sup> to

impacts from methane due to the revised federal standards.

The Four Corners is a methane hotspot due to extensive nearby oil and gas drilling that doesn’t need to adhere to safe methane capture protocols and geographical features that funnel and keep the emissions in the region. This means that polluted air coming from other states impacts southwest Colorado communities such as Telluride, Ridgway, Ophir, Durango, and Ouray despite the 75 percent reduction in methane emissions in the state. All Western communities deserve clean air to breathe and [81 percent](#)<sup>34</sup> of Westerners support stricter federal methane regulations to achieve that.

### Land Management & Extraction - Dust on Snow

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The Trump administration’s unilateral focus on expanding oil and gas leasing on public lands across the West has caused an uptick in oil in gas drilling which results in an increase in dust. This unique combination of factors has caused a dangerous springtime phenomenon of [dust on snow events](#)<sup>35</sup> in the mountains of Colorado. Dust blows in during springtime wind storms, settling on the snow. This causes snow to melt 1-4 weeks earlier which negatively impacts both summer and winter tourism, as well as harming agriculture and increasing the likelihood of wildfires.

All such impacts must be considered by the Department of Interior (DOI) when issuing oil and gas leasing permits, yet with “energy dominance” dictating public lands decisions, Colorado mountain towns suffer the consequences.

# COLORADO

## Land Management & Extraction - Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan

A June 2019 release of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) [Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan](#)<sup>36</sup> (RMP) again highlights the Trump administration's commitment to the energy industry and disregard for conservation.

Although the Resource Management Plan (RMP) identifies 190,000 acres of wilderness-quality land it does not prioritize this land for wilderness management. Further, although there is low to no potential for energy development in many of the protected areas, they are still left open for the possibility of development. This region includes South Park between the Sangre de Cristo and Wet mountains and areas in the Rio Grande watershed. By leaving these areas open for the possibility of development, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is neglecting to provide the protections the areas may need to ensure ecosystem stability.

## Land Management & Extraction - Uncompahgre Field Office Resource Management Plan

In a troubling June 28, 2019 decision, BLM announced the new RMP for the Uncompahgre Field Office in Western Colorado. The area includes the North Fork Valley, Colorado's "farm to table capital." North Fork Valley has long been eyed for resource development and this plan would open up this and almost all of<sup>37</sup> Colorado's Western Slope from Telluride to Paonia to oil and gas development, uranium mining, and coal mining.

The North Fork Valley is ecologically, economically, and culturally sensitive, but has long been targeted for oil and gas development. However, due to the importance of the region's farming and ecological character, citizens and local politicians have rallied together to limit extraction<sup>38</sup> and previous versions of the RMP reflected community input. But now, the Trump administration has cast aside community voices in favor of the oil and gas industry by opening up thousands of acres to development in the final plan. BLM admits the plan was created without considering public input, as was directly stated by<sup>39</sup> a BLM official: "Public comments resulted in the addition of clarifying text, but did not significantly change proposed land use plan decisions." This is a blatant disregard for public input as well as all other uses of public lands.





## IDAHO

### Wildlife & Conservation - Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan

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In 2015, the historic [Sage-Grouse Management Plan](#)<sup>40</sup> was finalized after a collaborative effort between conservationists, ranchers, and extractive industry groups to keep the iconic bird off the Endangered Species list. The plan placed limits on oil and gas drilling and other development on millions of acres that had been deemed as sensitive habitat.

However, in December 2018, the Department of Interior (DOI) [released revisions](#)<sup>41</sup> to the plans that reversed years of collaborative work, removing protections for the Sage-Grouse habitat that could push the bird toward extinction. Sage-Grouse habitat extends across the Intermountain West with one-third of the remaining population in Idaho and Wyoming. In Idaho alone, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 8.8 million acres of Sage-Grouse habitat. The new management plans call for the revision of buffers around Sage-Grouse mating areas called leks. This would allow oil and gas development to occur dangerously close to sensitive habitat,

yet another move by the Trump administration to prioritize oil and gas drilling above all else on our public lands.

Already, land managers are seeing a [drastic decline](#)<sup>42</sup> in Sage-Grouse populations with a 52% decrease in Idaho Sage-Grouse. Sage-Grouse are an indicator species in the [sagebrush sea habitat](#)<sup>43</sup> that spans much of the West, a habitat that could face steep decline if Sage-Grouse protections are not enforced. Now, with the Trump administration's revisions to the Endangered Species Act, the future of the iconic bird and Idaho's iconic sagebrush landscape is unknown.

The sagebrush sea provides migration routes for game animals such as antelope, that in-turn draw hunters to boost local economies. The destruction of this ecosystem by opening it up to unchecked oil and gas development means the destruction of numerous species, recreation, and a way of life.

## Wildlife & Conservation

In September 2018, scientists released a [new study](#)<sup>44</sup> detailing the adverse and unique impacts climate change has on many of America's national parks. The impacts of climate change are greater in more sensitive ecosystems such as high alpine areas in Glacier National Park in northwest Montana. Temperature data between [1895 and 2010](#) showed<sup>45</sup> that the temperature in national parks has increased twice as much as other areas in the United States and precipitation has declined. These impacts will only be exacerbated by the Trump administration's "energy dominance" agenda which increases greenhouse gases while removing protections for public lands.

For the iconic Glacier National Park, this [means the loss](#)<sup>46</sup> of its namesake glaciers. With glacial melt comes a change in runoff and other ecological processes, completely altering the ecosystem in the park. These changes could

reduce visitation and recreation in the park which in turn will harm the culture and economies of nearby communities. This highlights the need for climate resiliency programs in national parks as well as nearby communities.

These impacts are made greater by the Trump administration's unilateral focus on extractive industries as well as its unwillingness to fund public lands programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and agencies such as the Department of Interior (DOI) and the United States Forest Service (USFS). With climate change impacts adversely and uniquely impacting national parks and public lands surrounding mountain communities, the administration should be funding public lands programs, public lands agencies, and renewable energy research and development. Without this, mountain communities face a more uncertain future.





## MONTANA

### Oil, Gas, & Coal

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In 2017, the Trump administration announced that it would be restarting the federal coal program, cancelling a 2016 review that focused on the program's failure to generate a fair return to taxpayers. The Trump administration has attempted to restart the program without adequate review, and in 2019, a federal judge ordered that the administration do a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review of the entire program.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a [hasty and inadequate review](#)<sup>47</sup> that excluded input from highly impacted communities and

Native American Tribes such as the Northern Cheyenne. There are approximately 426 million tons of federal coal located near the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in southeastern Montana, but the tribe would not see any economic benefits. Instead, they would be subjected to the ecological and health impacts from nearby coal mining, with no say in the matter.

The unwillingness of the Trump administration to consider anything other than extraction at all costs is detrimental to all people and communities that live near the lands being exploited to benefit industry.

### Land Management & Extraction - Lewistown Resource Management Plan (RMP)

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The Trump administration has issued a revised RMP for a vast area in central Montana. This RMP encourages resource extraction over alternative plans that would consider multiple uses such as hiking, hunting, and fishing.

The Lewistown BLM district is made up of [intact backcountry](#)<sup>48</sup> surrounding the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument. This area draws hunters and other recreationists from all over the world. If extraction is prioritized in the region as the Trump administration would like, wildlife and recreation will both be irrevocably harmed.



## NEVADA

### Land Management & Extraction - Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act

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In February 2019, the Trump administration proposed a budget that would remove \$230 million from the [Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act](#)<sup>42</sup> (SNPLMA) over the next three years. This act allows the BLM to appropriately sell public lands in proximity to Las Vegas and distribute most of the funds for public lands improvements throughout Nevada.

Since its passage in 1998, this fund has generated an incredible \$300 million for [conservation](#)<sup>50</sup> in the Lake Tahoe region, including \$25 million in 2016 for forest health and fire fuels reductions.

The health of this region is important for recreation, tourism, and ecological function and the Trump administration's blatant disregard for conservation programs will be detrimental.

Beyond the Lake Tahoe region, about 80 percent of Nevada is federally managed public lands. These lands benefit from the SNPLMA as well as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), both of which face uncertain futures under the Trump administration.

### Land Management & Extraction - Non-competitive Oil & Gas Leases

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Nevada is a notoriously challenging state to productively drill in, yet the BLM continues to hold lease sales. Due to the challenges and uncertainty of oil and gas production in Nevada, many bidders instead purchase leases through [non-competitive leasing](#)<sup>51</sup>, paying well below market rate—a practice that encourages speculation.

In fact, only 3 percent of Nevada's 890,000 acres of land that are held for oil and gas leasing were developed and producing oil at the end of 2018. This means that 863,300 acres of public lands in Nevada are being held from any other uses. Instead of continuing to hold massive lease sales for questionable parcels of land to pad oil and gas industry balance sheets, the BLM should focus on priority areas for drilling, and let the rest be managed for a variety of uses including recreation, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and conservation.



## NEW MEXICO

### Oil, Gas & Coal - Royalty Rates

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Due to outdated oil and gas royalty rates on public lands, the state of New Mexico has been [shortchanged by \\$2.5 billion](#)<sup>52</sup> that it should have received from royalties due from drilling on public lands in the state between fiscal year 2009 and 2018.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)'s onshore drilling royalty rates are a staggering one-third lower at 12.5 percent than the 18.75 percent royalty rates charged for offshore production.

This discrepancy should have been addressed by the Royalty Policy Committee (RPC) that was brought back to life by former Secretary Zinke. However, the RPC was stacked with industry interests and did nothing to balance the scales

for taxpayers or conservation. Following [legal action](#)<sup>53</sup> from conservation organizations in 2018 claiming that the RPC did not adequately represent the public interest, the charter that created the RPC was not renewed and it was disbanded.

Recently, a federal judge [barred the Trump administration](#)<sup>54</sup> from acting on any advice from the industry heavy RPC, confirming that the committee, appointed by former Secretary Zinke, was created in an attempt to legitimize the Trump administration's industry focused decisions.

Southeastern New Mexico is home to a portion of the fastest expanding oil basin in the United States and is [losing more money](#)<sup>55</sup> than any other state due to outdated public lands royalty rates.





Courtesy Bureau of Land Management

## OREGON

### Wildlife & Conservation - National Monuments Review

In early 2017, President Trump ordered then-Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke to carry out a review of all national monuments that had been created since January 1, 1996 that covered more than 100,000 acres. This review sparked controversy that continues today over the original intent of the 1906 Antiquities Act.

As part of the [review<sup>56</sup>](#), Southwest Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument came under fire. The monument sits on Oregon's southern border at the confluence of several ecosystems, creating a unique and spectacular landscape that draws visitors from all over the world and provides unmatched outdoor access to residents.

The National Monument was expanded by nearly 48,000 acres in 2017. [Documents released<sup>57</sup>](#) after former Secretary Zinke made his recommendations to President Trump showed that Department of Interior (DOI) officials were looking to repeal the expansion to continue logging. In fact, former Interior Secretary Zinke's recommendations for Cascade-Siskiyou were to reduce the area so that [some forested acreage<sup>58</sup>](#) could be available for timber production.

President Trump has yet to act on these recommendations, but it is clear that these recommendations are yet another example of the Trump administration making rules to support extractive industries above all else.

# UTAH

## Wildlife & Conservation - National Monuments Review

The Trump administration's [Monuments Review](#)<sup>59</sup> impacted areas of Utah more than anywhere else in the United States. Two large national monuments in Utah were the impetus for the review - Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in southern Utah was created by President Bill Clinton in 1996; and Bears Ears National Monument was created in 2016 by President Barack Obama after many years consulting with Tribes in the area as well as conservationists, hunters, ranchers, and Utah lawmakers. When former Secretary of Interior Zinke announced his recommendations for the reduction of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments, many Americans were shocked and outraged.

President Trump went on to [remove protections](#)<sup>60</sup> from 85 percent of the 1.35 million acre Bears Ears National Monument and about half of the 1.88 million acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument - the largest removal of public land protections in history. This move has been fought in the courts by Tribes, businesses, and conservation organizations. It even [spurred the move](#)<sup>61</sup> of the outdoor trade show, Outdoor Retailer, from Salt Lake City, Utah where it had been for 20 years to Denver, Colorado due to Utah's lawmakers support for the unprecedented removal of public land protections.

This unilateral decision by the Trump administration was another move to place extraction above all other uses of public lands. If public input were considered by the administration, they would have no choice but to keep the monuments as they are since [97 percent of public comments](#)<sup>62</sup> collected by the Interior Department supported keeping the monuments intact. Utah residents [overwhelmingly support](#)<sup>63</sup> the original Bears Ears designation, as do all Tribes in the area.

## Land Management & Extraction - Monument Management Plans (MMP)

Long before former Interior Secretary Zinke announced his recommendations to shrink the Utah national monuments, the Trump administration [had been eyeing](#)<sup>64</sup> the region for oil, gas, and mineral development. Even as the legality of President Trump's monument reductions remain unanswered by the courts, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) officials are moving forward with MMPs for the newly drawn Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The MMPs explore coal and other mineral suitability. Several Senators are calling this work illegal [under provisions of appropriations law](#)<sup>65</sup>. The hasty move to explore minerals in Grand Staircase-Escalante again makes it clear the Trump administration's propensity toward any federal action that benefits extractive industries without due consideration of other uses of public lands.

In July 2019, the Trump administration [released an MMP](#)<sup>66</sup> for the remainder of Bears Ears National Monument. The MMP would allow the clearing of trees, installation of utility lines, and increased livestock grazing. The area outside the illegally redrawn boundaries of the National Monument is now targeted for extraction. President Trump's unlawful 2017 proclamation slashing the monument diluted the power of the five sovereign Tribes by adding a county representative to the collaborative management body, as well as limiting its authority to just one of the two shrunken monument units. This will prove detrimental to the Tribe's ability to protect cultural values of the land.



## WASHINGTON

### **Land Management & Extraction - Wildlife Funding & Forest Management**

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Washington, California, and Oregon are three of the West's most fire-prone states, and thus their [governors applauded](#)<sup>67</sup> an executive order from President Trump that focuses on removing trees and brush from federal lands to curb catastrophic wildfire activity. However, the governors also questioned the ability of the order to accomplish anything due to the lack of structure and funding. The order instead seems a symbolic gesture of support for the states without any concrete action to assist with wildfire mitigation, suppression, and impacts.

Washington has seen an increase in wildfire activity in recent years, particularly on the state's more temperate west side. This is concerning to state officials, especially as President Trump

has yet to admit that climate change is a major contributing factor to increased catastrophic wildfire. To further highlight President Trump's lack of substantial action on wildfire funding, he proposed a decrease of \$3.6 billion in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 [budget](#)<sup>68</sup>, despite his executive order supporting forest management.

This disjointed approach to wildfire policy and funding does not allow states the security they need when planning for wildfire season. With variable winter snowpacks and increased temperatures becoming the norm, it is even harder for managers and communities to know what to expect, and how to plan and tackle wildfire season.



## WYOMING

### Oil, Gas & Coal- Leasing & Wildlife

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President Trump's "energy dominance" agenda has had a huge impact on Wyoming. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has passed a policy that nearly eliminates public comment periods, and requires the approval of deferred leases to go through the BLM National office. The effect is to "streamline" the oil and gas leasing process and has produced a devastating outcome for Wyoming's wildlife. According to a [Center for American Progress report](#)<sup>69</sup>, 20 percent of leases offered in Wyoming between January 2017 and April 2019 were in critical areas for wildlife. Sage-grouse habitat makes up a significant portion of impacted habitat, as do important migration corridors that support Wyoming's hunting economy.

[Drilling infrastructure disturbs](#)<sup>70</sup> important habitat and even blocks migration patterns in some cases. For example, Jackson Hole's pronghorn antelope have the second longest mammal migration route in the western hemisphere and oil and gas drilling in the Jonah oil field has made this 200 mile journey more and more challenging. It is likely that fencing and other oil and gas infrastructure will completely block the animal's migration corridor in the near future, threatening the future of the species.

Of particular interest to Wyoming residents is the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan (RMP).

This area includes the Greater Little Mountain area in Southwest Wyoming which has so far been spared from leasing due to collaborative efforts to protect it in the new RMP. However, with the new BLM requirement that only the BLM national office can defer leases, there are [700,000 acres](#)<sup>71</sup> that will be leased in the area in December, effectively ending all the collaborative efforts that have gone into keeping the area protected.

The rampant oil and gas development in Wyoming since 2017 is alarming. It is moving forward without input from the public to shape the process, cutting the public out of decisions impacting the lands they own. Already [this year](#)<sup>72</sup>, Wyoming's BLM has generated over \$100 million from oil and gas lease sales which is on top of the \$117 million generated in 2018.

Wyoming's wild and open spaces draw hunters, fishers, and recreationists from all over the world and the sale of every acre for oil and gas development is detrimental to the communities and people that rely on the outdoors. As Nada Culver of the National Audubon Society [said](#)<sup>73</sup> in regards to BLM's oil and gas leasing policy: "We're no longer requiring site visits, we're no longer requiring environmental analysis, we're no longer requiring consultation and time to talk to surface owners or state agencies or the public."

**CONCLUSION** The Trump administration’s “energy dominance” agenda and lack of commitment to science have been detrimental for public lands and Western communities. This, coupled with the administration’s unwillingness to fund conservation programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), has led to a large scale reduction in public lands protections.

The agencies tasked with managing public lands for multiple uses are instead managing public lands solely for extractive purposes. This degrades the environmental health of large swaths of lands, closes off areas that could otherwise be used for recreation or sightseeing, further contributes to greenhouse gas emissions responsible for climate change, and is often found to be illegal by the courts.

A [report<sup>74</sup>](#) released by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in November 2018 found that greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel extraction on public lands accounts for one-quarter of all United States greenhouse gas emissions, a fact the Trump administration disregards and even tried to hide through the untimely release of the report. Increased fossil fuel development increases the impacts of climate change such as drought, unpredictable snowfall and snowmelt, and increases in catastrophic wildfires.

From expanding and streamlining oil and gas leasing to reducing the size of national monuments in favor of extractive industries, the Trump administration’s priorities are clear. The President and his top officials at the Department of Interior (DOI) have time and time again proven that they are interested in furthering oil, gas, and mining industries above all else on public lands.

Mountain communities are inextricably linked to the public lands that surround them, and thus are damaged economically and culturally with the sole prioritization of extractive industries. [Studies<sup>75</sup>](#) have shown the benefits of proximity to public lands, finding that counties in the West with more federal lands perform better in four key economic factors. The rural, non-metro counties with the highest percentage of federal public lands have experienced faster growth in population, employment, personal income, and per capita income – highlighting the importance of federal public lands in the West. Yet the Trump administration has charged forward with the destruction and exploitation of our public lands and these same rural counties and communities are continually put at risk.

Further, outdoor recreation supports an [\\$887 billion industry<sup>76</sup>](#) and provides 7.6 million American jobs and is dependent on healthy and well-managed public lands, which means not leasing every acre to extractive industries for bargain basement prices.

“Energy dominance” is not an appropriate way to manage public lands. We have seen this approach disregard recreation and conservation since President Trump took office. The Trump administration has consistently made decisions to expand oil, gas, and coal extraction on public lands while not considering the impacts to nearby communities.

This report highlights just some of the ways the ways the Trump administration’s “energy dominance” agenda and leadership have impacted Western states and Western mountain communities. These issues have a broad reach and are just a snapshot of detrimental environmental, climate change, and conservation policies this administration has made. Public land management decisions need to consider and include possible health, cultural, economic, and ecological impacts to nearby communities due to climate change and increased public land destruction. It is time we put funding behind conservation programs such as the LWCF and management agencies to ensure our public lands can be enjoyed by all; future generations and the health of America’s public lands legacy depend on it.



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