



# The Mountain Pact

## July 2020 Conservation Update

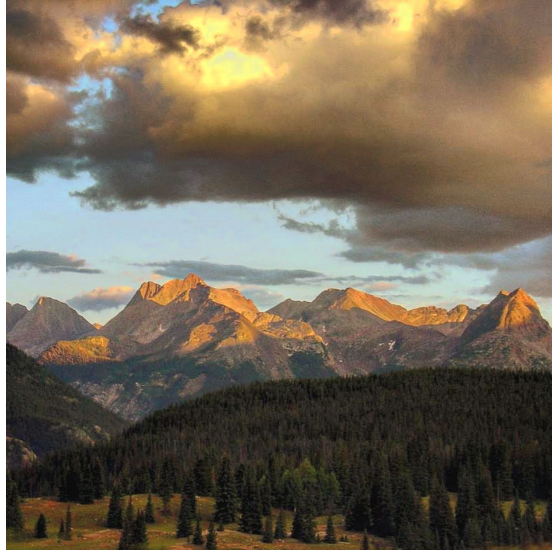
In this Conservation Update we report on the historic bipartisan vote by the House of Representatives to pass the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) which will fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); the latest on the impacts of COVID-19 on our mountain communities; the Trump Administration's controversial nomination of William Perry Pendley as the Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); and more.



### The Land and Water Conservation Fund and The Great American Outdoors Act

- On July 22, 2020, in a [triumphant bipartisan vote of 310-107](#), the [House of Representatives passed](#) the landmark [Great American Outdoors Act](#) which is now headed to the President's desk for his signature. [Many are calling it the most significant conservation legislation in decades](#). The [measure provides \\$900 million in annual funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund as well as \\$12 billion to address the crippling maintenance backlog at national parks and other public lands](#).
- The Mountain Pact has been working on ensuring full funding for the LWCF for years and we are very grateful to so many elected officials for working to get this important piece of legislation passed. Before the vote, we worked with many of you to elevate the issue with congressional offices and through the media. Recent examples include joint op-eds from [California](#) and [Colorado](#) mountain community local elected officials asking their representatives to vote for the GAOA. You can read more about our collective work [here](#).
  - Anna Peterson,

Executive Director of The Mountain Pact, said, "In the West, we know firsthand how important our public lands and the great outdoors are to our communities, small businesses, and visitors. We're so thankful to the House leadership for bringing home one of the biggest conservation laws in recent history for the



American people. The passage of the Great American Outdoors Act is a huge win for our communities as they work to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and serves as a powerful public lands legacy for future generations."

- **The Mountain Pact issued a statement with reactions from 20 Western local elected officials to passage of the bill - *please take time to read what Mountain Pact mayors, council members, and county commissioners said about this historic vote.***
- Here are some of the many news stories about the historic vote:
  - [Estes Park Gazette](#)
  - [The Colorado Sun](#)
  - [Ark Valley Voice](#)
  - [Bozeman Daily Chronicle](#)
  - [Missoula Current](#)
  - [SouthTahoeNow.com](#)
  - [Oregon Public Broadcasting](#)
  - [Teton Valley News](#)

## **How the Coronavirus Pandemic is Impacting our Mountain Communities & Other Mountain Community News**

- As visitors flock to our Western public lands in record setting numbers, "[knucklehead situations are on the rise.](#)"
- Before traveling to mountain communities, please check their official websites for COVID-19 updates.
  - Facing an increase in COVID-19 cases, [Bend OR is asking visitors to stay away until at least Labor Day and will issue fines for those not complying with the face mask requirement.](#)
  - While thanking its perennial visitors, [New Mexico is asking them to stay away for now](#) because of the Coronavirus.

- [Land managers are struggling with how to safely welcome visitors while preventing further virus outbreaks.](#)  
In Western states already experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases, [air pollution from wildfires could mean even more cases.](#)



- Because of the Coronavirus pandemic, [Mammoth Lakes, CA no longer has a 'bear whisperer'.](#)
- [There were no reports of Coronavirus in Yosemite National Park. Then it tested the sewage.](#)
- The Coronavirus pandemic is taking a huge toll on municipal budgets across the country. [An international coalition of cities believes that the only path forward for mayors is funding green stimulus plans focused on job creation.](#)
- [A recent poll shows that voter support for our public lands and the outdoors has only increased during the pandemic, which could influence elections.](#)
- The historic mining town of [Gothic, CO, near Crested Butte and home to a world famous climate research site, is now protected by a conservation easement.](#)
- [Chaffee County Commissioner, and Mountain Pact participant, Keith Baker is advocating for improving the Payments In Lieu of Taxes \(PILT\) program by adding a 'Gateway Community Dividend' to more quickly drive federal money to counties.](#)

## **The Trump Administration Agenda**

- President Trump has finally officially nominated William Perry Pendley to serve as Director the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) after a year as 'Acting Director' of the agency. [His confirmation prospects are uncertain because he of his strongly held anti-public lands positions.](#)
  - [Two lawsuits are pending](#) alleging that by exercising the authority of the Director of the BLM without Senate confirmation, Mr. Pendley is violating the U.S. Constitution and the Federal Vacancies Reform Act.
  - If the Senate confirms Mr. Pendley, it will [send a message to the public about the agency's priorities.](#)
  - [The Pendley nomination puts three vulnerable Republicans in a tough spot on public lands.](#)
  - Nine Western Democratic senators are [pushing for an expedited nomination hearing to quickly expose Mr. Pendley's record.](#)
  - Here are some recent articles about why the Senate should reject Mr. Pendley's nomination:
    - Grand Junction Sentinel: [Pendley doesn't get it and can't head up BLM.](#)
    - Albuquerque Journal: [Federal public lands are for all Americans.](#)

- Public New Service: [Conservation groups urge rejection of 'radical' BLM nominee.](#)
  - Santa Fe New Mexican: [Choice at BLM lousy, even for Trump.](#)
  - Outside Online: [William Perry Pendley's own words should disqualify him.](#)
  - The Guardian: [Trump wants to put a right wing zealot in charge of public land. Here's why it matters.](#)
- President Trump continued his rollback of environmental laws, [weakening the National Environmental Policy Act, one of the country's bedrock conservation laws.](#)
  - [Experts warn this will threaten minority communities.](#)
- A Biden administration could use the [Congressional Review Act to reverse Trump administration regulatory rollbacks implemented late in his term.](#)
- A federal judge in California ruled that the Trump administration's [decision to adopt narrower protections for wetlands and waterways can take effect almost everywhere in the nation, except in Colorado](#) where the court froze implementation of the rule while the courts consider the case.
- The [Trump administration's decision to toss aside ten years of work leading to a carefully crafted sage grouse conservation plan all in the name of energy dominance](#) disappoints many and threatens the Western way of life.
- Amidst the Coronavirus pandemic, the unprecedented "giveaway" to oil and gas corporations is still going strong with [public land lease sales scheduled on the doorsteps of Utah national parks.](#)
- Fearing the negative impact on its tourism economy, [Moab and Grand County, Utah officials ask the BLM to cancel energy lease sales](#) that will threaten popular recreation areas.
- [September BLM oil and gas lease sales of 114,000 acres of Utah wild lands will touch national parks, monuments, proposed wilderness](#) and some of the most beautiful red rock vistas in the state.
- With uncertainty in oil markets, [New Mexico could face a big problem of orphaned wells on public lands.](#)



## **The Fight Against Climate Change**

- The Government Accountability Office has found that the [Trump administration is undervaluing the cost of climate change](#) to boost its efforts to repeal or weaken climate change regulations.
- A California federal judge has blocked the [Trump administration from rolling back a rule designed to curb methane emissions from flaring and venting of natural gas and reduce leaks.](#)
- With demand slashed and a global price war because of the

pandemic, [fracking firms are heading towards bankruptcy at an alarming pace](#). As millions of dollars have flowed to company executives, unprofitable wells leaking planet-warming pollutants may be abandoned, leaving taxpayers with a hefty clean up bill.

- Kristopher Larsen, Mayor of Nederland, CO, [writes](#) that climate action must begin at the local level before it's too late.



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