

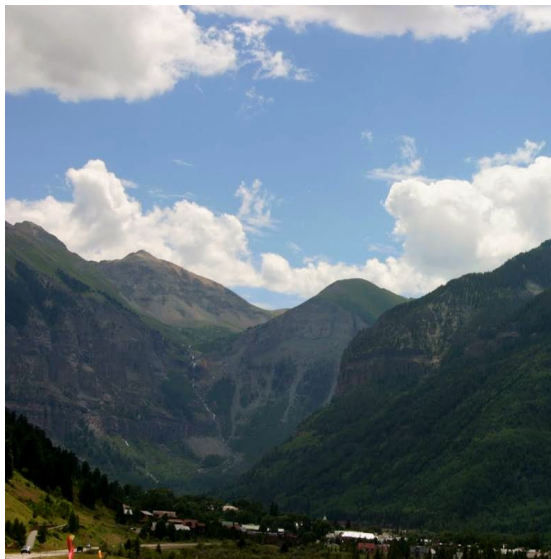
## The Mountain Pact Conservation Update September 2020

In this Conservation Update, we report on some of the land acquisition projects that the Land and Water Conservation Fund has made possible; the challenges facing public land managers because of COVID-19; the progress of the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act; the decision by a federal district judge in Montana that William Perry Pendley, the de facto leader of the Bureau of Land Management has been serving unlawfully for the last 424 days and cannot continue in the post; the catastrophic wildfires raging across the West; and more.



### How COVID-19 is Impacting our Mountain Communities and Other Community News

- [COVID-19 is causing challenges](#) for public land managers and environmentalists.
  - [Crowds have been flocking to Wyoming public lands during the summer of COVID-19](#), with officials reporting [campfire, littering, and food storage violations](#).
  - [Visitation to Mt. Rainier has spiked this summer](#).
  - [Heavy visitation to the Lake Tahoe basin](#) is causing worries for officials.
  - COVID cabin-fevered hikers, campers and day-trippers are [heading out to their favorite public lands and causing problems](#), including sparking wildfires with careless or clueless behavior.
  - [COVID exodus fills vacation towns with new medical pressures and increases in school enrollment](#).
  - [State parks struggle to keep up with the](#)



[increased demand](#) amid the pandemic.

- The [Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy, or CORE, Act](#) which extends different levels of federal protection to 400,000 acres near the Continental Divide, the San Juan Mountains, the Thompson Divide and Curecanti National Recreation Area is closer to becoming law.
  - Eagle and Summit County Commissioners penned and op-ed, which ran in the Summit Daily News, urging Senator Gardner to take action to [pass the CORE Act this Congress](#).
  - Avon, Colorado Mayor Sarah Smith-Hymes wrote an [op-ed for the Colorado Sun](#) thanking Representative Neguse for his work on the Great American Outdoors Act and the CORE Act.

## The Trump Administration Agenda

- [A federal judge has ruled that William Perry Pendley has been serving unlawfully as the de facto director of the Bureau of Land Management](#) and blocked him from continuing to exercise the authority of director. Trump nominated Perry to be the director but [withdrew his nomination after a public outcry](#).
  - The judge called on the Interior Department and the office of Montana Gov. Steve Bullock, which brought the lawsuit, [to detail which of Pendley's acts should be "set aside," beyond two resource management plans in Montana that Bullock's lawyers pointed to in the suit](#). The order said that the court "recognizes that any 'function or duty' of the BLM Director that has been performed by Pendley would have no force and effect and must be set aside as arbitrary and capricious" - a finding that could jeopardize decisions Pendley made since he became the de facto director in July 2019.
  - U.S. Senator Tom Udall said in a [statement](#), "William Perry Pendley has no business-and no authority-leading the Bureau of Land Management, and Secretary Bernhardt should have known better. Finally, Americans throughout the West and throughout the country can look forward to this anti-public lands, anti-Native zealot being shown the door. This ruling is a win for all who value the rule of law, Tribal sovereignty, and conservation. Any decision Pendley has made in this capacity must now be subject to legal scrutiny as well."
  - In the [Ark Valley Voice](#), Anna Peterson, Executive Director of the Mountain Pact, said, "We are thrilled by the federal court ruling that William Perry Pendley can no longer serve as Acting Director of the Bureau of Land Management. For over a year, Pendley, a climate change denier, has limited local input while ignoring science and experts in regard to decisions about our public lands. While mountain communities struggle to navigate the effects of the pandemic, he prioritized bailing out fossil fuel CEOs, gave the oil and gas industry special treatment and the opportunity to pollute without accountability all while expediting requests from companies to reduce what they pay to drill on our public lands. An anti-public lands zealot who has spent his life's work trying to dismantle our public lands has no business overseeing our nation's precious natural resources. We're thankful our country's public lands, waters, and air won today."
- Prior to the court decision, [the calls were mounting to fire Pendley](#).
  - [Todd Brown, Telluride Mayor Pro Tem, urges Senator Gardner to demand that the Trump administration fire Pendley](#).
  - Sporting groups and conservationists say that [Pendley, the](#)



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### William Perry Pendley Out as Director of the Bureau of Land Management

**Durango, CO** - In response to the United States District Court for the District of Montana's ruling that enjoins William Perry Pendley from exercising authority of Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Interior Secretary David Bernhardt from unlawfully delegating the authority of the BLM director, The Mountain Pact Executive Director, Anna Peterson, gave the following statement:

"We are thrilled by the federal court ruling that William Perry Pendley can no longer serve as Acting Director of the Bureau of Land Management. For over a year, Pendley, a climate change denier, has limited local input while ignoring science and experts in regard to decisions about our public lands. While mountain communities struggle to navigate the effects of the pandemic, he prioritized bailing out fossil fuel CEOs, gave the oil and gas industry special treatment and the opportunity to pollute without accountability all while expediting requests from companies to reduce what they pay to drill on our public lands. An anti-public lands zealot who has spent his life's work trying to dismantle our public lands has no business overseeing our nation's precious natural resources. We're thankful our country's public lands, waters, and air won today."

"Pendley's continuing re-appointments, along with his nomination and then the withdrawal of his nomination, have shown what a complete circus the Trump administration, the Department of Interior, and David Bernhardt are. This ruling pulls back the curtain on how little this administration cares for the rule of law. We are thankful the court has ruled in favor of justice and acknowledged that the Trump administration blatantly circumvented the Senate's constitutional advice and consent role in confirming high-level nominees and violated the Federal Vacancies Reform Act and the U.S. Constitution."

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- [controversial de facto head of the Bureau of Land Management, must go.](#)
- [Democrats and environmentalists push the White House to fire Pendley.](#)
- [Senate Democrats take to the Senate floor](#) and demand that the White House fire Pendley.
- [U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet howls about Pendley on the Senate floor](#)
- [William Pendley has no regard for the people or lands he is illegally serving.](#)
- [The Interior Department internal watchdog says that Interior officials misled Congress](#) about the Bureau of Land Management's decision to relocate its headquarters to Grand Junction, CO.
- [The Trump administration relaxed rules](#) for how coal-fired power plants dispose of wastewater laced with dangerous pollutants like lead, selenium, and arsenic.

- [Commissioners in Routt County, CO and five other Colorado counties sent letters to Sen. Michael Bennet pushing for more action to protect communities from the consequences of abandoned oil and gas wells.](#)
- [The Trump administration is having a fire sale of public lands for oil and gas drillers.](#)



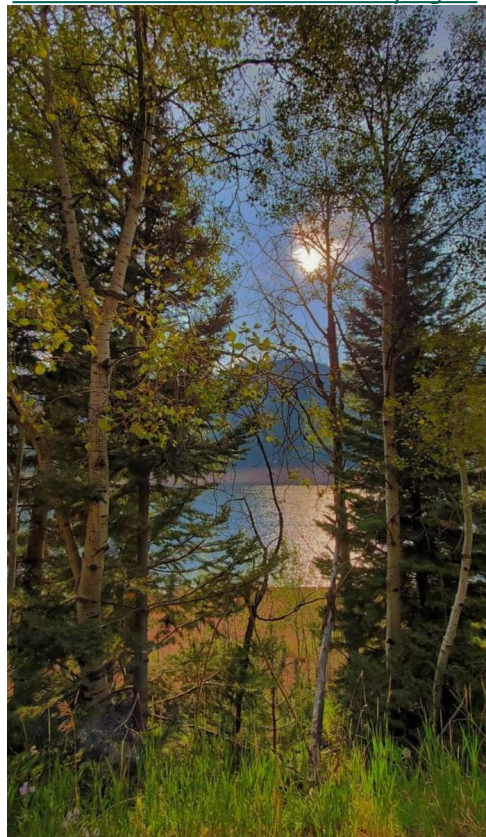
- [Half a million acres are on the auction block](#) as environmentalists fear a land rush.
- [The U.S. government had its first oil and gas lease sale in five months](#), with bids in New Mexico weaker than those before the pandemic.
- [The Trump administration is fast tracking dozens of major fossil fuel, energy and water projects](#) by expediting environmental reviews amid the pandemic, including a [proposal that would increase oil and gas drilling in the Greater Chaco region of northwest New Mexico.](#)
- [Wildlife and taxpayer advocacy groups are asking the federal government to stop leasing public land](#) this year while the demand for oil is low.
- [It's time to reform the broken oil and gas leasing system.](#)
- [The noncompetitive oil and gas leasing is ripping off American taxpayers.](#)
- [Big oil and coal are in big trouble despite billions in bailouts.](#)
- [The Trump administration cuts the lease payments for oil and gas drillers](#) who lease public land, as state budgets suffer.
  - [Oil and gas firms in Wyoming received an overwhelming majority of royalty rate reductions.](#)
- [U.S. shale producers race for federal permits](#) ahead of presidential election.
- [The Trump administration is proposing a new rule](#) that would allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to give more weight to the financial impacts on the oil and gas industry before designating new critical habitat.
- [The Forest Service has proposed a rule that would speed up energy leasing](#) while cutting the public out of the decision making process.
  - [Montana Wildlife Federation calls the proposed rule misguided.](#)
- [Federal courts are pushing back against the Trump administration's failures to protect the environment](#) and address climate change as it promotes fossil fuel interests and the natural resource extraction from

- public lands.
- [A second lawsuit has been filed](#) against the Trump administration plan to allow more drilling in Western Colorado.
- Conservation groups allege that the [Trump administration ignored a court order to consider reductions to coal, oil, and natural gas extraction](#) to combat climate change and air pollution.
- [How anti-environmental extremists are working with Trump to privatize and exploit public lands.](#)



## The Fight Against Climate Change

- Catastrophic [wildfires rage across a dozen Western states](#), including in California, Oregon, and Washington, [burning millions of acres](#).
- [Californians fleeing wildfires are talking about climate change](#) like they never have before.
- California's wildfires are [threatening the survival](#) of some of the oldest and most storied of the frontier settlements in the state.
- The scale, intensity, speed, location, and timing of the recent fires [reveal a pattern of growing fire risk from several factors made worse by humans](#), ranging from ignitions to urban planning to forest management to climate change.
- There are [four key reasons why California has so many wildfires](#).
- [The links between climate change and California's fires](#) are straightforward.
- [When the evergreens ignite, Oregon mourns](#).
- [We are living in the hellscape](#) that [climate scientists have been trying to warn us](#) about for years now.
- [Trump's environmental rollbacks](#) are expected to result in an additional 1.8 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere by 2035.
- [Trump's record on climate change](#) is nothing short of a boon for the fossil fuel industry and a threat to the planet.
- Wildfires have burned Colorado's iconic forests. [Some won't grow back the same because of climate change](#).
- [Colorado's famous aspens are expected to decline due to climate change](#).
- [Looking at the most significant climate threat unfolding in your own backyard](#) could help us figure out how to start dealing with climate change.
- [How to carry on the American road-trip tradition](#) but not contribute to climate change.



## The Land and Water Conservation Fund

- Here are some new land acquisition projects that were made possible because of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
  - [The Bureau of Land Management adds over 1100 acres in the Blackfoot River watershed](#) near Missoula.
  - [Arizona Land and Water Trust permanently protects Hayhook Ranch](#) near Coyote Mountains Wilderness, southwest of Tucson.
  - [The Conservation Fund and the Jackson Hole Land Trust add a key inholding](#) to Wyoming's Bridger-Teton National Forest.
- [The Bureau of Land Management spent \\$21 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) to permanently protect Mojave desert tortoise habitat near St. George, Utah, and is now proposing a road through it.



*Founded in 2014, [The Mountain Pact](#) mobilizes local elected officials in over 75 Western mountain communities with outdoor recreation based economies to speak with a collective voice on federal climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation policy.*

SUPPORT

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Read the PDF version of this and other Mountain Pact updates [here](#).

