



The Mountain Pact

The Federal Land Freedom Act Threatens our National Public Lands

In a continued effort to keep you informed on the most relevant federal public lands policies, this memo will discuss the Federal Land Freedom Act of 2017. This Act would decrease safeguards and open up large swaths of national public lands to increased oil and gas drilling and exploration.



The Federal Land Freedom Act
Riding the waves of the GOP bid to sell off national public lands and Secretary Zinke's review of national

monuments is the [Federal Land Freedom Act](#). Introduced in the House in July of this year by Rep. Diane Black (R-TN) and cosponsored by Reps. Charles Fleischman (R-TN), David Kustoff (R-TN), Pete Sessions (R-TX), Chris Stewart (R-UT), Paul Gosar (R-AZ), Jeff Duncan (R-SC), David Roe (R-TN), Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), John Duncan Jr. (R-TN), Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Liz Cheney (R-WY), and Blake Farenthold (R-TX), H.R. 3565 would allow states to take over oil and gas permitting on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands--essentially allowing the permitting process to [skirt important environmental](#) review processes.

Federal regulation of oil and gas exploration and development means that these companies must go through specific permitting processes. However, with states in charge these industries will be permitted through state regulations, and therefore [can circumvent](#) the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). State management would also [decrease the public's ability to have a voice](#) in what happens on public lands.

The Act also states that if the [royalty rates received](#) drop below a certain point then the federal government can take back over the permitting and review processes, which may encourage states to issue drilling permits at a higher rate, with fewer safeguards to avoid relinquishing decision making power back to the federal government.

This bill was discussed in a House Natural Resources Committee hearing on September 6, and has not moved forward since. A similar bill ([S.335](#)) was introduced in the Senate in February and has not moved forward or been sent to any committees. Both of these bills have broad support from Representatives and Senators of energy states such as Utah, Wyoming, and Oklahoma. It has also been found that many of the cosponsors have [received massive](#)

[campaign donations](#) from the oil and gas industry.

What does this mean for Mountain Towns?

The removal of environmental safeguards would allow more drilling and development on the public lands that surround our communities and that our economies rely on. The BLM and USFS mandates [require](#) that these agencies manage lands in a manner that benefits multiple use, as well as conservation of lands for future generations. However, states have no such mandates and would be able to open up substantive areas for drilling and exploration, thus harming large areas previously used for recreation.

National public lands are meant to be managed for all Americans, but removing the public's ability to comment on its uses and closing large areas for drilling would remove most Americans from these lands to benefit industry. This in turn would decrease visitation to the public lands that support outdoor recreation, thus harming mountain town economies.

Our communities rely on national public lands remaining healthy and open to outdoor recreation activities, so we will keep fighting for a healthy public lands system.

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