



The Mountain Pact

November Conservation Update

Welcome to your November Conservation Update - your monthly update on relevant conservation, public lands, and climate change news. In this newsletter we cover: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) leadership and headquarters relocation, public opinion about drilling on public lands, off-road vehicles in Utah's national parks, Secretary Bernhardt's move to strip protections from the delta smelt, the status of sage

grouse protections, President Trump's science advisory council, the United States' official withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, and the latest Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) news.



- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is [moving forward with its relocation](#) of nearly all Washington employees to various locations across the West. However, acting BLM Director William Perry Pendley [stated](#) that key National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decisions will still be made in Washington, **despite the fact that BLM headquarters relocation will [divide several key public lands teams](#) between seven states. The removal of expert, career staffers from D.C. where decisions will still be made will reduce the Department's ability to perform key environmental reviews and consolidate power with the few employees that remain in D.C.** In addition, it is expected that many experts will quit or retire rather than move, significantly reducing the expertise of DOI's workforce.
- A [recent poll](#) conducted by the Washington Post and Kaiser Family Foundation [found](#) that **over 80% of Americans think that drilling activity in the United States should either "decrease" or "stay as is."** Just over half of those polled said that drilling on public lands should decrease, with **only 13% saying that drilling on public lands should increase.**
- In late September, the National Park Service (NPS)'s acting intermountain regional director [announced that off-road vehicles](#) such as ATVs and UTVs would be [allowed in](#) Utah's National Parks. Although street-legal ATVs are allowed on Utah's state roads, they are banned from National Parks across the country. **The announcement brought backlash from conservationists, National Park employees, local elected officials, and business owners in Southeastern Utah. Grand County and several small cities in the county [united to pass local resolutions](#) urging the NPS to review the rule. Then, in a last-minute decision, days before the new rule was set to go into effect, the NPS [revoked the rule change.](#)**
- Secretary Bernhardt has [been under investigation](#) for ethics violations since

he was confirmed by the Senate in April. Recently, one former client won big. **In late October, the Trump administration moved to eliminate [protections from the endangered delta smelt](#) - a move that will allow farmers in the Central Valley to divert massive amounts of water that would otherwise flow into the San Francisco Bay-Delta.** This [change in protections](#) is exactly what Secretary Bernhardt had lobbied the Department of Interior (DOI) to do on behalf of his former client.

- In-mid October [a Judge blocked DOI's attempt](#) to roll back protections for the greater sage-grouse. This iconic bird was the subject of a historic collaborative effort under President Obama's Interior Department. **The Judge stated that should the weakened protections be implemented, DOI would go ahead with issuing oil and gas leases, building roads, and issuing permits for livestock grazing - all practices that will likely reduce the population of the sage grouse.**
- After nearly two years without one, President Trump [appointed a new science advisory council](#). The President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) provides guidance on the country's most pressing science questions and typically includes a majority of academic members. **However, President Trump's seven-member PCAST includes only one academic. The rest of the positions are filled by industry representatives.**
- **On October 31, the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) act [was passed](#) in the U.S. House of Representatives.** However, with a split in support along party lines amongst Colorado Representatives, the bill [faces an uncertain future](#) in the Senate.
- On November 4, the United States **sent notice to the United Nations that they would [begin the year-long process](#) of officially withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. This is in opposition to what [77 percent of registered voters believe the United States should do and will set the U.S. on a track to become the only country not signed on to the agreement.](#)** It will take a full year for the United States to withdraw from the agreement - the process is detailed [here](#).
- On November 5, Katharine MacGregor [testified before](#) the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in her confirmation hearing to become DOI's Deputy Secretary. **MacGregor is outspoken in her belief that environmental regulations for oil and gas development are burdensome, and has [close ties](#) with several industry groups.** MacGregor [has been serving](#) in the role of Deputy Director for one year and is expected to be confirmed in the position.
- The Center for Western Priorities' new "[Winning the West](#)" poll results are in. **The majority of Westerners think that mountains and the outdoors make the West unique, consider themselves conservationists, and think that this Administration has done a poor job of managing our public lands.**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) remains in limbo as members of Congress have yet to pass bills to provide full, dedicated funding in the Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act ([S. 1081](#)) and its House Companion ([H.R. 3195](#)). However, in a great display of support for the LWCF on October 31, [Senators rejected](#) Senator Lee's amendment that would have diverted funds away from conservation. As bipartisan support for [LWCF increases](#), we must push for a vote so that America's best conservation program can receive full funding, now and in the future! ***We only have 18 legislative days left in the year. [Call your Senators and Representatives now to make](#)***

sure they are supporting full, dedicated LWCF funding.

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