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PROTECTING PUBLIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

By Nick Gevock
MWF Conservation Director

Montana is blessed with the best public land hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation in the country. But with all the bounty that we enjoy here, increasingly the public is having trouble getting to our public lands and waters. People are gating roads that hunters, anglers, and other outdoors enthusiasts have used to get to public land for decades. In other cases, bridges leading to public water are having barbed wire and electric fencing put up to them. And there are nearly two million acres of public land in Montana that is completely inaccessible to the public.

Those problems are outlined in a new report titled "Roadblocked and Landlocked," a joint project of the Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) and the Public Land/Water Access Association (PLWA). The report lays out all the cases in which sportsmen have had to go to court to reopen roads that have been gated, gain access to our state's streams at public bridges and otherwise fight for public access to public resources.

The report is a long overdue look at all the time, money and heartburn that everyday sportsmen and women, recreationists and others have been forced to put forward just to enjoy what's theirs. And it's a growing trend, with more and more cases of people blocking off public roads or otherwise working to gain exclusive access to a specific area.

Public access means getting to public land to be able to enjoy it. That doesn't mean every road on public land has to be open. Once on public land, land managers can gate some roads to protect wildlife security habitat, including areas for calving and fawning and in areas during the fall hunting seasons. Those management decisions are important for proper security for wildlife, and are also part of the reason we enjoy a five week general rifle hunting season in Montana.

Many private landowners also provide access for hunters and anglers, both to hunt their land and to access adjacent public lands. We're all grateful to these landowners, and responsible sportsmen

are respectful of every private property owner's wishes when it comes to closing gates and roads that are on their land.

The access problems start when people selectively close public county roads that run adjacent to their private property in an effort to keep the public out of large swaths of public land. We've seen it all too often. These roads, sometimes called bottlenecks, can cut the public out of tens of thousands of acres of public land, effectively making it only accessible to a few people who own adjoining private land.

It's a fight that PLWA, an MWF affiliate, has been heavily involved in for well over two decades. This dedicated group of volunteers has worked tirelessly to keep public access open. That means a lot of time and effort spent researching the history of certain roads, communicating with the public about the threat of people trying to block public access and, ultimately, putting up the money to fight these cases in court.

The group's victories are numerous. They're impressive. And they're vital to maintaining our heritage of having the best fair chase public hunting and fishing on public land and water. It's hard to imagine Montana without the concerted efforts of PLWA, and most sportsmen and women know that we all owe a huge debt of gratitude to these guys.

But ultimately, this is a war of attrition. It's difficult for a dedicated group of volunteers to fight the flood of money. And frankly, that's what this group is up against, because some of their actions have been taken against billionaires, literally. It's not about the fact that some people have money – but rather the different values some people bring when it comes to our public fish, wildlife, land and water resources. The fact is we all own these things and accordingly we should all enjoy equal opportunities to enjoy them.

The only real counter to that is organizing, and that's exactly what MWF and PLWA are doing. This fall we're launching a major campaign centered on public access. We're highlighting the numerous examples around Montana where people have purposely put up gates across public roads to keep the public out of public land. In some of these cases, the people blocking the road are also outfitters who are taking advantage of exclusive access to large swaths of public land to profit off of the public's wildlife.

Montanans are fighting back. PLWA has won almost every case it's been involved with. But the group needs help. It's time to strengthen our

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SETTING PRIORITIES AND TAKING ACTION



By Skip Kowalski
MWF president

Autumn is in the air, hunting season is upon us and the November elections are just around the corner. Before we realize it, it will be 2015 and the start of a new legislative session. As to be expected, there will be a lot at stake.

MWF is not sitting idly by and waiting for things to happen. We have been at work for months developing an aggressive plan that calls for defeating bills that are bad for wildlife and wildlife habitat, restrict access to public lands, or interfere with science-based resource management. Not to play only defense, we will also advocate for bills that are pro-wildlife, pro-sportsmen and pro-conservation.

We can't predict exactly what kinds of opposition Montana sportsmen and Montana's fish and wildlife will face with this upcoming legislature, but there are a number of things that deserve our attention.

First, MWF is going to make access to public lands by Montana sportsmen a priority in the 2015 legislature. MWF members and other Montana sportsmen made our voices loud and clear the last go around by advocating for the corner crossing bill. Although we did not prevail, we placed the access issue front and center with legislators. We will capitalize on this attention by promoting our own legislation to protect and expand public access to public lands. If traditional hunting and fishing opportunities

are going to continue into the future, we must stop the current trends of blocking legal access to public lands, animosity between landowners and sportsmen, and the closure of traditionally "open to hunting" private property. In addition to securing some real wins on this issue in 2015, I also hope that our efforts to advance an open and honest political debate can create an environment where reasoned efforts like the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council (PLPW) will lead to additional solutions.

Second, we need to continue to lead the charge to protect our public lands from efforts to turn them over to state management and control. Such proposals are not new, and MWF has opposed them each time. These efforts deceptively suggest that such a move is beneficial to sportsmen, conservationists and the general public. In reality, it is an effort to privatize public lands, making wildlife management more difficult and curtailing access for hunters and anglers. In a similar vein, shortsighted efforts that advocate for "no net gain" in acreage of state-owned lands continue. As development pressures continue, the need to protect high quality, strategically located habitat becomes even more paramount.

We also need to make sure that Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is adequately funded to carry out its responsibility to manage our fish and wildlife resources. The Fish & Wildlife Licensing and Funding Advisory Council, with good representation from MWF, developed reasonable and practical recommendations for changes in license fee structure to alleviate this situation. However, their recommendations have already been watered down by the Environmental Quality Council (EQC) and who knows how their recommendations will be handled in the Legislature. MWF needs to weigh in to ensure that the recommendations are enacted.

Lastly, I'd like to pose a question regarding the priority MWF should place on major unfinished or emerging wildlife conservation work. To what degree should we limit our efforts to holding on to what we have versus taking on new, contentious issues? How we address this question will, in part, dictate how MWF approaches the 2015 legislature. Should we focus on short-term and reactionary problem solving or should we devote time and energy to more difficult long-term conservation needs?

Any number of factors can place wildlife "at

risk." For bighorn sheep, pneumonia induced mortality is one. Bighorn sheep populations have experienced significant pneumonia related mortality—some of which can be traced to exposure to domestic sheep. Adding insult to injury, we cannot reintroduce bighorn sheep into traditional or suitable habitat that is proximate to existing domestic sheep operations because of the disease threat. For a species that is prized so highly by sportsmen and valued by wildlife enthusiasts everywhere, this situation is inexcusable.

MWF could play a larger role in promoting research on disease transmission, seeking options to reduce interaction between domestic and wild sheep, and reestablishing new bighorn populations. This would generate concern from wool growers and legislators, but I am personally confident that a win-win situation exists. We just have to make it a priority.

The bison is the icon of the American West and once outnumbered all other big game of the Great Plains. Today, wild bison are restricted to a few small, isolated populations. MWF is on record supporting bison restoration. Some legislators oppose this idea and we can expect a variety of bills addressing the situation and preventing development of a statewide bison management plan.

Reestablishing wild bison where they have been absent for over a century will be difficult. MWF could play a major role in framing the debate and helping determine how, when, where and if, wild bison are reestablished in the "Last Best Place."

Where do you think MWF's emphasis could and should be in the coming months? In survey after survey, you rank "working with the legislature" as your major expectation from MWF and the most important contribution that MWF provides its members. With your help, working as team and a federation, we can achieve great things for the wildlife and sportsmen of Montana. We can show, once again, that MWF is the organization that "protects and enhances Montana's public wildlife, lands, waters, and fair chase hunting and fishing heritage."

Share your ideas and comments with Skip Kowalski at skipmwf@bitterroot.com.



Photo by Noah Lindgren

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION HUNTER ANGLER WORKING GROUP REBUILDING A SPORTSMEN'S FEDERATION

By John Gale
National Wildlife Federation

Alarming declines of America's game and fish resources brought local and state wildlife groups together in 1936 at the first North American Wildlife Conference in Washington, D.C. The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) was born out of that historic conference with the purpose of uniting wildlife groups into a powerful national voice for America's wildlife. Over time, hundreds of thousands of these local, state, regional and national groups of sportsmen and women successfully protected fish and wildlife habitat and restored many wildlife populations.

Today, however, the collective strength of this unique wildlife conservation coalition has become fragmented. Old and new challenges in protecting wildlife and maintaining our sportsmen and women heritage continues to be at risk. NWF's national sportsmen initiative is poised to address these threats and guard our heritage.

Hunters and anglers are passionate about and understand the connection between wild and healthy wildlife habitat and great hunting and angling experiences. However, relatively few sportsmen have engaged with the public processes that can protect and conserve these resources. Moreover, more than 34 million hunters and anglers are not associated with a state or national sportsmen conservation organization. Of those 20% that do belong to a national organization, most are engaged in raising money for on-the-ground habitat projects. While these efforts are important, there has not been a coordinated effort on behalf of sportsmen and women to address high level state and federal policy decisions that impacts all habitats.

NWF is in a unique position to engage both leadership of single species organizations and unaffiliated sportsmen and women. To that end, NWF is rebuilding a strong and robust sportsmen network that will give voice to unaffiliated individuals that wish to help re-establish wild-



Photo courtesy of John Gale

life conservation as a national priority and advance our sportsmen conservation agenda at the state, regional and national level. State wildlife affiliates like the Montana Wildlife Federation will be a key partner in this effort.

Working in partnership with state wildlife federations, NWF has developed a sportsmen agenda reflecting the priorities of Americans who hunt and fish. The priorities include:

- Access and Opportunity
- Habitat Degradation and Fragmentation
- Water
- Science-based Fish and Wildlife Management
- Wildlife and Habitat Funding
- Hunter and Angler Recruitment and Retention

The greatest challenge for the hunting and fishing community is to make fish and wildlife conservation a core American value again. We also

need to implement more meaningful landscape-level planning policies that guide resource extraction, development, and management of our public lands and waters. Habitat fragmentation and degradation are immediate threats that imperil the future of fish and wildlife populations and we are compelled to defend our heritage of hunting and fishing by ensuring that the integrity of our public lands is not diminished or sold off to the highest bidder.

Together, with the Montana Wildlife Federation, other state wildlife affiliates and conservation partners, NWF is inspiring Americans to ensure that future generations of hunters and anglers can enjoy access to our public lands and healthy populations of fish and wildlife.

John Gale is the Sportsmen's Outreach Campaign Manager for the National Wildlife Federation. Reach him at galej@nwf.org.

PRIVATE LANDS/PUBLIC WILDLIFE COUNCIL IMPROVING HUNTER-LANDOWNER RELATIONS

By MWF Staff

The Private Land/Public Wildlife Council (PLPW) is a governor-appointed committee comprised of hunters, landowners, outfitters, legislators, and an FWP Commissioner. The committee makes recommendations related to Montana hunting and fishing access programs, landowner, hunter and outfitter relationships, and other lands and wildlife issues. Several MWF leaders have been serving on the Council, dedicating long hours to helping improve relations between landowners and hunters.

Council members worked over the past eight months to develop draft recommendations to help achieve a number of goals, including: maximizing access to public lands, improving

communications and relationships among outfitters, landowners, hunters, and Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, increasing public access to private property and outfitted lands; improving hunter compliance with laws; and recognizing good behavior.

At the end of August, the Council released a set of draft recommendations to achieve these goals. These recommendations focus on:

1. collecting and reporting better information about which public lands have legal public access;
2. providing landowner elk-permit incentives to allow public elk hunting;
3. revising the nonresident hunting license for nonresident family members; and
4. promoting responsible hunter behavior and improving hunter and landowner relationships.

On the final point, the Council recommended expanding the Montana Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project. This web-based education program promotes responsible hunter behavior and helps encourage good hunter/landowner relationships in Montana. Some landowners are already using the program as a tool to promote responsible hunter behavior, either by posting signs provided by FWP to indicate the ranch supports the project. Many hunters who have completed the course have indicated that information provided through the program has helped them be more aware of the many issues associated with private land and public access.

After hearing comments from the public, the Council will pass their final recommendations on to FWP, the Legislature, and the Governor for action.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

FOCUSING ON FUTURE DECADES

By Dave Chadwick
MWF Executive Director

September 3, 1964 was an important day for conservation in America. On that day, 50 years ago, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law two of our nation's most important conservation laws: the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act and the Wilderness Act.

Over the last half century, the LWCF and the Wilderness Act have both had a profound benefit for wildlife and people. That's not to say that either law has been without controversy. Over the years, conservationists and other stakeholders have had many fights about both programs. Sometimes these fights have been between different interests groups, and sometimes these fights have been within the conservation community. Every discussion about protecting an area as wilderness evokes important questions about land management and community values. Likewise, the decision to spend LWCF funds acquiring land or access is often controversial. Once lands are protected under either law, the debate over management will continue – often with even more intensity and controversy.

But at the end of the day, there's no denying that both the LWCF and Wilderness Act have had a profound benefit for Montana's wildlife and people. For all the individual details and local disputes, when you look at the big picture, these laws have resulted in the protection of millions of acres of habitat for wildlife and land for people to hunt, fish, and enjoy the outdoors. They've maintained the lands and waters that support unmatched recreational opportunities, a sustainable multi-billion dollar outdoor economy, and a way of life that defines the Last, Best Place.

Public opinion in favor of land conservation and wilderness protection is a testament to the effectiveness of these laws. Poll after poll show that people overwhelmingly support both of these laws in concept and in practice. People from all walks of life and all ends of the political spectrum support conservation. Despite a lot of bumps and fights over the years, the LWCF and Wilderness Act have worked. And they continue to work for Montanans.

In signing the LWCF and the Wilderness Act into law, President Johnson remarked "We know that America cannot be made strong by leadership which reacts only to the needs or the irritations or the frustrations of the moment. True leadership must provide for the next decade and not merely the next day."

President Johnson's words provide wise advice for MWF as we look to the many challenges that face us today.

"We know that America cannot be made strong by leadership which reacts only to the needs or the irritations or the frustrations of the moment. True leadership must provide for the next decade and not merely the next day." - President Lyndon B. Johnson

list goes on. No other organization in Montana faces the breadth of issues that MWF is routinely asked to tackle: our mission calls on us to protect the public trust and science-based wildlife management, maintain and manage habitat for all of Montana's wildlife, and protect and enhance access for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation.

Face with such a broad agenda, MWF can only succeed by focusing on long-term conservation wins. When we look at the many disputes and controversies that arise in the Legislature, the Fish and Wildlife Commission, and Congress. We need to ask ourselves: is this issue an

"irritation of the moment" or does this "provide for the next decade?"

When we look at access issues, as highlighted in Nick Gevock's story, are we fighting to open a single road or are we working to put in place a new approach statewide that protects sportsmen's access to public lands and public waters?

When we consider the Endangered Species Act, are we talking about individual animals or are we talking about long-term efforts to work with private landowners to protect habitat and prevent species from becoming endangered? The stories on page 9 point to the benefits of a long-term, collaborative approach.

When we think about federal land management, are we letting political activists drive the agenda with their talk of taking over and selling off federal lands? That's an important fight we need to have – but we also need to advocate for long-term public land management that includes better forest management, bold conservation ideas like the protection of backcountry lands, and responsible energy development, discussed elsewhere in this issue.

Some of MWF's biggest victories have indeed "provided for the next decade." The Stream Access Law thirty years ago set the bar for public access to public waters, giving us the best fishing in the West. Our victory in passing I-143 fifteen years ago to ban game farms was a landmark win for the public trust and the health of our wildlife resources. Every day we see new headlines around the nation as sportsmen, conservationists and wildlife managers in other states struggle to contain the spread of wildlife diseases due to confined game operations.

By focusing on bold, long-term actions and not getting distracted by the "irritations of the moment," we can ensure that MWF leaves a legacy for future generations of Montanans.

MWF Executive Director Dave Chadwick is at dchadwick@mtwf.org.

WELCOME NEW MWF MEMBERS

THE MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION CONTINUES TO GROW! THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE HAVE JOINED MWF AS ASSOCIATE MEMBERS SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER:

Don Woerner (Laurel, MT)
Amber McDermott (Billings, MT)
Joe Howry (Ventura, CA)
Allen Moos (Billings, MT)
Sharli Kiner (Billings, MT)
Spencer Brown (Billings, MT)
Lorene Gogerty (Billings, MT)
Debra Bonogofsky (Billings, MT)
Dana Morrell (Billings, MT)
Drew Marsh (Billings, MT)



Beth Hahn and Dru Carr (Missoula, MT)
Jeffrey Harding (Two Rivers, WI)
Jeff Twohig (Missoula, MT)
Carleen Gonder (Ovando, MT)
William Boone (Columbia Falls, MT)
John Peregoy (Polson, MT)
Audie Gowens (Firebaugh, CA)
Paul Glessing, Mohall, ND)
Joe Howry (Ventura, CA)

PLEASE ALSO WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS OF OUR WILDLIFE LEGACY COUNCIL:

Douglas Kreitzberg (Newtown Square, PA)
Bill Martin (Kalispell, MT)
Ross Bricklemeyer (Indiana, PA)

SPORTSMEN WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT HABITAT AND ACCESS CONSERVING BACKCOUNTRY PUBLIC LANDS

By Joel Webster
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership and
Hellgate Hunters and Anglers

Federal public lands available to sportsmen in Big Sky Country are not limited to our national forests and wildlife refuges. Montana hunters and anglers have more than eight million acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands to enjoy and explore. Most BLM lands in Montana are located in the southwest, central and eastern parts of the state, and they provide important public hunting and fishing access and key habitat for species like mule deer, elk and pronghorn, as well as wild trout and upland birds.

While many BLM lands in Montana consist of small blocks and isolated parcels, sizeable areas can be found north and south of the Missouri River Breaks, in the Pryor Mountains and in the Beaverhead country. Some of these lands are undeveloped backcountry and offer great hunting.

Despite the importance of backcountry BLM lands for wildlife and hunting, these areas are facing pressure from energy development and intensive motorized recreation, not to mention a relentless onslaught of noxious weeds. Montana is no exception, and unless conserved and – as necessary – restored, the best BLM lands could be industrialized, degraded and changed forever. Fortunately, sportsmen have an opportunity to ensure the responsible management of some of Montana's best BLM public lands.

Like the U.S. Forest Service, the BLM is required to create and revise land use plans that determine how public land will be managed over a 15-25 year period. Right now, the BLM is revising land use plans for 123 million acres across the West, including 6.2 million acres in



Photo by Joel Webster

Montana. Backcountry BLM lands such as the Crooked Creek Breaks northeast of Lewistown and the Frenchman Creek area northeast of Malta are being evaluated by the agency to determine their future management. These planning processes are a chance to conserve some of the best trophy bull elk and mule deer buck hunting in the state.

In response to this opportunity inside Montana and across the West, a coalition of sporting organizations – nearly 100 strong and growing, including MWF – is taking the lead to shape a new BLM conservation tool from the bottom-up that safeguards fish and wildlife habitat, works for our communities and benefits our outdoor heritage. Called Backcountry Conservation Areas, this management approach is being

proposed locally through BLM public land use planning processes to conserve, restore, maintain and enhance intact and undeveloped lands with high quality fish and wildlife habitat and dispersed sporting opportunities.

Backcountry Conservation Areas would:

- conserve backcountry BLM lands from development;
- prioritize management activities that restore habitats and control noxious weeds;
- sustain public access to public lands;
- maintain traditional uses of the land that are important to rural communities;
- resolve frustration and gridlock over the management of high quality public lands.

Contact Joel Webster at jwebster@trcp.org.

THE MONTANA OUTDOOR HALL OF FAME HONORING CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS

By MWF Staff

Over the last twelve months, MWF has been working with the Montana Historical Society, Montana Wilderness Association, Montana Trout Unlimited, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation, and the Cinnabar Foundation to launch the Montana Outdoor Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame will honor individuals, both living and posthumous, who made significant and lasting contributions to the restoration and conservation of Montana's wildlife and wild places.

The first batch of twelve Hall of Fame inductees has already been selected by the planning committee and will be honored in an induction ceremony on December 6, 2014. Going forward, the Hall of Fame will take public nominations.

The focus of the awards is not only to recognize Montana's historical and contemporary conservation leaders, but also to capture the stories of these individuals in an effort to

contribute to public awareness and education. By celebrating the accomplishments of these men and women who contributed so much to Montana, we can inspire future generations to work to protect the Treasure State's natural resources and outdoor traditions.

Conservation leader and long-time MWF member Jim Posewitz has been the force behind the creation of the Montana Hall of Fame. Jim had the idea after attending the 7th annual Wyoming Outdoor Hall of Fame banquet as a guest speaker. When he returned to Montana, he approached various non-governmental organizations, the Montana Historical Society, and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to create an Outdoor Hall of Fame for Montana.

The first batch of inductees to the Hall of Fame include people from all periods of Montana's history and all walks of life. They will include some public historical figures and advocates who have worked for conservation in Montana "from territorial legislators, to activists in the 1930's and 40's, all the way to the present date,"



says Posewitz. Several people with strong ties to MWF are in the inaugural class.

The induction awards and ceremony will be held at the Great Northern Hotel in Helena December 6. The event will be an exciting celebration of the inductees' contribution to Montana's conservation legacy, and all Montanans are invited to attend.

Tickets for the December 6 event can be purchased at mtoutdoorlegacy.org.

THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

50 YEARS OF FUNDING FOR PUBLIC ACCESS

by MWF Staff

2014 represents the 50th anniversary of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the nation's premier program to protect outdoor lands and recreational opportunity. LWCF passed Congress with strong bipartisan support during the summer of 1964 and was signed by President Lyndon Johnson on September 3, 1964.

The LWCF was created to set aside a portion of federal revenues from offshore oil and gas development to support the protection of public lands and waters. It represented a new model, in which the federal funding from development would be dedicated back into conservation. The LWCF is supposed to provide a total of \$900 million/year. Unfortunately, Congress has almost always diverted LWCF dollars to pay for other government programs, allowing only a fraction of the intended funding into land protection.

Despite the diversion of funds, the LWCF has been one of our nation's most successful conservation programs. Over the last fifty years, LWCF has still resulted in about \$16 billion in spending nationwide, protecting everything from national forest wilderness lands to urban parks. Montana has received over \$400 million in funding to protect important lands in the Blackfoot Valley, on the Rocky Mountain Front and all over the state.

In addition to protecting habitat for fish and wildlife, LWCF has also been an important tool for expanding access for hunters, anglers, and other outdoors enthusiasts.

Even though Montana has 23 million acres of public land, these areas can sometimes be

located behind private property or in areas that are otherwise inaccessible. Acquisition of a crucial parcel of land from a willing private seller can help open up tens of thousands of acres of adjacent public land. Over the years, LWCF funding has helped purchase crucial access points for hunters, anglers, backpackers, and other public land users.

LWCF also provides funding to Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks to improve public access. These grants to the state help fund recreational infrastructure like trails and fishing access sites. In fact, almost two-thirds of Montana's fishing access sites have been funded in part by LWCF.

Montanans hunt, fish, and enjoy recreation on public lands at a higher rate than residents of any other Western state. By providing funding

to conserve public lands and expand public access to those lands, LWCF helps protect our outdoor heritage and our quality of life. It's not surprising then, that Montanans overwhelmingly support LWCF: a poll last June found that 71 percent of Montanans support LWCF.

Because Montanans love our public lands so much, LWCF also enjoys strong bipartisan support from our Congressional delegation. Senator Jon Tester, Senator John Walsh, and Congressman Steve Daines have all been champions for funding the LWCF. They have also introduced legislation to use funds to expand access, including Senator Tester's SPORT Act (S. 1660) and Congressman Daines's Making Public Lands Public Access Act (H.R. 3962).

Photo by Gene Sentz



Access continued from pg 1

state's laws to put an end to this problem. It's time to hold public officials accountable. And it's time to ask prospective lawmakers where they stand on this issue and whether they would vote to support proactive measures to end illegal roadblocks.

This is not a partisan issue and it never has been. This is a Montana issue, and it's time we get active. We not only highlight the problem – we propose solutions. There are several bills that MWF will be bringing in the 2015 Montana Legislature to address this issue. And despite some claims to the contrary, these measures don't infringe on private property rights. What they will do is strengthen public property rights.

So look for the report. Ask your prospective legislators and local officials where they stand on this issue. And be prepared to join us as we work to improve public access to our public lands.

Nick Gevock is MWF's Conservation Director. Reach him at ngevock@mtwf.org.

CLEAN WATER RULE HELPS HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

SPEAK UP FOR CLEAN WATER

by Dave Ditloff
National Wildlife Federation

Good waterfowl hunting is dependent on a number of factors. Chief among them is the presence of a lot of intact wetlands with clean water in the breeding areas of ducks and geese. The same idea goes for good fishing. Ample, clean water in our rivers and streams is essential.

No federal law is more important to improving water quality, stemming the tide of wetlands loss, and reducing sediment and pollution in our waters than the Clean Water Act. That being said, over the last decade two Supreme Court cases (S.W.A.N.C.C v. Army Corps of Engineers and Rapanos v. U.S.) have cast doubt and confusion on more than thirty years' worth of Clean Water Act regulations and implementation. In particular, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to regulate isolated wetlands and intermittent streams has been in limbo.

As a result, 60% of the country's stream miles are at risk of pollution and destruction, and the rate of wetlands loss has increased by 140%. In short, the Supreme Courts cases threaten our

fishing and hunting heritage.

Fortunately, the Army Corps and the EPA have issued a draft rule that would clarify their roles. Under the proposed rule, they would again have authority to regulate isolated wetlands and intermittent and ephemeral streams. Essentially, the proposal would give the agencies most, but not all, of the authority that they had for the first thirty years of the Clean Water Acts existence.

The rule would not just clarify which water bodies are eligible for protection—it would also spell out which ones are not. The proposed rule specifically excludes many man-made ditches, ponds, and irrigation systems, and it preserves the Clean Water Act's existing exemptions for normal farming, ranching, and forestry practices. In this way, the proposed rule balances the needs of the agricultural community with the need to conserve the country's precious water resources.

Hunters and anglers need to take a leadership role in supporting the proposed rule. Just like we did in the early 1970s when the original Clean Water Act was passed, sportsmen and sportswomen need to speak out in support. Our outdoor heritage is at stake.

For more information on the proposed rule and to submit official comments on it, please go to <http://www2.epa.gov/uswaters>.

PUBLIC WANTS TO BALANCE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AND WILDLIFE SUPPORT GROWS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

by MWF Staff

According to a new poll, Montanans and other Westerners are in favor of wind and solar on public lands and they want conservation to be a component of development. This poll shows that we can have responsible renewable energy development - and that Montanans want it.

The poll, conducted in August 2014 by Peak Campaigns, demonstrates that support for wind and solar projects on public lands is incredibly high in Montana and across the West, especially when those projects enhance wildlife conservation efforts and improve access for sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts.

The poll shows extremely strong bipartisan support from western voters for renewable energy development on public lands. In particular, voters want to see projects that give back to wildlife through the creation of conservation and mitigation funds. Support is wide-ranging; spanning all demographics, political parties and ideological views. In Montana, 2 voters out of 3 favors renewable development that does not reduce the amount or quality of wildlife habitat and wild areas on public lands.

According to these poll results, voters not only support sharing the rents paid by wind and solar companies with counties and states where development occurs, but want a portion of that

money to go towards conservation and recreational access. In Montana, 82% of respondents think these rents should go towards restoring fish and wildlife habitat, and 78% favor directing revenue towards improving parks, refuges, and access to outdoor recreation.

Additionally, voters favor sending renewable energy revenue back to the counties and states where development occurs. Among Montana voters polled, 77% favor distributing a portion of the revenue generated by solar and wind development on public land back to the counties, state, land management agencies, and funding regionally based conservation projects.

Current proposals such as the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act (S. 279) sponsored by Senator Jon Tester and cosponsored in the House by Congressman Steve Daines speak directly to the viewpoints expressed in this poll by reinvesting wind and solar revenue into wildlife habitat and recreational access as well as paying back the states and counties where development occurs. It is a commonsense solution that fosters renewable energy projects while ensuring that wildlife and local communities don't bear the full cost of development impacts.

"Momentum continues to grow behind efforts to protect and responsibly develop our natural resources. Folks know that we can strengthen our communities and preserve our lands and waterways at the same time," Tester said.

PUBLIC LAND RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT ACT (S. 279)

The Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act (PLRED) will establish a pilot competitive leasing program for wind and solar projects on public lands. Part of the revenue from this leasing will be go back into states, counties, and a Renewable Energy Resource Fund.

Counties and states where development occurs will each receive 25% of the royalty funds, and be used for road maintenance, public safety and law enforcement, conservation or access easements, or capital for leveraging federal and state resources.

In addition to state and county royalties, PLRED will provide up to 35% of generated royalties to conservation funding in the region. Funding would support habitat restoration, purchase of access easements to isolated blocks of public lands, and enhancements to critical wildlife habitat or game corridors. PLRED would provide the framework for responsible project planning and execution, with long term funding going to local communities and wildlife.

PROTECTING PUBLIC LANDS FOR HABITAT AND OUTDOOR RECREATION WILDERNESS ACT CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

by MWF Staff

On September 3, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson put his signature on the Wilderness Act, ushering in a new era of protection for America's public lands and outdoor heritage.

The Wilderness Act established a process for permanently protecting public lands from road construction, logging, mining, and other development. Under the law, wilderness lands are permanently protected for their natural value and hunting, fishing, backpacking, and other recreational activities. Extractive economic activities are prohibited, as was the construction of permanent roads and recreational facilities, and the use of mechanized vehicles.

The Wilderness Act was the product of bipartisan effort and passed with overwhelming support. The law passed the Senate by a vote of 73-12 and in the House of Representatives with only one dissenting vote.

In addition to creating the wilderness system, the Wilderness Act also designated the first 9.1 million acres of wilderness, including Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness. Since 1964, just over 100 million additional acres of wilderness have been designated nationwide.

In 1972, the 240,000 acre Scapegoat Wilderness was designated, representing the first wilderness area to be designated as a result of citizen action rather than government agency recommendations. Local champion Cecil Garland



Photo courtesy of US Forest Service Northern Region

built a grassroots coalition that ultimately earned the bipartisan support of Montana's Republican Congressman and Democratic Senators.

The last wilderness to be designated in Montana was the Lee Metcalf Wilderness in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge and Gallatin National Forests. Another Montana wilderness bill passed in 1988, but was vetoed by President Reagan. No additional lands have been designated since that time. All told, Montana today has about 3.5 million acres of wilderness spread out across 16 wilderness areas.

Fifty years after passing the Wilderness Act –

and thirty years since any wilderness has been designated in Montana – Congress has several proposals on the table to continue a bipartisan public land conservation agenda.

Senator John Walsh's Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act (S. 364) would designate about 70,000 acres of new wilderness based on a locally developed conservation plan. The bill has overwhelming public support and awaits action. Senator Jon Tester's Forest Jobs and Recreation Act (S. 37) would designate hundreds of thousands of acres of new wilderness while also expediting forest management in needed areas.

WILDLIFE FEDERATION LEADERS NATIONWIDE CALL FOR ACTION KEEPING PUBLIC LANDS IN PUBLIC HANDS

By National Wildlife Federation

In August, former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar joined Collin O'Mara, the National Wildlife Federation's CEO and president, and the executive directors of the Montana Wildlife Federation, North Carolina Wildlife Federation, and New Mexico Wildlife Federation to speak out against attempts to sell or get rid of America's public lands.

Earlier this year, the National Wildlife Federation's 49 state affiliates unanimously approved a resolution, led by the Montana Wildlife Federation and New Mexico Wildlife Federation, that call for keeping public lands in public hands. The federation leaders stressed that wise stewardship of the lands that belong to all Americans is a tradition that cuts across political and social lines.

"The nation's public lands are the birthright and priceless heritage of all Americans. Our policy makers and elected leaders should be working to preserve and enhance these multiple use economic engines," said Salazar, who served as Interior secretary from 2009 to 2013.

"The National Wildlife Federation, our 49 state affiliates, and four million members and supporters strongly support keeping our public lands in public hands," said O'Mara. "For more than a century, protecting land for the benefit all outdoor enthusiasts and wildlife has been an essential element of the American experience—and we must pass on this legacy to future generations."

The national and state wildlife federations have worked through the years to conserve the public lands necessary for fish and wildlife and hunting and fishing and will continue to do, said Dave Chadwick, Montana Wildlife Federation executive director.

"Every few decades this idea of selling off public land pops up, and public opinion always beats it back. Meanwhile, the challenges facing our national forests and other public lands have continued to grow," Chadwick added. "We need our elected officials to quit wasting time on these



Photo by Daryl Dodd

speculative, ideological proposals and instead take action on the common-sense, collaborative efforts under way all over the country to improve land management."

"Sportsmen and women and wildlife watchers in the Southeast value our public lands, from

We need our elected officials to quit wasting time on these speculative, ideological proposals and instead take action on the common-sense, collaborative efforts under way all over the country to improve land management.

the Appalachians to the coast. We also value the Western lands and their abundant wildlife, big open spaces and great hunting and fishing. We stand with our fellow sportsmen and women in defending public lands and protecting the special places that offer some of the best of what this country is about," said Tim Gestwicki, North

Carolina Wildlife Federation CEO.

"Sportsmen are on the front line in this effort to prevent the transfer of federal public lands. These are the very lands where we hunt and fish, and where we pass on those traditions to our kids. The idea that somehow our federal public lands are dispensable is an affront to all hunters and anglers, and we are determined to protect these lands for ourselves and for future generations," said Garrett VeneKlasen, executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

The conservation leaders were joined by Peter Metcalf, CEO and president of Black Diamond, Inc., a leading manufacturer of outdoor sports equipment and clothing.

"No other country in the world has the public land infrastructure that we have. There's such a richness of landscape and wildlife. Our public lands and outdoor recreation and lifestyles are coveted by people around the world and are a draw for communities and employers competing for new businesses and workers," Metcalf said.

JOIN THE FIGHT: RALLY FOR PUBLIC LANDS!



SATURDAY, SEPT. 27TH
12:00PM - 1:30PM
STATE CAPITOL - HELENA

On September 27th, Montanans will celebrate National Hunting and Fishing Day and National Public Lands Day by demanding that our public lands stay in public hands.

The threat of selling off public lands has never been greater. Right now, radical politicians are crafting plans to dispose of our public lands. They want to take our national forests, grasslands, and other public lands and sell them off to the highest bidder, closing off our access.

We need to show them that Montanans want to keep our public lands in public hands. For our families, for future generations, we have to fight back.

At high noon on Saturday the 27th, hunters, anglers, hikers, horsemen, and Montanans of all stripes will converge in Helena to set up elk camp on the Capitol lawn.

We plan to send a clear message to state and federal decision-makers: keep your hands off our outdoor heritage.

Hundreds of Montanans are expected to attend from all corners of the state. Buses will be running from several major cities. Lunch will also be provided for every participant.

For more information, contact MWF at mwf@mtwf.org or (406) 458-0227.

PREVENTING WILDLIFE FROM BECOMING ENDANGERED PROTECTIONS PROPOSED FOR SAGE GROUSE

By MWF Staff

On September 9, Governor Steve Bullock signed an executive order establishing a Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program. The program aims to avoid an Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing for the sage grouse by protecting the bird's habitat from development and fragmentation.

An icon of the West the sage grouse has been in decline for decades due to a range of threats. To the sage habitats on which it depends. Western states are currently developing conservation plans in the hopes of conserving enough habitat to prevent the need to list the sage grouse under the ESA. If the sage grouse were listed, would impact a range of land use activities and likely engender a considerable political blowback on endangered species conservation.

"Montanans recognize that it is in the best interest of our state, its economy, and our quality of life, to maintain state management of the Greater Sage-grouse," Bullock said of the executive order. "Through a public process, and

the work of a diverse group of stakeholders, we've developed a dynamic, and science-based approach to ensure this bird remains under state management, and is not listed under the Endangered Species Act."

The Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program is based on the recommendations of an advisory council that met during 2013-2014. The program will include restrictions on oil and gas drilling and other development activity in important habitat areas. A central part of the program is the conservation of habitat on private lands through voluntary incentives for landowners.

The sage grouse executive order was hailed by a variety of diverse interests, including several who participated on the advisory committee.

"We appreciate the efforts and leadership from Governor Bullock to ensure that management of the sage grouse remains in state hands," said Dave Galt, Executive Director of the Montana Petroleum Association.

"With an eye towards solutions, stakeholders with diverse viewpoints have come together to find science-based ways to ensure that we are protecting this bird, while respecting the needs

of Montana ranching families," Errol Rice, Executive Vice President of the Montana Stockgrowers Association said.

"We applaud the Governor's willingness to step up to the plate to launch this important conservation program. Science shows that business-as-usual will have devastating effects on sage-grouse over the long-term," said Janet Ellis, Program Director for Montana Audubon.

The creation of the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program represents an important first step in conserving the sage grouse and its habitat. MWF will be closely following the implementation of the executive order to ensure that proposed conservation measures are carried out. We will also be working with a coalition of partners to ensure that the 2015 Legislature enacts the necessary funding for habitat protection, private land incentives, and monitoring.

Avoiding an ESA listing for the sage grouse has the potential to be a big win for both conservation and economic interests, but it will only succeed if sage grouse populations and habitat are genuinely protected.

PROTECTING AGRICULTURAL LANDS AND AQUATIC HABITAT NO ENDANGERED LISTING FOR GRAYLING

By MWF Staff

On August 19, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) announced that the Upper Missouri River population of the Arctic grayling does not need protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The FWS reached this conclusion after analyzing efforts carried out by private landowners and government agencies to improve conditions for Arctic grayling in the Upper Missouri River basin.

The Arctic grayling is a coldwater fish related to trout, salmon, and whitefish. The grayling depends on very cold, clean waters for survival. While abundant in Alaska and Canada, only two populations of river-run grayling were historically known in the lower 48 states: one in Michigan and one in the Upper Missouri River basin in Southwestern Montana. The Michigan population is extinct, and the Montana population is now confined to the Big Hole River.

The Arctic grayling in the Upper Missouri River has been a candidate for an endangered species listing since the early 1990s. The ESA provides very strict regulatory protections for fish and wildlife habitat. While this can prevent species from disappearing completely, the law's requirements can also have severe impacts on agriculture and other land uses. As a result, federal and state wildlife managers, conservationists, and landowners have been working together for decades to conserve the grayling so that it would not need to be listed.

The Arctic grayling conservation strategy was developed and implemented partnership with the agricultural landowners in the Big Hole and Centennial valleys. Much of this work was carried out through a legal agreement

known as a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA), which provides protections to landowners who engage in voluntary conservation measures for imperiled species. Over 250 conservation projects have been implemented under the CCAA to conserve Arctic grayling, including riparian fencing, irrigation flow reductions, improved irrigation infrastructure, fish ladders, improved stock water systems, and stream restoration.

These conservation efforts were supported by a variety of programs that fund voluntary conservation, including the FWS's Partners for Fish and Wildlife, the State Wildlife Grants program, and funds from the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Private conservation organizations like

The Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited also played a crucial role in working with local landowners. As a result of this collaborative effort, habitat quality has improved and grayling populations have more than doubled since 2006.

"The conservation progress for Arctic grayling would not have been possible without the amazing support we have received from willing landowners and other partners in the Big Hole River and Centennial valleys" said FWS Director Dan Ashe.

"Montana has worked to restore arctic grayling for the past 25 years, and we've depended on support from private landowners every step of the way," said Jeff Hagener, Director of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.



Photo courtesy of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

EXCERPTS AND HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT PRESS COVERAGE

MWF IN THE NEWS

RENEWABLE ENERGY PUBLIC LANDS LEGISLATION READY FOR HURDLES

Public News Service - June 16, 2014

Wind and solar energy companies would have an easier time leasing public lands for projects, under a bill from Montana Sen. Jon Tester.

"It's really a win-win-win for wildlife conservation for hunting opportunity, and for energy companies," said Chadwick. "It's also a win for local communities, because the program also includes an element of impact assistance."

CURBING CARBON POLLUTION

By Stan Frasier (Helena Hunters & Anglers) Helena Independent Record - July 2, 2014

As a sportsman, I support the federal government's proposed Clean Power Plan and its first-ever national limits on carbon pollution from power plants. Global warming is already having an impact on Montana's outdoors. Most summers, rivers need to be closed to fishing for a time due to high water temperatures and low flows. Warmer temperatures and the ticks that come with them are impacting our moose populations, and more frequent and intense wildfires and pine beetle infestations are wrecking forests.

MONTANA FEDERAL-LANDS POLICY TAKES POLITICAL TURN

Bozeman Daily Chronicle - June 29, 2014

"Montana's public lands offer some of the best hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation in the country, and Montanans are overwhelmingly against any proposal to sell these lands," said Dave Chadwick, Montana Wildlife Federation executive director. "Our nation didn't get into debt because of our national forests and other public lands. Balancing the budget by liquidating our natural heritage is bad for Montana's quality of life and is irresponsible fiscal policy."

FEDS MAKE CORRECT DECISION CLOSING SHEEP STATION

By Skip Kowalski (MWF President) Missoulian - July 24, 2014

Closing government facilities never comes easy, but budget reductions could prove good news for wildlife along the Montana-Idaho border. A recent decision by the Obama administration to close the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station in the Centennial Mountains helps reduce federal expenditures and should benefit taxpayers, wildlife and hunters. However, opposition is building and it will take sportsmen, conservationists and legislators to ensure that the closure actually occurs.

FIVE INSPECTION STATIONS CATCH ANGLERS TRANSPORTING LIVE FISH

Helena Independent Record - July 28, 2014

The Fishing Outfitters Association of Montana, Invasive Species Action Network, Montana BASS Nation, Montana Pikemasters, Montana Trout Unlimited, Montana Wildlife Federation, Walleyes Forever of Montana, and Walleyes Unlimited of Montana have offered rewards in the thousands of dollars for information that helps authorities find and prosecute bucket biologists.

FWP COMMISSION APPROVES ELK BRUCELLOSIS CONTROL CHANGES

Bozeman Daily Chronicle - August 7, 2014

Montana Wildlife Federation spokesman Nick Gevock requested data on the plan's effectiveness in controlling brucellosis transmission. "This issue is so complicated and we're going to deal with this for decades," Gevock said. "But we still have some issues with some of the concepts in this."

HEARINGS ACROSS STATE TO ADDRESS PROPOSED WOLF STAMP

Helena Independent Record - August 12, 2014

The Montana Wildlife Federation sees the wolf stamp as the first step in getting more funding to fish and wildlife management and plans to testify in favor of the proposal, said Nick Gevock, conservation director for MWF.

"Good wolf habitat is also good wildlife habitat and we should be welcoming this," he said. "I'm not saying this proposal is perfect, but the alternative to keeping non-consumptive users from funding wildlife is privatizing wildlife."

PROTECT WATERWAYS BY SUPPORTING CLEAN WATER ACT, WATERS OF THE US RULE

By Jim Vashro (Flathead Wildlife Inc) Missoulian - August 22, 2014

Water is the lifeblood of Montana. And when viewed from high above, Montana's streams, rivers and lakes resemble a huge network of veins and arteries pumping life through the state. So how would you feel if your doctor told you 40 percent of your circulatory system was in danger of being damaged or clogged? That is the peril facing our waterways...The EPA's Waters of the U.S. rule is a practical definition of which waters are covered by the CWA, giving clarity and certainty to the public, farmers, ranchers and developers.

INVOLVING ALL MONTANANS IN PAYING FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

By Dave Chadwick

Helena Independent Record - August 27, 2014

As we move into the 21st century, we simply must find new ways to pay for the fish, wildlife, and natural lands that make Montana the Last, Best Place. In having that debate, we are standing on the shoulders of giants - the first generation of responsible hunters and anglers who, a century ago, invented the conservation movement. Today, we have an opportunity to carry on that legacy. By involving all Montanans in paying for wildlife management, we can ensure that our wildlife resources and hunting and fishing traditions endure for future generations.

TRANSFERRING FEDERAL LANDS TO MONTANA: POLITICAL THEATER OR A VIABLE OPTION?

Helena Independent Record - August 31, 2014

While a healthy discussion over public land management is good for the state, the debate over a land transfer has been toxic, said Dave Chadwick, executive director for the Montana Wildlife Federation.

"I think it has sparked a reminder of how much Montanans love public lands," he said. "This is a large privatization effort and the thought that they wouldn't be sold off is just not true."

"I think it does speak to the level of frustration, but I don't know what it is that makes people go from supporting legitimate issues and go down this ideological road," said Nick Gevock, conservation director for MWF.

MWF IS A PROUD MEMBER OF MONTANA SHARES



Montana Shares is a federation of 40 Montana-based non-profit organizations working to promote our state's human, animal, cultural and natural resources.

Montana Shares provides a way for people to support their favorite charities through workplace giving.

For more information, please visit the Montana Shares website:

www.montanashares.org



UPDATES AND ACTIVITIES AROUND THE MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION FEDERATION NEWS

In June, Executive Director **Dave Chadwick** attended a meeting of the **Russell Country Sportsmen** to discuss several important issues, including access and habitat protection.

In June, the **Bear Paw Bowmen** hosted another successful shoot at the Barber Ranch. More than 350 shooters participated in the two day event.

In July, Executive Director **Dave Chadwick** attended the Board meeting of the **Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association**.

Over the summer, MWF Board member **Joe Perry** continued to chair the Private Lands-Public Wildlife Committee. MWF board members **Kathy Hadley** and **Rod Bullis** also served as a member of the committee.

In June, Conservation Director **Nick Gevock** attended a meeting of the Board of Directors of the **Hellgate Hunters and Anglers**.

In August, **Public Land and Water Access Association, Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association, Gallatin Wildlife Association, Hellgate Hunters and Anglers, Bear Paw Bowmen, Big Sky Upland Bird Association, Conrad Sportsmen Association, Park County Rod and Gun Club, Russell Country Sportsmen Association, Helena Hunters and Anglers, Anaconda Sportsmen's Club, and Flathead Wildlife Inc.** joined MWF in sending a letter to the Environmental Quality Council opposing the proposed takeover of federal land.

Over the last three months, **MWF Intern Chelsea Fried** visited breweries in Bozeman, Billings, Great Falls, and Lakeside for community outreach events. Members, affiliates, and friends came out to drink beer, chat, and raise money for MWF. Thanks to **Flathead Wildlife Inc, the Russell Country Sportsmen, Gallatin Wildlife, Laurel Rod and Gun Club, and Public Land and Water Access Association** for helping turn out great crowds at these events!

SAVE THE DATE

MWF ANNUAL MEETING

APRIL 25, 2015

HELENA, MONTANA



WHAT IS THE MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION?

The Montana Wildlife Federation is a statewide conservation organization dedicated to promoting wildlife, wildlife habitat, and sportsmen's interests. Our 5,000 members include Montanans and around the nation.

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MWF STAFF	
Executive Director Dave Chadwick dchadwick@mtwf.org	Office Manager Candy Noose cnoose@mtwf.org
Comptroller Deb Lane dlane@mtwf.org	Conservation Director Nick Gevock ngevock@mtwf.org
Frontline Fundraiser Maureen Glatzmaier	

OFFICERS	ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS	AFFILIATE CLUBS
Skip Kowalski, President Joe Perry, Treasurer Tim Aldrich, Past President Kathy Hadley, Secretary Corey Fisher, Internal Affairs, VP Stan Frasier, NWF Rep.	Region 1 - Chuck Hunt Region 2 - Jim Olson Region 3 - Vacant Region 4 - Joe Perry Region 5 - JW Westman Region 6 - Vacant Region 7 - Vacant Eastern - Vacant Central - Conrad "Duke" Williams Mountain - Gene Steiner Pacific - Chase Davis At-Large - Jay Gore At-Large - Jim Vashro	Anaconda Sportsmen's Club Bear Paw Bowmen Big Sky Upland Bird Bitterroot Houndsmen Conrad Sportsmen Alliance Custer Rod & Gun Club Flathead Wildlife, Inc. Gallatin Wildlife Association Great Falls Archery Club Helena Hunters & Anglers Hellgate Hunters & Anglers Laurel Rod & Gun Club Libby Rod & Gun Club Medicine River Canoe Club Park County Rod & Gun Public Land/Water Access Association Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association Rosebud/Treas. Wildlife Russell Country Sportsmen

JOIN TODAY! VISIT US AT WWW.MONTANAWILDLIFE.ORG

VOTE NO ON NEW REGISTRATION RULES (LR 126) PROTECT YOUR VOTING RIGHTS



Photo by Robert K. Jeffrey

By MWF Staff

This November, Montana voters will be asked to vote on a referendum to take away Montanans ability to register to vote on Election Day. Legislative Referendum (LR) 126 would change Montana's election laws to require voters to register by 5 PM the Friday before Election Day. People who aren't registered, or who have moved since they last voted, would be unable to exercise their constitutional right to vote if they miss the Friday deadline.

A broad coalition of organizations helped enact Election Day registration a decade ago in order to protect every Montana's constitutional right to vote. Since that time, nearly 30,000 Montanans have registered on Election Day and been able to vote when they might have otherwise been excluded.

Election Day voter registration has been used by returning veterans, students, firefighters and other emergency personnel, and a whole host of people who might not have the time or ability to register early. Without Election Day registration,

many people would have to make two trips to register and vote. This is a hardship for people in rural areas, senior citizens, and people who just can't afford to take that much time off work.

Why should MWF members care about Election Day voter registration? It goes without saying that many Montana hunters have better things to do with their time off in late October than make multiple trips to their county elections office. Many important wildlife management and conservation issues are also settled at the ballot box. One of MWF's biggest successes was the ban on game farms, I-143, which only passed by about 11,000 votes.

It isn't clear why proponents introduced LR 126 in the first place. Montana's election system is generally considered to be one of the most efficient and effective in the nation. Experts note that we experience few of the problems that have plagued many larger states. The referendum's author, Senator Alan Olson, has said that it is intended to address problems in polling places in past elections. However, Montana's Secretary of State Linda McCulloch has said that changing the law isn't necessary and would create more problems than it solves.

Paid for by the Montana Wildlife Federation
PO Box 1175 Helena, MT 59624 - Joe Perry, Treasurer

HUNT. FISH. VOTE.

November 4, 2014 is Election Day. As a nonprofit organization, MWF does not endorse or oppose any candidates or political parties. There are candidates on every end of the political spectrum who support hunting, fishing, and conservation – and there are some who do not. We encourage every Montanan to participate in the electoral process. Vote for what you believe in, and support candidates who will support you.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE REGISTERED

Don't assume you are already registered to vote! You'd be surprised how often people move and forget to update their registration. Check your status at <https://app.mt.gov/voterinfo/>. You can register by visiting your county election office or by downloading a voter registration form from <http://sos.mt.gov/elections/> and mailing it back in.

AVOID THE CROWDS: VOTE EARLY!

Early November is a busy time of year for most Montana hunters. The good news is that you don't have to wait until Election Day to cast your vote:

- **VOTE BY MAIL** - Any registered voter in Montana can sign up to vote by mail. All you need to do is request an absentee ballot, which you can return by mail or in person at your convenience. You don't need a special reason to use an absentee ballot. Watch your mail for an absentee application form or download one from the Secretary of State's web site at <http://sos.mt.gov/elections/> and return it to your county election office.

- **VOTE EARLY** - In addition to signing up to receive an absentee ballot in the mail, you can also vote early in person starting 30 days before Election Day. Simply go to your county election office on any weekday between 8 AM and 5 PM to complete the absentee registration form and fill out your ballot on the spot.

DON'T FORGET TO RETURN YOUR ENTRY

FOR THE

MADE IN MONTANA FISHING GEAR SWEEPSTAKES

WIN A BOZEMAN REEL

+

WINSTON FLY ROD

ENTER BY **OCTOBER 15, 2014**



DIDN'T RECEIVE A FORM? CONTACT THE MWF OFFICE AT 406-458-0227 OR MWF@MTWF.ORG