ENTREPRENEURS DRAWN TO MONTANA'S OUTDOORS

By Nick Gevock
MWF Conservation Director

Paul Marshall had a good job in Chicago, but pay wasn’t everything. The native of Missoula said as soon as he had a chance to come home, he did.

“I was eager to get back, and that was always our understanding when me and my wife got together — that we would end up back in Montana,” Marshall, 45, said recently. “I loved the outdoors here, the fact that you could get to a lot of good fishing, skiing, camping easily, because those things are pretty important to us.”

Marshall, who now co-owns Draught Works brewery in Missoula, said it’s even more important for him and his wife Laura Marshall because of their 11-year-old daughter. They wanted her to have outdoor amenities that the family could enjoy, and Montana offers them in abundance. He’d been working in human resources in Chicago, but Laura was able to find a job in Billings and they spent a few years there before Paul went into the brewing business back in his home town.

His story is not unique. Many entrepreneurs who have relocated or started businesses in Montana say the number one draw was the mountains, rivers and prairies. Those landscapes support abundant fish and wildlife, and with that, opportunities to hunt, fish, watch wildlife, hike and pursue a host of any other activities, they say.

That’s what drew Christopher James, 38, to Bozeman from Atlanta. The native of Texas had built up his company Xcentric, which specializes in information technology products for the accounting industry. James came to Montana on vacation and eventually proposed to his wife Chrystal while out here and together they decided to move here. James brought more than his young family here — he also brought a lot of jobs.

Xcentric has a total of 70 employees, most of whom live in Atlanta, and the total includes 28 people working out of Bozeman. James said he offers an internship program with Montana State University and those have turned into full-time jobs for most of the participants. Other employees in Bozeman have come from around the country. But James said whether they’re from Montana originally or other parts of the country, they share a common interest.

“We get requests from people from all over the country asking for a job here so that they can enjoy the benefits of working in Montana and the outdoors,” he said. “The bulk of our people either hunt or fish, or they enjoy the outdoors in other ways.”

James and Marshall are part of Business for Montana’s Outdoors, a group of companies that promote conservation of Montana’s public lands, wildlife and other resources. They advocate for policies that are important for conservation, including such core programs as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which helps promote conservation of public lands, and access to them, by using a portion of royalties from offshore drilling proceeds.

The numbers backing up the value of public lands, wildlife and water are impressive. The outdoor industry combined brings $5.8 billion annually into Montana’s economy, according to a study by the Outdoor Industry Association. In addition, outdoor recreation accounts for 64,000 jobs in Montana, and pays $403 million in state and local taxes.

And those are just the direct numbers. Employers like James say with the draw of the outdoors, they’re able to attract quality employees here, as well as keep Montanans, by offering good-paying jobs. Other members of Business for Montana’s Outdoors have companies that are directly tied to the outdoors. Among them is Dan Austin, whose Austin Adventures offers outdoor tours that focus on getting people out to appreciate our natural wonders. Austin moved from Alaska to Billings after taking a few hunting trips in Montana. He said he’s found Montana to be the ideal location for his business.

“I do adventure travel around the world, but Yellowstone and Montana are our top products, and have been for 20 years.” Austin, 59, said. Austin said Montana’s public lands and rivers

continued on page 6
One of the emerging threats to our fish and wildlife resources is pollution from carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas emitted primarily by the burning of fossil fuels. It’s imperative that the voices of hunters and anglers are heard in whatever policies are developed at the national, state and local levels that work to reduce or adapt to the realities of climate change.

Habitat Loss: Among the most productive habitats on Earth, coastal wetlands and estuarines are now threatened with the rise of sea levels, more intense and frequent coastal storms and altered runoff. In the central U.S., land loss and drought are threatening the “prairie pothole” region (Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa). More than 300 migratory bird species nest or migrate through this area, facing the challenge of finding suitable areas to nest and feed.

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CLEAN WATER RULE
RULE CLARITY PROTECTS HEALTHY WATERS
By John Bradley
MWF Eastern Field Representative

Rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands play an integral role in the lives of Montanans. The opportunity to fish, hunt, float, and enjoy the water is part of what makes Montana great. The water that affords us that opportunity deserves to be protected. Unfortunately, some of our elected representatives across the country have continued to try and weaken protections for clean water.

In 1972, Congress acted on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis to pass the Clean Water Act. During the first three decades the law was in effect, it was understood to apply to more or less all streams and wetlands, as well as larger rivers and lakes. During the decades of full enforcement, water quality in the country improved dramatically even as the economy grew. But two controversial Supreme Court decisions threw this aspect of the law into doubt in the early 2000s. For more than a decade, our nation’s small streams and wetlands have been in a legal limbo, subject to case-by-case decisions.

The Clean Water Rule was developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers to clarify which waters are covered under the Clean Water Act and which are not. Before releasing the Clean Water Rule, the agencies heard and addressed concerns from agricultural, energy, and other industries during a lengthy public comment period. The final rule is extremely explicit about which water bodies are protected and which are not. It excludes artificial irrigation systems, ponds, and many ditches, while clearly restating the Clean Water Act’s existing exemptions for normal farming, ranching, and forestry practices. The agencies met with over 400 stakeholder groups, including groups that represent farmers, ranchers, and sportsmen. They also held a public comment period in which nearly a million Americans sent comments to the EPA in favor of the rule.

Since the agencies’ announcement of the rule, there has been an onslaught of misinformation and tactics to prevent the rule from being implemented. One of the more recent attacks happened at the beginning of November with the “Federal Water Quality Protection Act” (S.1140). Despite its name, the law would have invalidated the Clean Water Rule – resulting in the continued loss of protection for 20 million acres of wetlands critical to fish and wildlife across the nation, including waterfowl nesting grounds and cold-water trout streams. Locally, these streams and wetlands play a vital role in maintaining healthy populations of fish and game—and help support the 64,000 jobs that are directly generated by Montana’s outdoor recreation economy. Luckily, the Senate had just enough votes to kill the bill, with Senator Jon Tester standing up for hunting, fishing, and our outdoor economy.

The clean water rule would restore Clean Water Act protections to 63,000 miles of waterways in Montana. The rule represents the best chance in a generation to clarify Clean Water Act protections that safeguard habitat, our outdoor economy, our clean drinking water, and our way of life in Montana.

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The clean water rule would restore Clean Water Act protections to waterways nationwide, including 63,000 miles of waterways in Montana, and provide consistency in the implementation of federal regulations. The rule represents the best chance in a generation to clarify Clean Water Act protections that safeguard habitat, our outdoor economy, our clean drinking water, and our way of life in Montana. Hunters, anglers, and all those who cherish Montana’s waters should voice their support for clean water to our congressional delegation and let them know that sportsmen are watching carefully how they vote:

Representative Ryan Zinke: 202-225-3211
Senator Steve Daines: 202-224-2651
Senator Jon Tester: 202-224-2644

John Bradley is Montana Wildlife Federation’s Eastern Field Representative. You can send him questions or comments at jbradley@mwf.org.

EMPLOYER MATCHED GIVING
EASY WAY TO INCREASE YOUR IMPACT
By MWF Staff

Every year, millions of Americans take advantage of employer matching gift programs to double or even triple the impact of their charitable giving. Unfortunately, millions more don’t take advantage of this easy way to boost their donations to organizations like the Montana Wildlife Federation.

What is employer-matched giving? It’s simply where your employer matches, dollar for dollar, your contribution to the causes and nonprofit organizations that matter the most to you. Matched giving programs give companies the ability to recognize their employees’ charitable activity while also giving the company an easy way to donate to nonprofit causes. It is a win-win-win for employees, companies, and charitable organizations.

Many companies have open giving programs, where they will match your cash donation dollar-for-dollar to any nonprofit you choose. Several of Montana’s largest employers offer matching gift programs, including First Interstate Bank, BNSF, Northwestern Energy, UPS, Wells Fargo, and Walmart. Many smaller companies will also match your donation on a case-by-case basis.

MWF volunteer and Board member JW Westman uses his employer’s charitable matching gift program to make sure that conservation work is being supported in Montana.

I’m just sorry I didn’t do it earlier. I knew that the program existed and finally just said, “Let’s do this and make the call.”” Said JW. “It just takes a few minutes. Ask your HR department if your employer will match your donation to MWF.”

Getting signed up for employer-matched giving is often as easy as contacting your human resources (HR) department. It sometimes requires a simple form, which MWF staff will be glad to help you complete.

For more information, contact the MWF office at 406-458-0227.
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE**

**MWF IS UP TO THE CHALLENGE**

As we close the books on 2015, the Montana Wildlife Federation can celebrate another successful year working to protect the Treasure State’s fish and wildlife, public lands and waters, and public access to the outdoors. In 2015 began with another lively session of the Montana Legislature. Thanks to hard work by our dedicated volunteers and staff, we were able to secure several big wins for Montana’s wildlife and outdoor heritage. We worked with a coalition of other conservation groups to defeat efforts to take over Montana’s national forests and other public lands. We helped pass several bills to shore up Fish, Wildlife and Parks’ finances and enhance the agency’s management toolbox. We defeated dozens of bills that tried to replace scientific wildlife management with politics.

During and after the Legislative Session, MWF also maintained a constant presence in front of the Fish and Wildlife Commission. We weighed in on scientific management of the public’s wildlife and offered constructive suggestions for improving proposed regulations and programs. We didn’t always get our way, but we were there to provide criticism when it was needed and praise when it was warranted.

At the federal level, MWF kept up the pressure on our Members of Congress to support common-sense federal land protection. Even though the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF – page 8 ) remains unfunded, we made real progress in building support for the program. Over the course of 2015, we moved our entire governmental delegation on LWCF funding. By working with a diverse coalition and focusing on the common-sense benefits for wildlife, hunters and anglers, and Montana’s outdoor economy, we were able to persuade Senator Steve Daines and Congressman Ryan Zinke to join Senator Jon Tester in championing LWCF and its benefits for Montana. The job isn’t done yet on LWCF, but we are well-positioned for success in 2016.

As we close the books on 2015, the Montana Wildlife Federation can celebrate another successful year working to protect the Treasure State’s fish and wildlife, public lands and waters, and public access to the outdoors.

Looking ahead to 2016, we’ll need to push back on congressional proposals to undercut many of our key natural resource management laws. Work on the Montana Clean Power Plan represents a big step toward tackling the contentious issue of climate change, and we need to make sure that Montana’s hunters, anglers, and other conservationists have a voice in the debate. And we’ll need to start getting ready for the 2017 Legislature, which will begin before we know it.

MWF is up to the challenge and already looking ahead to the future. During 2016, we’ll also celebrate the 80th anniversary of MWF’s founding. As one of the oldest wildlife federations in the country, and the oldest conservation organization in Montana, we have a long history of success that we will build on in these challenging times.

As we look ahead to 2016, I hope I can count on you to stay engaged, vigorously debate the issues, and stay committed to wildlife, habitat, and access.

Dave Chadwick is MWF’s Executive Director. Contact him at dchadwick@mtwf.org.

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**MWF DEPENDS ON YOUR YEAR-END DONATION**

The Montana Wildlife Federation depends on donations from people who care about Montana’s abundant wildlife, our natural lands and waters, and our unmatched public access to the outdoors. In fact, a majority of our funding as an organization comes from individual donors – people like you who decide to chip in $25, $50, or $100 to support our work. Your support is crucial to our ability to stand up to well-funded special interest groups at the Montana Capitol and in Congress.

There are many ways you can donate to MWF:

- **By Mail:** Use the envelope enclosed in this newsletter to send in a check or credit card donation.
- **Online:** Make a secure donation at www.montanawildlife.org.
- **By Phone:** Call our office at 406-458-0227 and we’ll take a credit card donation over the phone.

Donating to MWF can also provide you with tax benefits. MWF is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, and donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed under federal law. If you make a year-end donation before December 31, you can potentially reduce your 2015 tax liability.
At the end of November, the Interior Department announced the permanent cancellation of a 6,200 acre oil and gas lease that had been illegally awarded in the Badger-Two Medicine area of Lewis and Clark National Forest more than 30 years ago to the Louisiana-based Solonex Corporation. The decision was the culmination of decades of work by conservationists and the Blackfeet Nation to protect the Badger-Two Medicine.

The 130,000 acre Badger-Two Medicine area is located between Glacier National Park, the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, and the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The area is named for the headwaters of Badger Creek and the Two Medicine River. This wild backcountry provides crucial habitat for elk, deer, mountain goat, bighorn sheep, grizzly bears, and variety of other wildlife. The cold, clean waters of Badger Creek and the Two Medicine River also harbor important populations of native cutthroat trout.

The Badger-Two Medicine also has deep cultural significance for the Blackfeet Nation. It is an important place for a variety of cultural practices. Despite the Badger-Two Medicine area’s incredible wildlife values and cultural importance, the area was leased for oil and gas drilling in the early 1980s. The leases were issued without legally-required environmental impact statements and without consultation with the Blackfeet Nation.

Over the years, many of the leases in the Badger-Two Medicine area have been withdrawn or exchanged for development rights elsewhere. Senator Max Baucus in particular devoted considerable energy to negotiating the withdrawal of many of the leases in the Badger-Two Medicine.

However, the Solonex Corporation refused to give up their lease or exchange it for developable rights elsewhere. The lease was frozen by the federal government in 1996, but it has been tied up in court since then. In 2013, Solonex sued the Interior Department, which ultimately forced the decision to permanently cancel the leases.

The Interior Department’s announcement follows a growing tide of opinion against the Solonex Lease. In addition to the Blackfeet Nation’s longstanding opposition, eighteen tribes from other Western states have weighed in against the lease. Senator Jon Tester and Governor Steve Bullock have also championed protection for the Badger-Two Medicine and termination of the lease, along with six former superintendents of Glacier National Park and nineteen former US Forest Service leaders. The US Department of Agriculture, which oversees the Lewis and Clark National Forest, also decided to support cancellation of the leases, following the recommendation of the federal Historic Preservation Advisory Council. That group found that the initial lease had violated federal legal requirements to consult with the Blackfeet Nation and protect cultural resources.

MWF has been honored to participate in the fight alongside a diverse coalition to protect the Badger Two Medicine for more than 20 years. The area’s natural and cultural values far outweigh the highly speculative financial benefits of short-term oil and gas development. Protecting this area fills in yet another crucial piece of the puzzle to protect the Rocky Mountain Front for future generations.

**NEW REPORT: WILDLIFE IN HOT WATER**

**CLEAN POWER PLAN KEY TO PROTECT WATERS**

continued from page 2

the changing climate before it is too late. Future generations deserve nothing less.”

The first five months of 2015 were the hottest on record, on pace to surpass 2014’s record year. A recent study published in the journal Nature finds an increasingly visible link between global warming and extreme weather, with warmer temperatures adding fuel to superstorms like Sandy.

Wildlife in Hot Water details the steps needed to confront climate change and protect our waterways:


- Say no to new dirty energy projects. Oil, gas and coal development destroy, degrade, pollute and fragment habitat. Science is telling us that we must slow and stop the expansion of new dirty energy reserves—such as the massive coal fields in North America and the tar sands in Canada—which threaten important habitat and would lock in more carbon pollution for decades to come.

- Expand clean, wildlife-friendly energy and improve energy efficiency. Wind (on land and offshore), solar, sustainable bioenergy and geothermal energy can help protect wildlife, habitat and our water from climate change.

- Maintain fully restored Clean Water Act protections. In addition to curbing carbon pollution, the Environmental Protection Agency recently finalized a new rule restoring Clean Water Act protections to at least 60 percent of America’s streams and 20 million acres of wetlands nationwide.

Miles Grant is director of communications for National Wildlife Federation, coordinating communications across NWF’s programs to protect wildlife and wild places.

Read the full report: [Wildlife In Hot Water online](http://www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/Media-Center/Reports/Archive/2015/08-11-2015-Wildlife-In-Hot-Water.aspx)
I sit in the desert of central Arizona, searching for the words to write about Montana. I was born in Phoenix. Raised with an appreciation for the wonders of the outdoors—the desert, the mountains, the cactus, the wildlife, the fish, all of it. Table Mesa is in the middle of the state. Rough, dry, rocky terrain. Beautiful sunsets, mesquite campsites and star-filled nights. The city used to be 30-40 miles away. Now it’s maybe eight or 10. It is not like it was when I was a kid camping here. Arizona has grown 60 percent in population since 1978. Wildlife, development, more recreationists. Maybe Montana is the Arizona of 40 years ago?

I believe that Montana is the most unique place in the lower 48 states. We have an incredible array of animals and birds, majestic mountains, wild rivers, vast prairies, abundant agriculture, beautiful lands. No other state offers what we have. We have more opportunities to do something wild in the outdoors than anywhere in America.

We have more opportunities to do something wild in the outdoors than anywhere in America. We have an incredible array of wildlife and wild places in the lower 48 states. We have an incredible array of wildlife and wild places. Montana’s abundant wildlife and wild places are extremely valuable in creating real business opportunities for hunting, fishing, floating, hiking, wildlife watchers, farmers and ranchers. For over 45 years we have outfitted Montana’s residents and its visitors with the equipment, clothing and footwear they need to go out and experience the outdoors.

Montana’s abundant wildlife and wild places are extremely valuable in creating real business opportunities like mine, which is directly connected to the outdoors, but also for many companies who purely just want to live this lifestyle. Two vendors we deal with who relocated their sales offices to Montana from out of state for the benefit of “living here” are Sitka Gear in Bozeman and Kimber in Kalispell.

We who live here, for the most part live here to enjoy all that the Treasure State is. No matter where one is in our state, it has its special places, and wildlife, unique and wonderful, we all stake claim. My hunting partner says “what a country!” and I say “yes, it is!” Today, more than 10 million travelers come to Montana annually to “get” a little peace, to hunt, to fish, to have a moment, to experience something extraordinary. The wildlife and natural resources of the Treasure State are very valuable to the million of us Montanans. The time is here to secure as much as possible the Montana that we know now, and to build upon the past efforts of conservation and wildlife management that have brought us to this point.

I recently served on the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Citizens License and Funding Advisory Council. We dealt with funding FWP for the next few years. It was a rewarding and informative endeavor. The universal and frequent message I heard from citizens throughout the process is that Montanans love their outdoor places and wildlife. They desire very much to enhance every opportunity to hunt, fish, hike, watch wildlife and recreate in every way. They want to secure Montana’s heritage of wildlife conservation through hunting and to create more security for healthy habitats and wildlife.

Change is coming. We will need to think much bigger than we have about the needs of our fish, wildlife and parks, and take some concrete actions to secure consistent and sufficient funding to meet the needs of the future.

We see it, we feel it. Do you think you should prepare? Sure we should. We will need to think much bigger than we have about the needs of our fish, wildlife and parks, and take some concrete actions to secure consistent and sufficient funding to meet the needs of the future. FWP will have to step up to the demands of more recreationists, more challenges in wildlife and resource management, and changing attitudes and values about how we go about taking care of this place and how we get to do it.

For my business it is critical that outdoor recreation opportunities exist and grow. But much more importantly, if we truly love the Montana we know, it is critical that we prepare now to secure the means to manage our needs and desires for the future of our outdoor places and wildlife.

Ed Beall is the owner of Capital Sports, an outdoor retailer in Helena. Reach him at ed@capitalsportsmt.com.

As a business owner, Ed Beall clearly sees the importance of Montana’s outdoor resources to our state’s economy and heritage. To that end, he also dedicates his time to helping decision-makers tackle the tough questions about how to ensure those resources are around for future generations.

From 2013 – 2014, Ed served on the Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) License Funding Advisory Council. This group was convened by FWP Director Jeff Hagener to review the agency’s finances and make recommendations for improving the licensing system. The Council’s members included thirteen people, representing hunters, anglers, business owners, legislators, and other stakeholders from all over Montana. The group’s recommendations were ultimately enacted by the Legislature, helping put FWP on a more sustainable course for the near future.

As a follow up to the LFAC, Ed is presently serving on FWP’s Funding Common Ground panel. This group includes hunters, anglers, agricultural, commercial, and wildlife and natural resource conservation interests, and has been tasked with developing recommendations to broaden funding for FWP and strengthen relationships among the agency’s many stakeholders.
VALUE FOR ALL TIME
MT BUSINESSES THRIVE ON OUTDOOR SUCCESS

By Meg O'Leary
Director, Montana Dept. of Commerce

Montana has more spectacular and unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48. This is one of the core pillars upon which Montana’s tourism brand rests. To be known around the world for this special attribute, and to be able to promote Montana as a premier destination for visitors, entrepreneurs and investors based on the promise of a unique visitor experience not available anywhere else, has not happened by accident. This outstanding accomplishment has been achieved through ongoing collaboration of state agencies, partners in conservation and economic development organizations, brand-minded businesses, policy makers, and a progressive tourism industry that places value on our unspoiled nature.

Montana’s landscapes and the opportunities they provide for a quality visitor experience are the largest contributing factors to the nearly 11 million tourists we welcome each year, generating nearly $4 billion annually and growing. This spending supports over 53,000 jobs across Montana and $1.3 billion in wages to Montana workers. Tourism is one of Montana’s leading industries, and it relies heavily on breathtaking landscapes, public land, and outdoor recreation opportunities to succeed.

First-time visitors come to Montana primarily to enjoy Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. The majority of those visitors will return again to Montana to explore more off-the-beaten path locations. The top activities in which warm season visitors participate, according to 2014 data from The NPD Group, Inc., are scenic drives, hiking, wildlife watching, visiting National Parks, monuments wilderness areas – all nature-based outdoor recreation activities. In 2014, 19 percent of winter travelers nationwide chose Montana as their destination, generating $1.3 billion, coming for the same primary purposes of scenic drives, outdoor activities like skiing, visiting the national parks, and wildlife watching.

We also see added revenue generated for the state through hunting and fishing based activities, which feed many local economies during shoulder seasons for travel. According to the summary of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks’ 2014 Statewide Estimates of Resident and Non-resident Hunter and Angler Expenditures, hunters and anglers in Montana spend nearly $1.3 billion annually on trip-related expenditures. This includes transportation, food beverage and lodging, as well as equipment and fees outside of license costs.

Montana’s landscapes, wildlife opportunities and recreation opportunities not only form the basis of the state’s tourism industry, but are also central tenants to attracting business and increasing income for residents. The Headwaters Economics report “West Is Best: Protected Lands Promote Jobs and Higher Incomes” (Dec 2012; http://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/west-is-best-value-of-public-lands), demonstrates that the national parks, monuments wilderness areas and other public lands we enjoy also offer a competitive advantage for attracting and growing high-tech and service industries, leading to more economic growth in key measurement areas compared to parts of the country without these protected lands. This includes higher rates of job growth and higher per-capita incomes in counties with a large number of acres of public lands (according to Headwaters Economics’ model, a county such as Gallatin can ascribe $2,655 of the per capita income to the presence of protected public lands). These companies are drawn here for the quality of life our landscapes and outdoor recreation opportunities provide.

We are always aware of the balance between economic growth and preserving the integrity of our natural landscapes. Through research and careful execution that stays true to the brand, we believe we can maximize economic growth through tourism and business development while maintaining our status of having the most unspoiled nature in the lower 48. Maintaining this balance will require us to work together to grow existing conservation-minded efforts and partnerships that help maintain the viability of our brand and the success of the industries that depend on it.

As Director of the Montana Department of Commerce, Meg O’Leary has dedicated herself to building Montana’s economy and creating good-paying jobs for Montana citizens by promoting the state as a premier tourism destination and an unparalleled place to do business.

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<th>MONTANA’S</th>
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<td>Provides $1.3 Billion in MT Wages</td>
<td>Supports 64,000 MT Jobs</td>
<td>Contributes $6 Billion to MT’s economy</td>
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Photo by Alec Underwood
POLITICAL EXTREMISTS TARGET POPULAR PROGRAM

FEDERAL LAND PROTECTION FUND STILL AT RISK

By MWF Staff

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has been one of our nation’s most successful conservation programs. The program puts aside a portion of federal revenue from offshore oil and gas drilling to fund land conservation. Over the last 50 years, LWCF has played a crucial role in protecting habitat and opening up public access.

Since 1964, LWCF has still resulted in about $16 billion in spending nationwide, protecting everything from backcountry national forest lands to urban parks. Montana has received over $400 million in funding from LWCF. These funds have protected important lands in the Blackfoot Valley, on the Rocky Mountain Front, in the Greater Yellowstone region, and all over the state. LWCF funds have also been used to acquire key parcels that open up large areas of “land-locked” public land for hunting and fishing.

It’s no surprise that the LWCF is hugely popular with Montanans. Hunters, anglers, and other outdoor recreationists value the access the program provides, and businesses value the economic activity that results from hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities on public land.

Despite the huge benefits of LWCF – at no cost to taxpayers – it remains a target for political criticism. Although the program enjoys bipartisan support in Congress, a small group of ideological activists oppose the acquisition of any public land. As a result, the LWCF’s formal legal authorization expired in September, and funding for the program remains at-risk.

In October, Congressman Rob Bishop (R-Utah), the Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, introduced a bill that would radically change LWCF. Among other things, Bishop’s plan would almost completely end funding for projects that seek to conserve wildlife habitat and expand public access, while diverting LWCF funds to pay for oil and gas permitting.

Montana’s congressional delegation strongly supports LWCF, following a tough reauthorization fight in September. Senator Jon Tester, Senator Steve Daines, and Congressman Ryan Zinke have all co-sponsored a bill (S. 338/H.R. 1814) that would permanently authorize the LWCF. Senator Tester is also a cosponsor of S. 890, which would both permanently authorize and fully fund the program.

With the clock ticking, Montanans’ hunters, anglers, hikers, and other outdoorspeople are watching to see if Congress can get the job done on reauthorizing LWCF. Our state’s unmatched recreational access – and our $6 billion outdoor economy – depend on it.

THE MONTANA OUTDOOR HALL OF FAME

HONORING CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS

By MWF Staff

Over the last two years, 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 and sustain the Montana Outdoor Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame was created to 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 was honored in an induction ceremony on December 6, 2014. Future inductions will happen every other year. Nominations for the second round of inductees are being accepted until December 31, 2015, with the next inductees being selected and honored towards the end of 2016.

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 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.

Help us continue to recognize and honor those who’ve worked so hard to make sure that Montana remains a state of healthy lands and waters, teeming with wildlife, with unmatched access and opportunity. Go online today and make a nomination. The window for the next round of honorees ends December 31.

Nominations can be made online at https://www.mtoutdoorlegacy.org/projects/montanaoutdoorhalloffame.
By Bill Geer
MWF Board Member

The Montana Wildlife Federation has for eight decades stood up for abundant wildlife, healthy habitat and public hunting opportunity. As part of that, MWF has been a leader in protecting our public lands, places that offer world-class wildlife habitat and equal opportunity for all Montanans to hunt.

Recently MWF debated the proposal by the N-Bar Ranch in Fergus County, which is owned by the Wilks Brothers, to trade roughly 4,868 acres of Bureau of Land Management public lands, including 2,785 acres of the Durfee Hills, for 5,100 acres of Wilks’ land that includes the former 2,243-acre Anchor Ranch in Blaine County. MWF voted to oppose the land trade.

It’s important to note that MWF is not opposed to land trades and public land sales that can benefit wildlife, habitat and public hunting. Montana is rife with examples of major land deals that have had public benefit. For example, land trades in the upper Gallatin River drainage blocked up large areas of public lands that are prime wildlife habitat. Many other carefully planned land trades have helped block up public lands and improve public access.

But in every case, it must be determined whether a land trade would benefit the public. And in this case, clearly it would not. MWF looked at the proposal on a value-for-value basis that considered several criteria, including the quality of the habitat; presence of huntable populations of wildlife including elk, mule deer and sage grouse; and public access and hunting opportunity.

The Anchor Ranch, a small isolated parcel of the much larger N-Bar Ranch, didn’t come close in terms of wildlife habitat to the Durfee Hills. The Anchor Ranch is essentially a sagebrush plain with little big game security habitat and relatively few big game animals. In contrast, the Durfee Hills contain superb wildlife habitat.

It’s true that the Durfee Hills are accessible primarily by air at this time. But in recent years, more and more hunters are accessing the area via airplane for a relatively affordable fee. The area has had roughly 200 elk hunter days per year, and high success rates, according to data from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

The hunting district that encompasses the Durfee Hills has an elk population of more than 5,200. Roughly 2,000 of those elk inhabit the Durfee Hills at some time of the year. In addition, the Durfee Hills are the only remaining federal lands available for public big game hunting in Herd Unit 530, and are the core habitat for an elk herd that has provided 1,120 to 2,563 public elk hunter-use days over a decade.

One of the arguments to make the land trade was to open the Bullwhacker Road, which leads to the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument south of the Anchor Ranch and the hunting opportunities it offers. However, that area is already accessible by boat on the river, as well as farther upstream via some roads.

A final reason to retain the Durfee Hills and the other parcels of nearby BLM public lands is to continue the public use and hunting access to a pair of state land sections that adjoin the federal lands there.

It is not in the interest of the public to trade away some of the best wildlife habitat in Montana. Land trades with private landowners have offered some solid benefits to the public over the years, but this would one would not. The BLM should reject this offer and keep the Durfee Hills in public ownership for the public to enjoy.

Bill Geer is a retired wildlife biologist and a board member of the Montana Wildlife Federation. Contact him at whygeer@bridgemail.com
LEAVING A LEGACY FOR MONTANA’S WILDLIFE

WHY PLANNED GIVING?

Planned giving means leaving a portion of your estate to a nonprofit organization to help ensure their long-term stability. Your donation would allow a nonprofit organization such as the Montana Wildlife Federation to continue to serve outdoorsmen and women across the Treasure State. As a donor, there are many benefits such as tax incentives, income, and the feeling of satisfaction your donation offers.

You do not have to be wealthy to participate in planned giving. The benefits of planned giving are available at any income level. Even a modest donation can contribute to MWF’s endowment funds, helping sustain the work you care about for years to come.

Your gift helps ensure your children and your children’s children can enjoy the access to wildlife, water, and public lands that we value today.

LEAVING A LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Including MWF in your estate planning is one of the most important ways you can support our work to protect Montana’s abundant fish and wildlife, natural lands and waters, and public access for future generations.

LET US THANK YOU

If you have included MWF in your estate plans, please let us know! We want to thank you for your gift and make sure that we understand the purpose of your gift.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more, call MWF at 406-458-0227 or send an email to giving@mtwf.org.
**MWF RAFFLES & SWEEPSTAKES**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS**

Chris Bond and her dog checking out their new Reliable Tent and Teepee Wall Tent. Reliable Tent and Teepee will be donating another wall tent to be raffled off in 2016. Stop by MWF live events to get your tickets!

Thanks to the Montana Game Wardens Association for donating a Tikka T-3 lite for our new-members drawing. And congratulations to John Kovach for joining MWF and winning!

John Larson of Wisconsin was the lucky winner of the Get Fired Up Rifle Sweepstakes. Pictured left is Jon holding his new Browning 1895 .30-06.

To celebrate MWF’s upcoming 80 years of conservation leadership, we’ll be hosting a variety of raffles and sweepstakes in the upcoming year! Watch for them at montanawildlife.org/promotions

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**WELCOME OUR NEWEST STAFF MEMBER**

Jill Feldhusen has joined the Montana Wildlife Federation our Climate Change Outreach Assistant. Based in Helena, Jill will be reaching out to local hunters, anglers, and other wildlife enthusiasts to understand how they are affected by climate change.

Jill grew up in Idaho and has a degree in Political Science and International Development from the University of Montana. After graduation, she didn’t want to leave the beauty and unique lifestyle of Montana. Jill has since worked as a field organizer for congressional campaigns, and lobbied with Montana Audubon during the 64th Legislative Session.

Jill loves the outdoors and particularly enjoys backpacking, fly-fishing, and skiing. Additionally, she enjoys reading, spending time with any dog, and lots of coffee.

Jill is excited to bring her passion for organizing and outdoor conservation to the Montana Wildlife Federation.

You can reach Jill at 208-721-1442 or at jill@mtwf.org

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**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 others around the nation.

Montana Wildlife is published quarterly by the Montana Wildlife Federation, PO Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624-1175. Third Class postage paid at Helena, MT. Advertising, editorial, subscription and membership correspondence should be mailed to the above address.

Montana Wildlife is the official membership publication of Montana Wildlife Federation. Subscriptions to Montana Wildlife are available for $35 per year.

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**WESTERN WILDLIFE HABITATS AT STAKE**

**INDUSTRY WOBBLES AND FEDS STUDY OPTIONS**

By Ron Moody

The Rocky Mountain West is a landscape of ‘favorite places’ for hunters, anglers and other recreationists. From goat hunters and rock climbers in the snowy peaks to the anglers and hikers in the river valleys our ‘favorite West’ is the surface of lands and waters - what we can see, feel, and enjoy as we enter the ‘great outdoors.’

Use of fossil energy sources such as coal, oil and gas may be fundamental to our industrial civilization, but it comes at the cost of sacrificing some of the surface land and water needed for hunting, fishing, ranching, and farming.

From the 19th Century birth of the conservation movement, conservationists have struggled with how to discipline mineral resource extraction to minimize the loss of natural landscapes and wildlife habitats while still allowing industry to deliver the raw materials of prosperity.

2016 promises to be a pivotal year in the coal industry in the West – primarily the Powder River Basin of Wyoming and Montana. Coal use for domestic energy is declining sharply as utilities switch to natural gas, and renewable energy for domestic energy is declining sharply as utilities switch to natural gas, and renewable energy for domestic energy is declining sharply as utilities switch to natural gas, and renewable energy for domestic energy is declining sharply as utilities switch to natural gas, and renewable energy for domestic energy is declining sharply.

The iconic game species of the American West are in perilous decline, as migratory animals lose ground to energy development and habitat destruction in Southeast Montana and Northeast Wyoming,” according to a report just issued by the National Wildlife Federation and the Natural Resource Defense Council.

So what are hunters and anglers to do? Evolving energy markets appear to be taking the “business as usual” option off the table. The time seems right to make changes while understanding that the nation will demand some use of fossil fuels for decades to come.

In mid-November I traveled to Washington DC as MWF’s sportsman representative along with Montana ranchers and landowners to deliver a list of reforms for the federal coal program. The trip was organized by the Northern Plains Resource Council, which has long fought to protect Southeastern Montana from coal mining.

We met with senators, representatives, their staffs as well as senior officers of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Office of Surface Mining.

Shaking hands with flesh and blood people who otherwise are newsprint abstractions to Montana residents is the point of the long flights to the nation’s capital. Some meetings with House and Senate staffs are cordial but formal. Meeting with Senator Jon Tester in his Hart Senate Office Building suite is emotionally indistinguishable from sitting down at the kitchen table of his Big Sandy farm home.

The White House executives with whom we met were sincerely interested in the opportunity open to the Obama Administration to start a process to update and reform mining of federally-owned coal out West.

My part of the message is straight forward: in places like Montana, the coal miner who is worried about his or her job and the hunter worried about game populations often are one and the same person. The time is ripe to stop treating wildlife and their habitats as throw-away externalities removed in the same way top soil is scraped away to expose a coal seam.

Intelligent federal business planning can shrink the impacts of energy production without being the limiting factor of industry profits. But the plan for protecting the well-being of people should, for the first time, be in the front of action and not the afterthought of historic precedents. The hunter and angler in Montana has a lot at stake in how coal production is managed in the future.

Right now some 287,442 acres (450 square miles) of former prairie wildlife habitat is now a moonscape of coal strip mines. To date, less than 30,000 acres have been fully reclaimed. Weak state government make it likely very little of those 450 square miles will ever be home to deer and antelope again. I won’t even start on the effects on water.

Less well known to the public but critical to our outdoor heritage is the fact that a great deal of what we think of a “private land” in western states is only private on the surface. Hundreds of thousands of acres of “private land” sits on top of subsurface minerals owned separately by the federal government in an arrangement known as “split estate.”

So the hunter who thinks coal mining can only happen on BLM land may someday be unhappily surprised to see his favorite block managed by state government ranch also go under the big shovel.

And ranchers who depend on BLM grazing leases stand to see their business model fail as energy development displaces livestock grazing on split-estate lands.

Hunters, anglers and ranchers are all in the same boat when it comes to the need for reforming the federal coal program.

Ron Moody is a former MWF Board member, former Fish and Wildlife Commissioner; lifelong conservationist, and well-known rabble rouser in Lewistown, MT. Contact him at couleeking@hotmail.com.