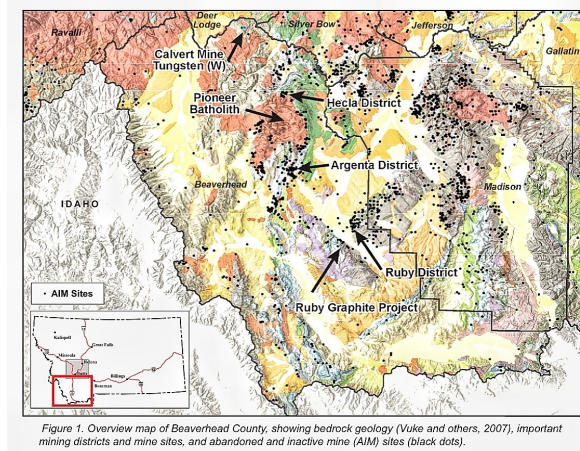


Subject:

FW: Missouri Headwaters Conservation Area land grab



- **October 23, 6-8pm in Butte at the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives Building, 17 W. Quartz St, Butte, MT 59701**

The final public meeting with the USFWS is scheduled for this evening!

American Stewards has done extensive research on the Biden 30 x 30 plan and the designation of massive swaths of land as Conservation Areas under the disguise of protecting open space and wildlife connectivity when in fact this effort is for more federal government control and federal land acquisition.

<https://americanstewards.us>

Designation of nearly 5.8 million acres in the Missouri Headwaters Conservation Area (MHCA) will be done without Congressional approval or support from local governments or the citizens who live and work in the area. In the case of the MHCA, the USFWS coordinated behind closed doors with the Nature Conservancy and the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership for years to create a plan to remove people from the land and elevate the importance of wildlife above human presence. Conservation Areas are managed by the Service as Wildlife Management Areas and all other uses

become subordinate to wildlife and wildlife habitat.

American Stewards has exposed the Biden 30 x 30 land grab scheme and shown the true agenda behind this effort in destroying rural America and removing people from the land and access to our natural resources.

<https://americanstewards.us/biden-administration-targets-5-8-million-acres-in-mt-for-30x30/>

Designation of this area as a “Conservation Area” will elevate the importance of fish and wildlife above multiple use. The uses affected include:

- Agriculture – Grazing leases, fencing, livestock/cattle guards, weed management, predator management, water containment and conveyance facilities.
- Energy Development – Transmission corridors, renewables/oil & gas leases
- Mineral/mining claims for exploration and development
- Timber sales and leases
- Road/trail maintenance and construction

When access to our public lands and resources are removed or curtailed, dependence on foreign nations for our critical minerals and resources increases. Many of these foreign countries are not favorable nations. Access to our critical minerals are not the only resources that would be affected but access to grazing, timber, water, and recreation would also be negatively affected. More regulations and restrictions would apply to these areas as the priority goal of Wildlife Management Areas is for wildlife and wildlife habitat. Lack of access for multiple use of these lands would severely impact small communities and decrease local government’s ability to provide critical services in their communities.

The purpose of the MHCA and 5.8 million acres of newly designated land in SW Montana is not about providing money from the LWCF to purchase conservation easements on private land. Rather, the true agenda is to remove people from the land and take control of private property. Conservation Easements, through agreements, result in the property owner becoming subservient to the land trust or holder of the easement, which in the case of the MHCA is the federal government.

As stated by American Stewards, wealthy out of state buyers are using the tax benefits to purchase large parcels of land in Montana. We have seen large ranches in Montana purchased by wealthy out of state interests using the benefits of conservation easements and close these properties to all public access. Some of these new owners are not interested in continuing the use as a working ranch but rather leaving them in a natural state and reducing the tax receipts to counties. The reduced tax base affects all citizens of the county and the ability of the counties to provide essential services to their residents.

The counties targeted within this new Conservation Area are rural counties. All are currently supported by agriculture, timber resources, mining, oil and gas

development, and recreation. According to the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology's surveys, this area contains major amounts of Montana's critical minerals, which are in high demand. The area has thousands of mining claims and several large mine operations which would likely be adversely affected under this plan.

Nearly 70% of all proposed timber sales in Montana are currently in litigation. Our forests are full of dead and down timber creating a crisis of fuel load ready to burn. Catastrophic fires pollute our air with deadly carcinogens, sterilize the soil, add massive amounts of sedimentation to our streams and rivers, and destroy wildlife and wildlife habitat. The Conservation Area designation would add another tool for extreme environmental organizations to use in litigating any type of active forest management, as well as mining.

The grazing of cattle on public lands also reduces fuel loads and naturally adds nutrients to the soil. Much of the water resources used by agriculture are located on these public lands. Reservoirs and water conveyance facilities need maintenance and a new level of review by the USFWS would be required if any maintenance would occur for these facilities. Review of federal grazing permits by the USFWS could prevent renewal of these leases because of the new management guidelines of the Conservation Area. Loss of federal grazing permits in these rural counties could destroy a ranch operation and reduce the tax receipts to the counties.

In Montana we have seen a downward pressure on resource development including mining and timber through litigation by environmental organizations. Most mills are gone, and mining permits have nearly been litigated out of existence. The counties located in this area are becoming more dependent on outdoor recreation to survive but the federal land management agencies have continued to close access to these public lands. A study completed by the Montana legislature in 2016 showed the Forest Service alone has closed nearly 22,000 miles of roads in Montana since the mid-1990s.

The new Conservation Area designation will result in more loss of access for recreation as the USFWS will elevate the importance of wildlife above recreational access in this area. The primary management tool for management of wildlife populations, by the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, is through hunting and trapping quotas, permits, licenses, and drawings. More loss of access to this area for hunting will severely impact the Montana FWP in their ability to manage our wildlife populations. Hunting and fishing, along with motorized and mechanized outdoor recreation is a large economic driver to the counties and small communities in the targeted area. Again, the environmental groups will use this Conservation Area as another tool when litigating new Forest Management Plans, Travel Plans and BLM Land Management Plans resulting in closing more public access.

Montana has seen an influx of out of state buyers and the use of the tax benefits of Conservation Easements in purchasing large acreages. Many of these out of state buyers have closed the historic access once provided to the public. They have installed locked gates to prevent access to our public lands on roads that were historically open and used but never formally recorded, or

in many cases the records were lost or not easy to find. Many have resulted in long court battles on a single access. Out of state buyers are not connected to the ground and have no generational knowledge of this area of Montana.

The 3 public meetings that have been held in Montana by the USFWS have been attended by hundreds of people, the vast majority of which have voiced strong opposition to the MHCA. While the USFWS and their NGO partners responsible for writing the plan have claimed strong local support, the attendees of these 3 meetings tell a completely different story. This plan is not supported by local residents, local governments or even state government agencies. This flawed plan is a top-down overreach by the USFWS. The USFWS and their NGO partners are deceiving the public in thinking this is a good deal for Montana. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What You Can Do to Help Stop the Land Grab

1. Call Congress:

Call your congressman and request they offer a floor amendment to the Interior Appropriations bill that:

Prohibits Funding for Conservation Areas.

Rescinds the Land and Water Conservation Funds.

Defunds Every Action the Biden Administration is Using to Implement 30x30!

2. Call your State Representatives:

Ask them to establish a 10 percent rule in your State, preventing additional conservation easements, conservation programs, federal land acquisitions, or foreign land purchases in counties with 10 percent or more of its land already in one or a combination of these devices.

These devices erode our property rights, devalue the tax base, and prevent our local governments from properly funding our schools, hospitals, emergency services, infrastructure, and public services.

This policy will help protect your community if the Service attempts to create a conservation area in your region.

3. Send an Email to USFWS:

Email MOHWCA@fws.gov and submit a comment to the official record with the following message:

The Missouri Headwaters Conservation Area proposed plan is a “major federal action that significantly impacts the human environment” and therefore requires the preparation of an “Environmental Impact Statement” under the National Environmental Policy Act. This must be completed unless the plan is immediately rescinded.

Dig Deeper

Learn more about the Natural Asset Scheme: [Monetizing the Air we Breathe](#)

Learn how Conservation Easements extinguish private property rights: [Conservation Easement or Servitude](#)

Read the USFWS public notice on the [Missouri Headwaters Conservation Area](#).

Biden's 30 x 30 plan is also hurting the people in Wyoming.

Sens. Lee, Romney say BLM's 'outrageous land grab' in Wyoming will hurt Utah's grazing, energy needs.

The two Utah Republicans join Wyoming senators in opposing the BLM's plan for the Rock Springs Field Office, which manages 3.6 million acres in southwestern Wyoming.

By Anastasia Hufham

| Oct. 20, 2023, 5:59 a.m.

Sens. Mike Lee and Mitt Romney don't only oppose federal land protections in Utah. They've taken their fight to Wyoming.

On Wednesday, Lee and Romney announced that they'd joined Wyoming Sens. John Barrasso and Cynthia Lummis in condemning what they call an "outrageous" Bureau of Land Management proposal in Utah's neighboring state. The four Republican senators sent a **letter** dated Oct. 12 to BLM Director Tracey Stone-Manning expressing their concerns.

In August, the BLM released its draft resource management plan for the Rock Springs Field Office, which covers 3.6 million acres in southwestern Wyoming. The proposal designates 1.8 million acres as **Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**, which, according to the BLM, are "areas within the public lands where special management attention is required." Lands with this designation are closed to oil and gas leasing, mining, motorized vehicle and grazing on a case-by-case basis, as delineated in the **draft resource management plan**.

It's this designation, and the resulting curtailment of those activities, that Utah's senators most strongly protest.

"Land in Utah — and throughout the American West — is best managed by communities and the people closest to it — not unelected, federal bureaucrats," Sen. Romney said in an email to The Salt Lake Tribune. "The Bureau of Land Management's Rock Springs Draft Resource Management Plan will have major repercussions for Utah's ranchers in the Uintah Basin, who utilize the land for grazing, as well as many of Utah's communities who rely on natural gas power coming from Wyoming."

Romney pointed out that nearly two-thirds of land in Utah is owned by the federal government. The only state with a higher percentage of federal land is Nevada.

Lee's office expressed similar concerns.

"The BLM's unilateral decision to disregard local input and lock up 1.8 million acres threatens the livelihood of Utah ranchers who have depended on grazing allotments in this area for generations," Billy Gribbin, Lee's communications director, wrote in an email to The Tribune. "This plan will also hinder electric transmission and natural gas supplies that Utah depends on for its energy needs. It is a flagrant violation of the BLM's multiple-use mandate and yet another example of the Biden Administration's contempt for hardworking communities across the West."

In May of this year, Sens. Lee and Romney **wrote a letter opposing** the Biden administration's proposed "**Public Lands Rule**," which stands to treat conservation as a use of public lands just like grazing, mining and recreation.

The senators' opposition to the BLM's Rock Springs Field Office draft resource management plan echoes many of their issues with Biden's Public Lands Rule. "It's clear that anti-grazing and anti-development organizations would abuse

this tool to attempt to halt ranching and block access to our nation's abundant energy reserves located on public lands," the [letter from May](#) read.

Sens. Barrasso, Lee, Lummis and Romney ask the BLM to revise its resource management plan for the Rock Springs Field Office, specifically the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

The letter argues that the BLM has used these designations to "restrict recreational demands, obliterate grazing rights, and hinder economic development in lower-income communities" without a standardized format.

The senators call for a new proposal that "takes into consideration stakeholders and local partners in Wyoming and Utah."

And the BLM seems to be listening.

On Thursday, the BLM announced that it was [extending the public comment period](#) for the Rock Springs Field Office draft management plan until Jan. 17, 2024. Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon asked for the extension so that Wyoming residents and other stakeholders would have more time to give feedback.

"A lot of work happens between a draft plan and a final plan, and that work is best informed by people who roll up their sleeves to work together," Stone-Manning said in a statement. "We are committed to doing that work to finalize the final plan."

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