



MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

WILD

MONTANA

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WINTER 2017

**HISTORY MADE OVER
THE LONG HAUL IN THE
BADGER-TWO MEDICINE**



MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

Montana Wilderness Association works with communities to protect Montana's wilderness heritage, quiet beauty, and outdoor traditions, now and for future generations.

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STEADFAST DEDICATION TO THE PLACES WE HOLD DEAR

Cradled between Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness, the Badger-Two Medicine is a prime example of what makes Montana so special. Meadows sprawl up the sides of hovering mountains, gin-clear streams brush the bottoms of craggy limestone cliffs, and dense stands of fir and aspen swoop down onto the prairie below. The Badger is vital habitat for grizzly bears, Canada lynx, wolverines, west-slope cutthroat trout, and all the other species that make the Crown of the Continent ecosystem so extravagantly wild.

But whereas the Blackfeet people see a sacred homeland and others see a place of wild beauty, some have pictured oil wells and private profit. With this picture in mind, the Department of the Interior under Secretary James Watt issued dozens of oil and gas leases in the Badger in the 1980s.

It took 35 years, but together we finally got rid of the last 18 remaining leases this year. Thanks to your passion and commitment, the Badger-Two Medicine remains wild.

MWA has played a pivotal role in the saga of the Badger-Two Medicine since the leases were issued 35 years ago. The saga has taken many harrowing turns over the years and will no doubt continue to do so over the next four years, as we now face a presidential administration and Congress that could try to roll back decades of conservation gains.

In spite of the results of the 2016 election, we remain hopeful and resolute. That's because our values – clean water, abundant wildlife, healthy forests, and access to public lands – are Montana's values, and those values transcend the current, bitter state of American politics. The fight 35-year fight to save the Badger-Two Medicine is proof of that.

At the beginning of this new and challenging chapter, we welcome Mark Hanson as MWA's new state council president. A South Dakota native, Mark first discovered his love for wilderness working in Glacier National Park at age 20. After earning a doctorate in ethics, he found his way back to Montana in 2000 and has been exploring the state by foot and Nordic skis ever since. He teaches at the University of Montana in Missoula and, together with his spouse Kara, helps their almost-two-year-old daughter Lena discover the wonders of the wild world every day. Thanks to MWA and our partners, she'll be able to visit the wild and sacred Badger-Two Medicine for years to come.



Brian Sybert, MWA Executive Director



Mark Hanson, Council President

WILD MONTANA

WINTER 2017

THE BADGER-TWO MEDICINE

After a 35-year struggle, the threat of industrial development no longer hangs over this special area. On the cover: A view of the Badger-Two Medicine



PICTURE WILD MONTANA

See winning photos from MWA's 2016 photo contest

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UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

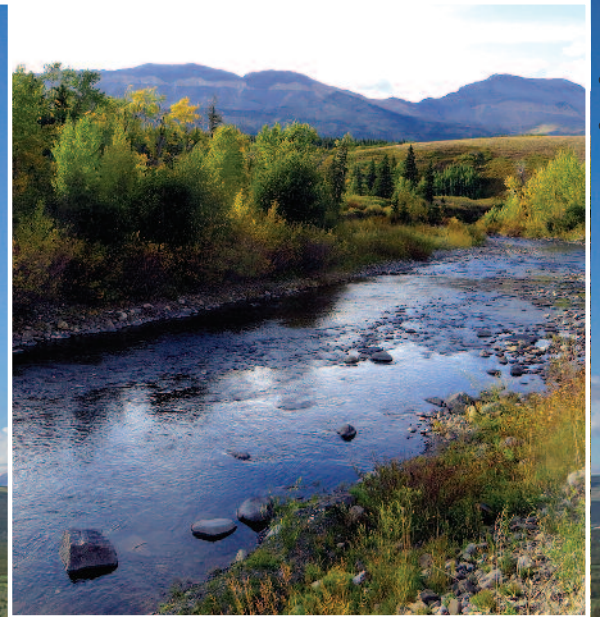
The latest from MWA's on-the-ground work around the state

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THE LONG HAUL

The cancellation of the last remaining oil and gas leases in the Badger-Two Medicine marks a pinnacle in the 35-year battle to save the area from industrial development



Gene Senitz

Someone once said that public land conservation is the work of a lifetime. Our nation's legal, administrative, and political processes move at a glacial, grinding pace. Lasting victories for our public lands are few and far between, and the fight to protect these places requires, if nothing else, a great deal of patience and persistence.

All of which makes the decision by the US Department of the Interior to cancel the last remaining oil and gas leases in the Badger-Two Medicine worth celebrating. In November Devon Energy, holder of 15 Badger leases, voluntarily retired its leases at a ceremony at the Department of the Interior. The department cancelled the final two remaining leases on January 10, 2017.

continued

Top: South Fork Two Medicine River

Full page: Hiking into the Badger-Two Medicine

Rosanna Morris



Top: A 1986 protest against oil and gas development in the Badger, with the author in lower right-hand corner

Middle: The Badger is vital habitat for grizzly bears

Bottom: Blackfoot tipis at a Badger-Two Medicine gathering

Individuals make a difference; individuals working together over the long haul make history.

We cannot yet claim that the threat of industrial development in the Badger has been totally removed, since one of the lease cancellations is still being challenged in court. We can nonetheless count the cancellations as a major victory, and, like most great conservation victories, this one's been a long time coming.

Back in 1986, I was a 23-year-old transplanted Midwestern kid attending the University of Montana. To this day, I remember my first visit to the Badger-Two Medicine, gazing dumbfounded at peaks named after mythic Blackfeet heroes – Feather Woman, Morningstar, Scarface and Poia – as a fierce October wind gnawed at my face and brought tears to my eyes. Equally vivid are memories of another cold day that same autumn, this time on the University of Montana Oval, when hundreds of us – Blackfeet tribal members, UM students, and seasoned conservationists – marched in solidarity to the sound of a Blackfeet drum as we protested plans to open up the Badger-Two Medicine to oil and gas development.

Of course, that day in Missoula is just a snapshot – one event in a prolonged battle that was already raging and would continue well into the future. By that time, the federal government had already issued leases to Solenex, Chevron, Fina, and others. Opponents, in turn, had responded with lawsuits challenging those leases.

By 1986, MWA's John Gatchell and Lou Bruno had been fighting the battle for more than a decade – pursuing legal challenges, fighting bad forest plans, and seeking protective designations for the Badger-Two Medicine.

After a few quiet years, the battle heated up again in the early 1990s when the oil and gas industry redoubled its efforts to drill the Badger. Gatchell and MWA members Gene Sentz and Roy Jacobs sounded the alarm and rallied supporters on behalf of the Badger and other endangered areas further south on the Rocky Mountain Front, including Deep Creek and the Blackleaf.

Then, in 1997, something amazing happened – something that was all but unthinkable even five or ten years earlier. Then-Lewis and Clark National Forest Supervisor Gloria Flora issued her landmark decision to put a moratorium on all future oil and gas leasing on Forest Service lands along the Rocky Mountain Front, including the Badger-Two Medicine. With that bold and courageous act, the tide turned. Her decision opened the door for the string of victories that followed: legislation enacted to withdraw federal oil and gas leases on the Front (2006), a non-motorized travel plan for the Badger-Two Medicine (2009), and passage of the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act (2014).

Despite these important victories, the Badger-Two Medicine still remained threatened by the specter of oil and gas development from a handful of remaining leaseholders. That threat became a tangible reality in 2013 when Solenex sued the federal government to lift the long-held suspension of its Hall Creek lease. Even this threat became an opportunity, however, by forcing the federal government to re-examine the original leases and draw the inescapable conclusion that not only the Solenex lease, but all 18 remaining leases in the Badger-Two Medicine, were issued illegally and needed to be removed once and for all.

The cancellation of all remaining oil and gas leases in the Badger-Two Medicine is an incredible victory for this landscape and the people who have worked so hard to protect it. As MWA members, we've been hard at work protecting wild places like the Badger-Two Medicine since 1958, and we'll be at it for a long time to come – long after I'm dead and gone. For me, that too is something to celebrate – a little taste of immortality!

Individuals make a difference; individuals working together over the long haul make history.

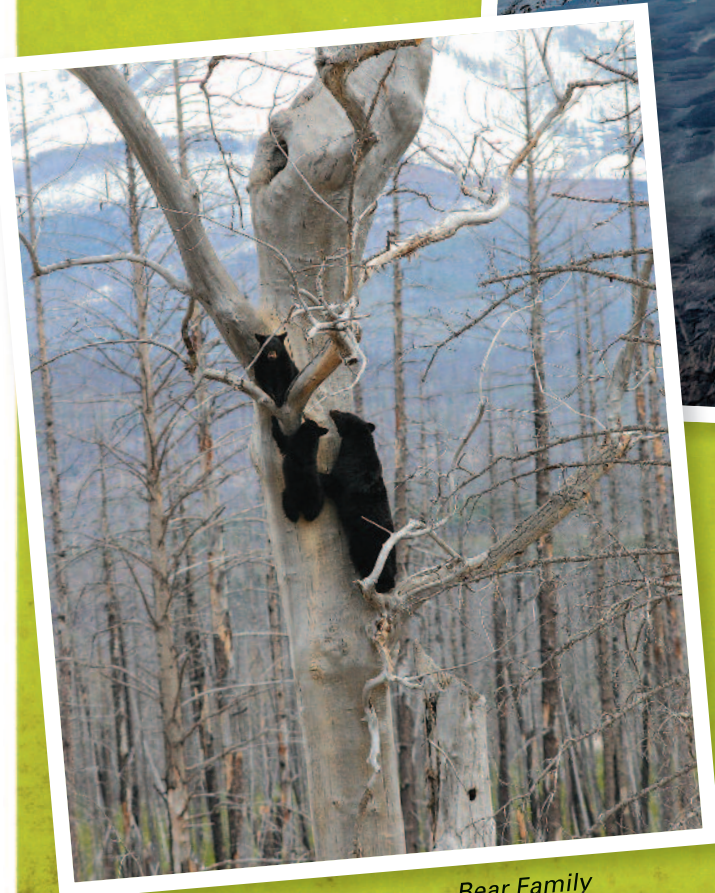
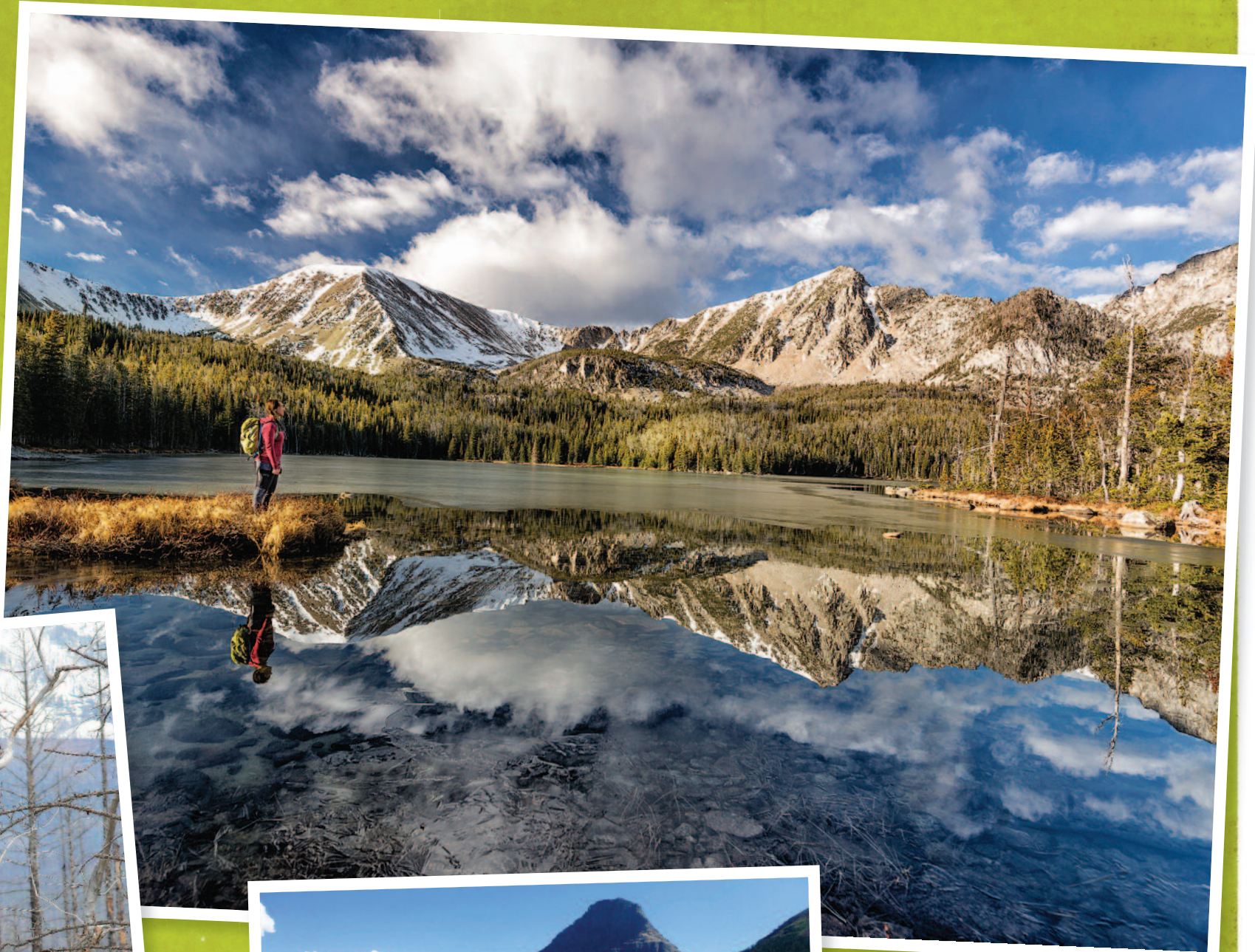
– *Scott Friskics served as MWA's president from 2013 to 2014. He is director of Sponsored Programs at Aaniiih Nakoda College.*

MONTANA IN ALL HER BEAUTY

Our 2016 Picture Wild Montana photo contest drew more than 1,000 wonderful submissions capturing our state's beauty, from peaks to prairie.

We thank everyone who submitted and congratulate the winners.

Here are some of the winning photos.



Bear Family
Cindy Houk
Overall Popular Vote



*Thompson Fire in
Glacier National Park*
Bridger Donaldson
First Place, Youth

*Hollowtop Lake,
Tobacco Root Mountains*
David Wells
First Place, Adult





*White Cliffs, Upper Missouri
River Breaks National Monument*
Roland Taylor
Third Place, Adult



*Lake McDonald Aurora,
Glacier National Park*
Erin Braaten
Second Place, Adult



Wind Sculptured Tree Trunk
Ruby Jennings
Second Place, Youth



Hebgen Lake Sunrise
Fiona Daley
Third Place, Youth





UPDATES FROM THE FIELD



A FAIR DEAL FOR TEN LAKES

Located near the Canadian border on the western side of the Whitefish Range, the 34,000-acre Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area (WSA) provides important wildlife habitat and incredible opportunities for solitude and quiet recreation. This ecologically-rich area is also vital habitat for lynx, grizzly bear, wolverine, fisher, wolf, and, until the mid-1980s, woodland caribou.

Woven into a larger network of wild country, Ten Lakes provides connectivity to the Whitefish Range and Glacier National Park. And it's the only area in the Kootenai National Forest where grizzly bears are thriving, making this a crucial area for the struggling grizzly populations in the nearby Yaak and Cabinet Mountains.

The Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 designated Ten Lakes as a WSA and directed the U.S. Forest Service to preserve the area's wilderness character and maintain its potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (which only Congress can do).

Unfortunately, the Kootenai National Forest has failed to meet both of these requirements. Not only has it increased motorized use in the WSA to a level that far exceeds what existed there in 1977, it also has started allowing mechanized use.

The recently released draft travel plan for the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area (WSA) admits these failures but falls far short of restoring wilderness character. It allows over 60% of the WSA to remain open to motorized and mechanized use, undermining any potential for a congressionally designated wilderness in the future and placing recreational uses ahead of wilderness values. What makes this travel plan all the more egregious is that 90 percent of the entire Kootenai Forest is already open to motorized and mechanized use. Ten Lakes need not be as well.

In January and earlier this month, we generated hundreds of comments to the Forest Service in support of keeping Ten Lakes wild. We won't back down from defending this important area.

For the latest on Ten Lakes and other places we're working to protect, visit our public lands blog, Wild Word, at wildmontana.org/wild-word.

— Amy Robinson, northwest Montana field director

Ten Lakes
Scenic Area from
Green Mountain



A GOOD START TO PROTECTING WILDLANDS IN THE HELENA-LEWIS & CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

The newly combined Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest (HLCNF) recently released a draft forest plan, also referred to as the "proposed action," for the future management of the 2.8-million acre forest. The Forest includes the Rocky Mountain Front, Big Belts, Little Belts, Elkhorns, Big Snowies, Highwoods, and many other beloved public lands stretching from Lincoln to Lewistown and East Glacier Park to Townsend.

Throughout the multi-year forest planning process, the Forest Service will make crucial decisions about secure habitat, clean headwaters, and quiet recreation on one of Montana's wildest and most diverse national forests.

It is critical that those who cherish wildlands get involved and provide feedback to the Forest Service on the draft HLCNF plan by March 31.

The draft plan and accompanying documents include hundreds of pages addressing forest-wide management goals for everything from timber to wildlife habitat to recreation. The forest has also proposed specific management direction for each of the ten geographic areas, which include the Rocky Mountain Front, the Highwoods, the northern Crazies, and the vital Continental Divide corridor running through the Upper Blackfoot and Divide areas.

Overall, we think the draft plan is a great starting point. The draft recommends nine areas for Wilderness, including several important places that have never been recommended before, such as 95,095 acres of the Big Snowy Mountains and the 51,021-acre Nevada Mountain area between Helena and Lincoln. The HLCNF is also proposing to preserve the opportunity for Congress to officially designate Wilderness in the future, by not allowing non-Wilderness recreational uses (such as ATVs, snowmobiles, and mountain bikes) in the 281,235 acres recommended for Wilderness in the draft plan.

Land managers have done an admirable job of incorporating public input into their decision-making so far, and we know that your comments will make a difference going forward.

For more information about the draft forest plan, how it compares to MWA's priorities, and how to comment, please visit wildmontana.org/wild-word or feel free to contact me at cperkins@wildmontana.org or 406-544-1093.

— Casey Perkins, Rocky Mountain Front field director

Hiking in the
Big Snowies





UPDATE FROM THE CAPITOL

AFTER MORE THAN A THOUSAND RALLY FOR PUBLIC LANDS IN HELENA, A TERRIBLE BILL IS WITHDRAWN

On January 30, more than a thousand Montanans squeezed into the capitol rotunda and demanded that our elected officials keep public lands in public hands. This was more than twice the number that attended the last public lands rally, held in 2015.

MWA led a coalition of conservation, sportsmen, and outdoor recreation groups in organizing the rally. The message we sent at the rally hit its mark. A few days after the rally, Utah Congressman Jason Chaffetz withdrew a bill that would have disposed of 3.3 million acres of public lands.

Speakers at the rally included Governor Steve Bullock, legendary mountaineer and rock climber Conrad Anker, Trout TV host Hilary Hutcheson, and C.E.O. of Simms fishing company K.C. Walsh. Sen. Jon Tester called into the rally while in transit to Washington, D.C.

Mary Hollow, executive director of Prickly Pear Land Trust and rally emcee, kicked off the rally by leading the crowd in a chant that electrified the building.

"Let's let them hear us down every hall in this building and all the way to Sanders County," she said. "Keep public lands in public hands! Keep public lands in public hands!" Hollow mentioned Sanders County because it's the home of Jennifer Fielder, CEO of American Lands Council and Montana's most infamous opponent of national public lands.

In her remarks, Hutcheson called public lands her "life blood" and urged mothers and fathers to raise their children – and especially their daughters – outside.

"If little girls are not allowed to [get] the dirt of public lands under their finger nails," she warned, "then we run the risk of losing those wild Montana women who make history."

Governor Steve Bullock spoke last and began his remarks with a rhetorical question: "We have 30 million acres [of public land] in Montana, and the beauty is we don't need permission to go on them, do we?"

The crowd offered a deafening "No!" in response. "These lands are our heritage," Bullock continued. "These lands are our birthright. These lands are one of

our great equalizers. The size of your checkbook does not define whether you have the right to access our streams and rivers, or whether you have the right to some of the finest hunting lands in the world because we all own them."

Bullock promised to veto any bill that even hinted at transferring American public lands to individual states. He also called on legislators to invest in the future of public lands and wildlife by supporting Habitat Montana, a popular state program that funnels revenue from out-of-state hunting licenses to protect imperiled wildlife habitat and create access to previously inaccessible public lands.

Sen. Tester spoke of the threats public lands face at the federal level, including the bill by Rep. Chaffetz and a House rules change that paves the way not just to sell off public lands but to give them away for free.

"People are trying to steal our public lands," he declared, "and we can't let that happen." The crowd erupted in approval.

"Thanks to the more than one thousand Montanans who showed up at the Rally for Public Lands on Monday and everyone else who has stood up for our outdoor way of life, 3.3 million acres of American public lands are no longer on the chopping block in Washington," MWA executive director Brian Sybert said on the day Chaffetz withdrew his bill. "We can expect more attacks on our public lands, but today we can celebrate a victory that is a testament to the power Montanans hold in defending our public lands heritage from those who want to steal it from us."

The rally was just the opening salvo in our fight this year to keep public lands in public hands and ensure that public lands aren't exploited for private gain. MWA will keep a close eye on our elected officials at the state and federal level and will let our members and supporters know when they need to act. In the meantime, stay informed by regularly visiting our public lands blog, Wild Word, at wildmontana.org/wild-word.

– Kayje Booker, state policy director

MEMBERS MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

Thanks to the new members who joined Montana Wilderness Association from October 1, 2016 to January 20, 2017.

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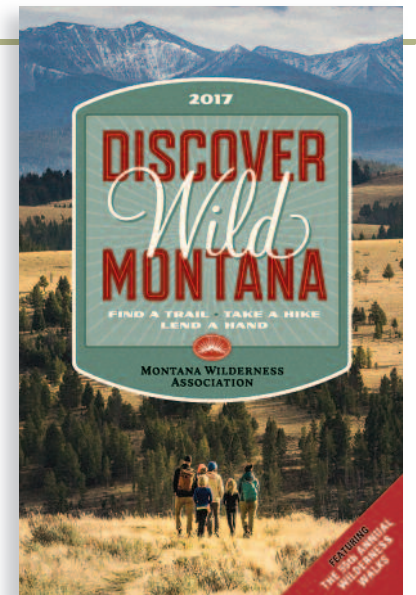
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Stephanie Wright

A special thanks to everyone who gave an end-of-year donation. We are deeply grateful for your steadfast investment in our mission as we work together to protect the wild places we love.

Coming in April!

Our new, full-color *Discover Wild Montana* publication will combine the best of our Wilderness Walks books, volunteer trail project offerings, online hiking guide highlights, and updates on our work from around Montana.



Just how **WILD** are you?

**Show us by joining
the Wild Bunch today**

Wild Bunch is MWA's monthly giving program. It provides a reliable base of financial support that helps us keep up the good work year-round and saves you from having to renew your membership each year.

You can make your monthly pledge in one of the two easy ways, either as an automatic credit card charge or as an automatic electronic funds transfers from your bank account. As long as the pledge is active, your membership in MWA will be automatically renewed.

To join the Wild Bunch, visit wildmontana.org and click on the DONATE tab to sign up for a monthly pledge. Or call Annie McLaughlin at 406-443-7350 ext. 111.

Thank you for your wild support.



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