

New Report: Public lands conservation in the Trump era



(Image: The Mountain Pact)



by **Press Pool**
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The Trump administration's policies are hurting western mountain communities

News Release

The Mountain Pact

President Trump and his administration have made rolling back critical environmental protections a focus of his presidency. A [report released today](#) by The Mountain Pact, takes a look at how Western mountain communities have been harmed by some of the Trump administration's policies both generally and with specific impacts to each of the 11 Western states. There are currently 84 [environmental rollbacks](#) being carried out under President Trump have significant impacts on Western mountain communities who depend on the national public lands out their backdoor.

By asserting "energy dominance" on America's public lands, appointing scandal-ridden former extractive industry and anti-public lands leaders to head key environmental agencies, limiting public input, destroying some of our country's bedrock environmental laws, and refusing to adequately fund our public lands, the administration is harming Western mountain communities. It's been made clear time and time again that rampant extraction; expanding greenhouse gas emissions that increase wildfire, drought, and reduce snowpack; and harming the economies of Western communities take precedence over public health, strong economies, outdoor recreation, wildlife conservation, clean air, and clean water.

Anna Peterson, Executive Director of The Mountain Pact said, "This report was alarming and heart-breaking to pull together. We know about, work on, and follow the slashed environmental protections that have been stacking up every day, but really looking at so many of the disastrous impacts in one place makes the Trump administration's assaults on our public lands over the last two years and eight months even more devastating. Over Labor Day weekend, many of us spent time on our great public lands recreating, relaxing, and appreciating our American public lands legacy. It's sickening that we will be dealing with the ruinous impacts of this administration's tragic greed and catastrophic short-sightedness for generations to come."

CALIFORNIA:

John Wentworth, Councilmember in Mammoth Lakes, California said, "For gateway communities who are so intertwined with their surrounding public lands, the government shutdown impacted economies and compromised public natural resources. In the Eastern Sierra, the health of public lands was threatened by neglect."

COLORADO:

Mayor of Glenwood Springs, Colorado, Jonathan Godes, said, "Our Western mountain communities, and communities like Glenwood Springs, are culturally and economically linked to the health of our public lands. The economic boost from increased public lands protection and improved outdoor access is real. We should care for and fund our public lands for the long-term so that future generations may continue to enjoy the amazing places that make our communities so special. When our leaders do not protect our public lands, they do not have the best interests of our communities in mind."

Todd Brown, Mayor Pro Tem of Telluride, Colorado, said, "Public land management decisions need to consider and include all the possible health, cultural, economic, and ecological impacts to nearby communities, including impacts due to climate change and to degradation or decreased public access to public lands. It is time we put funding behind management agencies and conservation programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund to ensure our public lands can be enjoyed by all; future generations and the health of America's public lands legacy depend on it."

Corinne Platt, Mayor of Ophir, Colorado, said, "'In Ophir, we value close access to public lands and clean air. However, our proximity to the Four Corners — a methane hotspot — threatens the clean air our kids need to breathe. The President and his top officials at the Department of Interior (DOI) have time and time again proved that they are interested in furthering the destruction and exploitation of our public lands and putting western mountain communities at risk."

UTAH:

Rani Derasary, Moab, Utah City Council Member, said "Public lands support the nation's \$887-billion, 7.6-million-job outdoor recreation industry, and with it, Western communities such as ours here in Moab, Utah. Our residents' identity, quality of life, and in most cases — very livelihood — depend on healthy, well-managed public lands with their immense appeal to tourists and residents alike. Many rural cities including Moab are embracing community development founded on clean energy, environmental quality, and outdoor recreation, all of which can be a source of sustained economic growth. By underfunding land management agencies and the Land & Water Conservation Fund, undermining public comment, muting stakeholder voices, slashing national monuments, increasing methane emissions and embracing more greenhouse gases, this administration is assaulting our democracy, our climate, our nation's public lands stewardship legacy, and Utahans' belief — regardless of political party — in the importance of leaving this place at least as good, if not better, for future generations."

Key Messages from the Report:

"Energy Dominance" on Western Public Lands

- In March of 2017, President Trump coined the term "[energy dominance](#)." This term has been used to justify many Department of Interior (DOI) decisions that have overwhelmingly benefited the oil, gas, coal, and mining industries at the expense of our public lands.
- In April 2017, President Trump ordered then Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to conduct a review of all national monuments over 100,000 acres that had been created since 1996. These national monuments had all been protected using the 1906 Antiquities Act, a bedrock public land conservation law passed by Teddy Roosevelt used equally by Republicans and Democrats to protect iconic places from the Grand Canyon to the Statue of Liberty.

- In January 2018, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) deemed public involvement in oil and gas lease sales an “unnecessary impediment,” reduced protest periods from 30 days to 10 days, and made public comment the discretion of Bureau of Land Management personnel Instruction Memorandum (IM) [2018-034](#)).
- From late December 2018 through much of January 2019, the U.S. government shut down for 35 days. During this shutdown, the Department of Interior chose to leave public lands, including national parks, open to the public without adequate staffing, maintenance, or facilities. This resulted in widespread and largely irreversible damage to many national parks. Yet at the same time, the Department of Interior chose to [continue issuing oil and gas leasing permits](#) during the shutdown, deeming employees who could approve permits “essential.”

Department of Interior

- President Trump has repeatedly appointed agency heads that seem set on destroying the agencies that they are tasked with overseeing. Both the originally appointed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Interior agency heads faced numerous ethics scandals and subsequently resigned under pressure. Former Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke’s successor, Secretary David Bernhardt, has been scrutinized regarding [several conflicts of interest](#).
- The appointment of an outspoken and self-proclaimed “Sagebrush Rebel” to [acting head of the Bureau of Land Management](#). For decades, William Perry Pendley has advocated for the transfer and sale of federal lands to the states and private interests.
- Secretary Bernhardt has been [working to weaken](#) the Endangered Species Act (ESA). New [revisions](#) to the Endangered Species Act weaken habitat protections and impose an economic analysis when considering listing a species. These revisions undermine the intent of the law and put many species and habitat conservation programs at risk at a time when a [U.N. report warns](#) that as many as 1 million species are at risk of extinction globally.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund and President Trump’s 2020 Budget

- President Trump announced a budget proposal that would provide essentially zero dollars for the fund. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is widely considered America’s most successful conservation program, having provided funding for projects in every state and nearly every county in the United States.
- The administration’s [proposed Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2020 budget](#) would reduce funding for the Department of Interior by 14 percent, the Environmental

Protection Agency by 31 percent, and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) by 15 percent, deeply slashing all public lands and environment funding.

About The Mountain Pact

Founded in 2014, [The Mountain Pact](#) is an effort to educate, mobilize, and empower mountain towns with outdoor recreation-based economies in the American West around federal policy. We work with local elected officials in over 50 mountain communities from all 11 western states to build resilience in the face of environmental stresses and their economic impacts through a shared voice on policies related to climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation.