



## Legislative Tracker 2018

This list includes both new and longstanding federal legislation that carry implications for Western communities, including bills related to energy development, public lands access and protection, wildfire resilience and economic stability. Included are the bill numbers, summaries, sponsors and how to follow the progress of each. It is not a comprehensive list of all conservation-related legislation.

### **Voluntary Public Access Improvement Act (SB 2243)**

**Introduced:** Dec. 18, 2017

**Sponsors:** Sen. Michael Bennet (D-Colorado), Sen. Steve Daines (R-Montana)

**What It Does:** This would amend the Food Security Act of 1985 (known as the Farm Bill) to include funding for the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program. The U.S. Department of Agriculture program supports farms, sportsmen and women, and the outdoor economy by incentivizing private landowners such as farmers and ranchers to open their land to public hunting, fishing and other activities. In addition to expanding public access, the funds would improve wildlife habitat.

**Read the Text:** <https://congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2243>

*"This program has rewarded Colorado's farmers and ranchers for providing new opportunities for the next generation of sportsmen and women and improving wildlife habitat across our state." – Sen. Michael Bennet*

### **Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act (SB 282)**

**Introduced:** Feb. 2, 2017

**Sponsors:** Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nevada), Sen. Michael Bennet (D-Colorado), Sen. Steve Daines (R-Montana), Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colorado), Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-New Mexico), Sen. James Risch (R-Idaho), Sen. Jon Tester (D-Montana), Sen. Tom Udall (D-New Mexico)

**What It Does:** This bill, which has major bipartisan support, would authorize the U.S. Department of the Interior to establish areas on public land for geothermal, solar and wind projects, as well as a program to improve federal permit coordination for renewable energy development. The bill would also create a fund for federal, state and tribal agencies to restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat in areas affected by renewable energy development, and preserve and improve recreational access to those lands.

**Read the Text:** <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/282>

*"If we truly want to implement an 'all-of-the-above' approach, we have to let renewable energy companies compete on a level playing field. The common-sense approach we have laid out will*

*result in more jobs, true progress toward American energy independence, and preservation of our natural wonders.” – Sen. Dean Heller*

## **Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (SB 1842)**

**Introduced:** Sept. 19, 2017

**Sponsors:** Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon), Sen. Michael Bennet (D-Colorado), Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colorado), Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Sen. James Risch (R-Idaho), Sen. Jon Tester (D-Montana)

**What It Does:** The Department of Agriculture and Department of Interior currently can't draw from an emergency fund to respond to wildfires, which means they have to take money from other programs. Designed to address one of the West's most pressing problems, this bipartisan legislation would require adjustments to discretionary funding limits for wildfire suppression operations. If USDA or Interior determined that more money is necessary for such operations, the agency would be required to ask Congress for the funds. The President's budget also would have to include average costs for wildfire suppression over the previous 10 years.

**Read the Text:** <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/1842>

*“It may not be getting headlines in the national news, but wildfires have burned millions of acres in the West this year and the communities impacted in Colorado need assistance. I've been working to advance this legislation to stop fire borrowing for several years, and I appreciate the strong bipartisan support to ensure the Forest Service has the funds it needs for clean-up and prevention efforts while also finally requiring the government to treat wildfires like it does other natural disasters.” – Sen. Cory Gardner*

## **Sportsmen's Act (SB 733)**

**Introduced:** March 27, 2017

**Sponsors:** Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), Sen. Steve Daines (R-Montana), Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-New Mexico), Sen. James Risch (R-Idaho), Sen. Jon Tester (D-Montana)

**What It Does:** This bill would require federal departments and agencies to facilitate expanded and improved hunting, fishing and recreational shooting opportunities on federal land, conserve and improve aquatic systems, and improve the management of game species and their habitat. Federal agencies would be required to identify land that is open to hunting, angling and recreation but is not accessible and report options for improving access. In addition, an advisory council would be established to advise USDA and Interior on habitat conservation, hunting and recreational shooting. The bill would not affect state authority to manage fish and wildlife.

**Read the Text:** <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/733>

*“The number one issue for sportsmen across the country is access. This widely supported, bipartisan bill will open more areas to hunting and fishing and grow America's thriving outdoor recreation economy.” – Sen. Martin Heinrich*

## **Advancing Conservation and Education Act (HR 4257)**

**Introduced:** Nov. 6, 2017

**Sponsors:** Rep. Chris Stewart (R-Utah), Rep. Jared Polis (D-Colorado)

**What It Does:** The bipartisan bill would allow western states to swap state trust lands surrounded by federal conservation land for federal parcels. State trust lands are designated to generate money for public schools. But when surrounded by federal conservation areas such as national parks and monuments, it's difficult for states to lease their own lands for grazing or resource extraction and thus collect revenue for education. This legislation would help agencies manage federal land more efficiently while giving states the opportunity to collect additional revenue for schools.

**Read the Text:** <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4257>

*“This bill represents an absolute win-win situation. It makes management of federal land more efficient, while providing additional revenue for state land trusts and schools. These are two worthwhile goals that when combined represent a genuine opportunity for those in the West.” – Sen. Jeff Flake*

## **Recreation Not Red-Tape Act (SB 1633)**

**Introduced:** July 26, 2017

**Sponsors:** Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon), Sen. Jon Tester (D-Montana)

**What It Does:** Another bipartisan bill to promote outdoor recreation, this legislation would require the BLM and Forest Service to offer a joint permitting process and partner with states to offer recreation passes that cover both federal and state lands. Other federal agencies also would be required to consider recreation opportunities in their decision-making.

**Read the Text:** <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/1633>

*“Our bipartisan bill will break down barriers to the great outdoors, allowing more visitors to take advantage of the endless recreation experiences our public lands have to offer.” – Sen. Ron Wyden*

## **Grand Staircase-Escalante Enhancement Act (HR 4558)**

**Introduced:** Dec. 6, 2017

**Sponsors:** Rep. Chris Stewart (R-Utah), Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah), Rep. John Curtis (R-Utah), Rep. Mia Love (R-Utah)

**What It Does:** The law would create three smaller national monuments and one national park that would collectively preserve about 60 percent of the lands within the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument designated in 1996. Management plans for the land would be developed and administered not by a federal agency but by a seven-member council including Utah county commissioners, a Utah state representative, a Department of the Interior representative and the president. The bill would also codify President Trump's reduction of Grand Staircase-Escalante Monument boundaries.

**Read the Text:** <https://congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4558>

### **Shash Jaa National Monument and Indian Creek National Monument Act (HR 4532)**

**Introduced:** Dec. 4, 2017

**Sponsors:** Rep. John Curtis (R-Utah), Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah), Rep. Chris Stewart (R-Utah), Rep. Mia Love (R-Utah)

**What It Does:** Similar to the Grand Staircase-Escalante Enhancement Act, this bill would codify President Trump's reductions to Bears Ears National Monument and establish two new monuments encompassing about 15 percent of the lands within the original monument boundaries, as designated in 2016 under the Obama administration. The land would be managed by Utah county commissioners, tribal members and an official from the U.S. Department of the Interior or Department of Agriculture.

**Read the Text:** <https://congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4532>

### **Federal Land Freedom Act (SB 335)**

**Introduced:** Feb. 7, 2017

**Sponsors:** Sen. James Inhofe (R-Oklahoma), Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah)

**What It Does:** This bill would transfer oil and gas leasing and regulating authority from the federal government to states. States would assume control over land currently managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. State actions to lease, permit or regulate oil and gas development would be exempt from stipulations of federal laws including the Administrative Procedure Act, the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

**Read the Text:** <https://congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/335>