



October 11, 2010

# Heard It Through The Pipeline

## PUBLIC LANDS FOR PUBLIC USE

*Coalition works to stop erosion of public lands access, restore productive use*

Montana’s natural resource-based trade associations are concerned that federal land use policies are removing federal land from multiple and productive use, limiting Montanans’ access and reducing the revenues those lands produce for education and local government.

Every acre of public land in Montana is managed by the federal government. Federal agencies prepare and update land use plans that determine whether the land can be used for mineral development or grazing or other purposes. Thanks to pressures from environmental groups who want to make public lands off-limits for productive use, and to general bureaucratic inertia, these plans are now taking years to write. Millions of acres of lands are in the meantime sitting idle – lands rich in natural resources that could put Montanans to work and generate needed revenues.

PUBLIC LANDS FOR PUBLIC USE is a diverse coalition of major employers and rural schools formed to advocate for reasonable land use policies that protect the environment while allowing people to make a livelihood by working on the land.

### Disturbing trend

Every time a management plan is written (and most are stalled) more land is either removed from active beneficial use or restricted to ever increasing standards. Grazing, mining, timber harvest and hydrocarbon development have been incrementally reduced over recent years to the point where they could be “planned out of existence” on public lands. While wilderness bills are written and debated in Congress, environmental groups are pressuring U.S. Department of the Interior to restrict public lands even further. These restrictions take the forms of “National Monuments” designated by the White House, or “habitat conservation.”

Revenues from grazing, mining and oil/gas development are vital to local schools, which is why the Montana Rural Education Association became one of the first members of PUBLIC LANDS FOR PUBLIC USE. Local and state governments rely on resource revenue to fund much-needed state programs.

The Montana Petroleum Association’s annual essay contest will address the question of federal lands use in its 2010-2011 high school essay contest. This year’s question asks students to determine the impact of recent trends in federal land use policy on adjoining landowners, communities, schools, tax base and jobs. The contest is open to Montana high school age students. To learn more please visit: <http://www.montanapetroleum.org/assets/PDF/essay/MPA-MBOGC-contest-notice-2010-2011.pdf>

### PUBLIC LANDS FOR PUBLIC USE

Montana Petroleum Association

Montana Farm Bureau

Montana Stock Growers Association

Montana Wood Products Association

Coal Bed Natural Gas Alliance

Montana Coal Council

Montana Mining Association

Montana Rural Education Association

The Montana Policy Institute supports the recent MPA efforts.

Visit the following website to learn the MPI view:

[http://www.montanapolicy.org/main/article.php?article\\_id=78](http://www.montanapolicy.org/main/article.php?article_id=78)

### **PUBLIC LANDS FOR PUBLIC USE**

will work to make sure all Montanans are aware of the eroding access to public lands, and how this trend, if it continues, will hurt all of us.