

RESOLUTION NUMBER 2015-18

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO, STATING THE VALUE OF PUBLIC LANDS TO LA PLATA COUNTY'S ECONOMY, RECREATION, HERITAGE AND QUALITY OF LIFE AND SUPPORTING CONTINUED FEDERAL OWNERSHIP OF FEDERAL PUBLIC LANDS

WHEREAS, La Plata County includes a unique wealth of scenic and wild natural landscapes, including mountains, rivers, forests, lakes, basins and plateaus; and

WHEREAS, most such natural landscapes within the county are federal public lands owned equally by all Americans; and

WHEREAS, public lands under the management of the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management comprise more than 38% of the land surface of La Plata County; and

WHEREAS, these federally administered public lands are essential to the quality of life in La Plata County, providing extensive public recreational opportunities for wildlife watching, hiking, hunting, fishing, backpacking, horseback riding, skiing, bicycling, sightseeing, and numerous other outdoor recreational activities, thereby improving the health of our community and its visitors; and

WHEREAS, these same federally administered public lands provide essential habitat for fish and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, fish and wildlife and the exceptionally scenic landscapes of La Plata County's federal public lands attract the outdoor recreation and tourism that are the dominant drivers of La Plata County's thriving tourist economy; and

WHEREAS, the unified, experienced and consistent management of federally administered public lands by the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Bureau of Land Management across the nation best protects the national value and utility of the public lands for all Americans and the values on which the economy in La Plata County are dependent; and

WHEREAS, La Plata County's attraction to businesses, employers, quality employees, and the tourists who are a significant component of our economy overwhelmingly owes to the high quality of life arising from the expansive wild landscapes and outdoor recreational opportunities available on surrounding federally managed public lands; and

WHEREAS, La Plata County's agricultural industry has traditionally relied heavily on public-lands grazing of sheep and cattle; and

WHEREAS, we believe that management of our federal public lands and wildlife via long-established collaborative approaches in which federal public land management agencies cooperate with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado State Forest Service, La Plata County officials, and the community are more likely to produce effective landscape-wide management than would ownership or management of federal public lands by the state of Colorado; and

WHEREAS, La Plata County residents actively collaborate among diverse interests and with public land managers to improve equitable public land management and public access, as evidenced by the broad-based coalition that forged the successful Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act; and

WHEREAS, federal public land management agencies directly and indirectly employ many full-time residents of La Plata County, contributing significantly to the fiscal and social health of the county; and

WHEREAS, Americans throughout the country value federal public lands as a distinctly prideful part of our national heritage, no matter in which state we live; and

WHEREAS, owing to ongoing drought and insect infestations, forests in La Plata County are increasingly prone to wildfire, including periodic large-scale fires such as the Missionary Ridge conflagration of 2002; and

WHEREAS, federal money, manpower, aircraft and other specialized fire prevention and firefighting assets essential to protecting our communities, infrastructure and public lands are unavailable at the state and county levels; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that there may be certain circumstances in which the limited transfer of federal public lands under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act may be appropriate and beneficial to local communities; and

WHEREAS, the La Plata County Board of County Commissioners held a public hearing and solicited public comment on the topic on May 12, 2015;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of La Plata County, Colorado, that:

1. The La Plata County Board of County Commissioners strongly supports continued federal land ownership and management in La Plata County, and the irreplaceable value these public lands bring to our county's economy, recreation, heritage, and quality of life.
2. The La Plata County Board of County Commissioners enthusiastically commends the dedicated federal employees who manage America's public lands in La Plata County, as well as the dedicated employees of the State of Colorado who manage fish, wildlife and forests in La Plata County, in partnership with the federal public land managers.

DONE AND APPROVED by the Board of Commissioners of La Plata County, Colorado, this 12th day of May, 2015.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO

ATTEST:

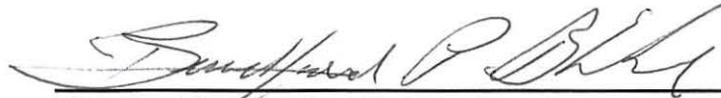


Jeanne Bignall,
Clerk to the Board





Gwen Lachelt, Chair



Bradford Blake, Vice-Chair



Julie Westendorff, Commissioner