

March 17, 2016

Montezuma County Commission
140 West Main Street, Suite 1
Cortez, CO 81321
(970) 565-3728

RE: Montezuma County position on public lands

Dear Montezuma County Commission:

Public lands in Montezuma County and across Colorado provide sportsmen and women with seemingly endless opportunities to hunt, fish, shoot, and recreate with our families. These lands are fundamentally important to our outdoor traditions, and we do not take lightly any efforts to undermine our public access or sporting opportunities. That's why we are writing you to request that Montezuma County cease supporting proposals to sell or transfer public lands—in fact, we ask that you clearly oppose any such proposals.

The idea that publicly-owned lands, such as National Forests and Bureau of Land Management acreage, would be better managed by the state of Colorado is fundamentally flawed, especially considering that 82 percent of state lands in Colorado are closed to hunting, fishing, shooting, or any public access at all. If America's public lands were seized by the state of Colorado, they would almost certainly be closed off to the public. Further, the state would be crippled by the enormous financial burden of fighting wildfires, battling noxious weeds, and maintaining facilities and infrastructure. Many of these lands would be sold off to pay down debts, all at the expense of the people who live in your county and this state.

In 2013, hunting and fishing in Colorado generated \$134 million in state and local tax revenue, supported more than 18,000 jobs, and generated \$86 billion in direct expenditures across the state. In Montezuma County alone, the most recent Colorado Parks and Wildlife study shows that 200 jobs were supported by hunting and fishing activity and direct expenditures related to hunting and fishing topped \$8.6 million dollars. The disposal of national public lands would likely result in an 80-percent reduction in this economic activity, not to mention the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funds that would be lost with these valuable lands—Montezuma County received \$3.8 million in PILT dollars since 1999.

We also find it concerning that the county spent taxpayer dollars on this bad idea last year, while needed public services are strapped for cash.

As sportsmen, we know firsthand that public lands management has its many challenges, and we are rolling up our sleeves to resolve conflicts and create real-world solutions. We encourage you to change course and take a more productive approach to addressing natural resource challenges.

Sincerely,

Businesses

Colorado High Desert Angler	Cortez
Colorado Love Outdoors	Cortez
Fishpond	Denver
Shooter's World	Cortez
Summit Shooting Center	Cortez

Organizations/Groups

Tim Brass, Southern Rockies Coordinator
Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

David Nickum, Executive Director
Colorado Trout Unlimited

Suzanne O'Neill, Executive Director
Colorado Wildlife Federation

Duncan Rose, President
Dolores River Chapter, Trout Unlimited

Aaron Kindle, Western Sportsmen's Campaign Manager
National Wildlife Federation

Scott Hampel, Director of Colorado Operations
Muley Fanatic Foundation

Ryan Goodenow, President
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Society

Nick Payne, Colorado Field Representative
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership