

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

Steve Bullock
GOVERNOR



Mike Cooney
LT. GOVERNOR

June 20, 2018

Jon Raby, Acting State Director
Bureau of Land Management
Montana/Dakotas
5001 Southgate Dr.
Billings, MT 59101-4669

Dear Director Raby:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages some of the most scenic and recreationally important public lands in Montana. This is especially true in the Missouri River Breaks region of central Montana where the Lewistown Field Office manages 650,000 acres of public land and in Garnet Range and along the Blackfoot River corridor where the Missoula Field Offices manages 162,000 acres. I am writing to encourage the BLM to consider the inclusion of Backcountry Conservation Areas in the forthcoming draft Resource Management Plans (RMPs) for these field offices.

As you know, these two distinct areas of BLM land are very different from one another, but they both provide highly important wildlife habitat and opportunities for Montana sportsmen and women to enjoy time outdoors with family and friends. Recently I established an Office of Outdoor Recreation in part to grow and expand Montana's \$7.1 billion outdoor recreation economy tied to opportunities on our public lands like those under management in the Lewistown and Missoula field offices.

As supported by numerous hunting, fishing, and conservation organizations, Backcountry Conservation Areas provide the tools necessary for the BLM to conserve and responsibly manage large tracts of generally undeveloped lands that provide important habitat for fish and wildlife and high-quality wildlife dependent recreation opportunities. They also provide important management flexibility for active habitat restoration, public access, and the continuation of traditional uses on the landscape. This management tool would not only further the habitat and outdoor recreation priorities of the state of Montana, I believe it would help the Montana BLM implement the access and habitat directives recently outlined in Secretarial Orders 3347, 3356, and 3362.

The BLM's RMPs for these areas have been around for decades, and we agree that it's time for the agency to see these plan revisions through to address the changing conditions on the ground. We ask that you fully consider Backcountry Conservation Areas in the range of alternatives as a management tool as you undergo this process.

Thanks for your consideration of my request; I look forward to continuing to work with your office as these plans advance.

Sincerely,



STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

cc: Mark Albers, BLM Lewistown District Manager
Rick Hotaling, BLM Western Montana District Manager
Joe Ashor, BLM Missoula Field Manager
Pete McFadden, BLM Lewistown Field Manager