

The Great Equalizers: Public Lands

Shared ownership and stewardship of our public lands is a fundamental part of what it means to be an American. As Governor of Montana, Steve has focused on protecting our public lands that are vital to our economy, environment, and wellbeing. Public lands make up almost a third of our country. As President, Steve will fight to enhance access to our lands and protect them from exploitation.

Steve's public lands policies will be guided by three principles: Addressing climate change, honoring our heritage of public land ownership by restoring and increasing public lands, and making sure that all Americans get a fair shot at enjoying the opportunities our public lands provide.

Protecting Our Lands

Keep public lands public. Our country needs a robust land conservation effort to keep public lands available for future generations.

- Steve will direct the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to enhance, not diminish, public lands.

Reverse the Trump administration's **illegal rollbacks of national monuments and its assault on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.**

- Steve will reverse the illegal actions that President Trump has taken, such as at Bears Ears National Monument, and restore these lands for public access.

Fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

- Steve will work with Congress to enact legislation to make LWCF funding mandatory to ensure our public lands and waters receive the support they need.

Make **conservation management** a key part of legislative agenda to protect our natural resources while affording others the opportunity to enjoy them. He will:

- Steve will **propose legislation to increase funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act** to improve habitats for migratory birds and wildlife, as well as increase resilience for communities from floods.
- **Support the Recovering America's Wildlife Act** which would provide states, territories, and tribes funding to catalyze on-the-ground, collaborative efforts to restore essential habitat.

Steve will also work with state and federal agencies to break down jurisdictional lines when it comes to building **watershed resilience projects, which protect communities and the environment from catastrophic natural disasters** such as wildfires, floods, droughts, and storm surges.

- Steve will direct the Department of Interior to convene federal agency stakeholders to streamline these projects.

From National Wildlife Refuges to the National Parks, the Department of the Interior has more than **\$16 billion in maintenance backlog**. The Forest Service's backlog exceeds \$5 billion.

- As part of Steve's infrastructure plan, he will spend federal money addressing the maintenance backlog.

With over **40,000 abandoned mine sites on BLM land**¹, Steve recognizes that restoration is both an environmental imperative and an economic opportunity.

- Steve will work with Congress to allow states, local governments and other "good Samaritans" to invest resources in cleaning up these environmental liabilities, creating thousands of jobs in the process

Public Lands and A Fair Shot

Steve will enable Native American **tribes to assist the Park Service as partners in federal land management**.

- Steve will work with Congress to amend the Park Service Organic Act to allow tribes to help manage public lands, both creating jobs and increasing tribal economic development.

Steve will recruit **people of color for leadership positions** in our land management agencies.

- Steve will ensure that qualified minority applicants receive an interview for top land management agency positions.

Support collaborative proposals for land protections, particularly at the Forest Service.

Across the country, communities have done the hard work of finding common ground on proposing restoration projects on our forests, designating wilderness and creating recreation areas.

- Steve will direct the Forest Service to manage our forests to increase their health, protect our communities and lakes, and maintain jobs for the rural workforce.

Provide **equitable access to our public lands**:

- **Increase the number of free days at National Parks and ensure no entrance fee raises** for National Parks.
 - Steve will direct the National Park Service to not increase entrance fees and choose additional days for free entrance.
- **Partner with community organizations** and launch a marketing campaign to provide information to Americans - particularly people of color - about National Parks.
- Launch an enhanced marketing and access program in partnership with local governments, state governments and foundations to **ensure easy access to green areas, parks and our national public lands for all Americans**.

Taking on Climate Change

Support government scientists' efforts to **conduct research and shape the government's response to climate change**.

¹ <https://www.blm.gov/programs/public-safety-and-fire/abandoned-mine-lands>

- Under the Trump administration, research of climate impacts has been severely curtailed and politics have too often overruled science.²
- Scientists at federal agencies - including the Interior Department (e.g., the US Geological Survey and the National Climate Change and Wildlife Center), Department of Agriculture (e.g., the U.S. Forest Service), the Department of Commerce (e.g., NOAA), NASA, and other agencies - need to be supported in their research of climate impacts.
- Steve will ensure that these agencies are given the support they need so scientists can research the impact of climate change and how to address it.

Direct the Departments of Interior and Agriculture to **achieve net-zero emissions on our public lands by 2030.**

- Steve will direct these agencies to develop and implement a plan, including for land conservation and **natural biological carbon sequestration.**

Reverse Trump's effort to devote public lands exclusively for drilling, which prevents public lands from being accessible for Americans, harms our environment, and hurts tourism revenue.³

- Steve will direct BLM to closely examine new leasing for drilling and bring back land management tools, including resource management plans that were used under President Obama to increase public input into land use decisions.
 - He will do this by reversing the direction to the BLM that directs offices to issue leases every quarter, regardless of other demands on the agency. He will reinstate planning processes that engage local communities, such as Resource Management Plans, and he will reinstate public comment periods that engage the public.

Support **clean energy projects on public lands**

- Fostering clean energy projects on public lands is key to helping our country transition to a clean energy economy and developing further solar and wind resources.
- Steve will incentivize federal land agencies to develop such projects, expediting them and by working closely with state and local stakeholders.

Accomplishments as Governor:

1. Led the effort along with fellow governors to ensure effective management of the Greater Sage-Grouse (DNRC).
2. Approved the year-round bison expansion project (FWP).
3. Created an Office of Outdoor Recreation to support Montana's outdoor recreation economy (GOED).

² <http://columbiaclimatelaw.com/resources/silencing-science-tracker/silencing-climate-science/>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jan/19/bureau-land-management-federal-lease>

4. Designated a Public Access Specialist to address public lands access issues (DNRC).
5. Restored funding for the successful Habitat Montana program (2017).
6. Protected Private Property Rights under eminent domain (2013).
7. Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) boat check and regulations (2013 and 2017).
8. Approved Red Hill Road 40 acres purchase for 18,000 acres of Forest Service land (DNRC).
9. Reduced long-term interest rates from 3 percent to 2.5 percent on the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Program in 2014, saving Montana communities a total of \$56.5 million (DNRC).
10. Approved Salmond Ranch Land Board agreement opening up 50,000 acres of public lands along the Rocky Mountain Front (DNRC).
11. Approved Prickly Pear fishing access project (DNRC).
12. Finalized Agreement on firefighting helicopters with USDA (2015).
13. Created the Fire Suppression Fund (2013).
14. Signed the Good Neighbor Authority and fostered collaboration among conservation, industry, state, local and federal partners to help restore the health and resiliency of Montana's forests and the communities that depend upon them through the Forests in Focus Initiative (2014).
15. Signed the Master Stewardship Agreement (2014).
16. Appointed Western Governor's Chairs and developed the National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative (2017).
17. Launched the Parks in Focus Initiative (2017).