



Oregonians Applaud 'Public Lands Rule' Emphasizing Conservation and Recreation

State leaders urge swift action to conserve public lands, preserve cultural resources, and protect wildlife habitat

[Photographs for media use](#)

April 17, 2024 (Bend, Ore.) – Today, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released its final “Public Lands Rule” putting conservation, wildlife habitat and cultural resource protection on equal footing with extractive uses like oil and gas development for the first time in over 40 years. The Public Lands Rule joins a list of recent announcements by the Biden administration and the BLM that will finally bring balance to the management of BLM lands and ensure communities and local managers have the tools they need to create a sustainable future in Oregon and across the West.

“I’ve been a wildland firefighter, conservation director, sportsmen’s group coordinator, conservation organization board member, public lands user, volunteer, and citizen scientist over decades of exploring, enjoying and caring for the sagebrush biome,” said Karl Findling, hunter, angler, and owner of Oregon Pack Works. “The new Bureau of Land Management Public Lands Rule is an incredible opportunity to rebalance the agency’s management priorities to promote conservation and healthy communities across Oregon and the West.”

Public support played a pivotal role in shaping the Public Lands Rule with [92 percent of public comments submitted backing the draft policy](#). The regulation was also supported by western lawmakers, local elected officials, and [state governors including Oregon Governor Kotek](#). The [Oregon Attorney General's office also joined eight state AG's in supporting the draft rule](#).

“This new policy will put conservation on equal footing with other uses and give direction to the agency to manage for a healthy ecosystem,” said **Bonnie Olin, author of *Owyhee River Journals***. “For regions like the Owyhee, one of the most intact ecosystems in the west, we have a chance, at long last, to preserve, for future generations, the plants and animals endemic to the area, and the iconic rhyolite formations unique to this beloved place.”

BLM lands have been critical to the growth of Oregon’s outdoor recreation economy, attracting tourists from near and far to hike, bike, camp, hunt and fish. According to a [2019 Oregon Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact Study](#), outdoor recreation supported more than 224,000 full- and part-time jobs statewide, generated \$9.3 billion in wages and compensation and resulted in \$15.6 billion in consumer spending.

“The new Bureau of Land Management rule will help ensure balanced use of our public lands, including in Oregon's incredible high desert. This remarkable area where we fish and hunt supports our communities and our way of life,” said **Liz Hamilton, Executive Director, Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association**. “The new regulation recognizes the cultural, economic, and environmental necessity of prioritizing conservation as our legacy and gift to future generations.”

Conservation advocates and outdoor enthusiasts recognize that swift action is needed to successfully implement the Public Lands Rule across Oregon. Advocates across the state and around the West are eager to see the BLM use the new tools highlighted in the rule like Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and restoration leases to chart a more sustainable future for public lands.

"Communities across Oregon, including my own in Eugene, face unprecedented threats from climate change, such as wildfires, flooding, and habitat loss,” said **Debra Higbee, Conservation Chair, Sierra Club Oregon Chapter**. “The Bureau of Land Management’s Public Lands Rule couldn’t be implemented soon enough. It will protect the lands and waters that not only make our region unique, but provide climate solutions and are essential for our people and wildlife to thrive.”

Oregon lawmakers have played a significant role in helping to shape the final rule. Representatives Earl Blumenauer and Suzanne Bonamici joined [nearly four dozen members of Congress voicing support](#) for the rule in a letter to Secretary Haaland. Local officials, including those in Oregon also joined more than 120 past and present elected officials in the west [calling for additional protection of lands managed by the BLM](#).

Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley have been at the forefront of conserving public lands in Oregon as advocates for robust planning and thoughtful balanced management. The Senator’s encouraged the BLM to update their policies and management practices in a [letter](#) prior to the announcement of the draft.

“This new rule will be essential for conserving and restoring Oregon’s high desert, ensuring a future for desert wildlife, watersheds and wildlands for generations to come,” said **Mark Salvo, Conservation Director for Oregon Natural Desert Association**.

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