



Trump Administration Escalates War on Nature with Attack on the Public Lands Rule

Sweeping executive action aims to eliminate protections for America's public lands

September 10, 2025 – Today, the Trump Administration continued its ongoing attacks on America's public lands by [directing the elimination](#) of the widely supported Public Lands Rule. These actions mark a dramatic escalation in the administration's assault on public lands, prioritizing corporate interests and privatization over the interests of the American people.

The Public Lands Rule garnered overwhelming public support, with [92% of comments in favor](#). Backed by a diverse coalition including [Western lawmakers](#), [tribes](#), [scientists](#), [hunters](#) and, and [businesses](#), the rule represents a broad consensus on the need for a balanced, sustainable, and inclusive approach to managing public lands. Leading Western newspapers endorsed it, with the [Salt Lake Tribune](#) stating: "*The only thing wrong with the rule is that it wasn't written 47 years ago.*"

The rule modernizes and streamlines the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) decades-old management framework, providing new and enhancing direction on existing tools for conservation, wildlife habitat, watershed management, land health, cultural resources, the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in decision-making, and climate change mitigation alongside energy extraction and other uses for nearly 250 million acres of public land.

Balanced management of public lands helps generate billions in revenue each year from recreation, lodging, food and tourism. In 2023 alone, outdoor recreation generated [\\$1.2 trillion in economic output—two times](#) the economic output of agriculture and forestry, or [one-and-a-half](#) times that of oil and gas development and mining.

Today's announcement comes on the heels of proposals to sell off millions of acres of America's public lands, mass reductions in agency staffings, multiple executive and secretarial orders prioritizing fossil fuel development over all other uses of the public lands, and the budget bill directing increased oil and gas drilling and mining.

Public reactions to the Trump administration's announcement have been swift and strong, with many calling it a dangerous step backward for public lands and the future of our environment.

Reactions

National Conservation Organizations

“Public lands are the people’s lands. Rescinding the Public Lands Rule is another smokescreen to gaslight the public into giving these lands away and it locks regular people out of their favorite places to hunt, fish, and camp with their families. The Public Lands Rule brings balance to the management of the country’s public lands and waters in the U.S., and is overwhelmingly popular.” - **Jocelyn Torres, Chief Conservation Officer, Conservation Lands Foundation**

“With this announcement, the administration is saying that public lands should be managed primarily for the good of powerful drilling, mining and development interests even though most BLM lands are already open for energy development, and even though a huge wave of bipartisan support for public lands conservation played a key part in defeating a proposal to sell off millions of acres in the budget reconciliation fight just a couple of months ago. Interior’s rationale for repeal is on shaky footing – stating that it believes the rule is unnecessary and violates statutory direction. To the contrary, the Public Lands Rule was informed by many months of thoughtful public engagement and review, and is necessary to ensure compliance with long-standing direction from Congress that protecting undeveloped landscapes, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources is central to BLM’s mission.” - **Alison Flint, Legal Director, The Wilderness Society.**

"The revocation of this rule commits our National System of Public Lands to outdated management that will confound both science and sustainability. This rule provided for healthy habitats and now it’s foolishly being yanked away in service of the ‘Drill, baby, drill’ agenda.” - **Vera Smith, National Forests and Public Lands Director, Defenders of Wildlife**

“The Public Lands Rule puts conservation at the same level of importance as drilling, mining, or any other kind of extraction on public lands; it does not prohibit any of those other activities. But even that amount of protection for America’s public lands is too much for Donald Trump and the Big Oil CEOs who backed his campaign. It’s clear that the Trump administration and its allies in Congress refuse to accept conservation as a legitimate activity on our public lands. Generations of Americans have explored those landscapes and experienced the vast beauty and natural heritage of this country. If Trump gets his way, the only heritage we’ll leave the next generation is pumpjacks and pollution.” - **Athan Manuel, Director of Lands Protection, Sierra Club**

“Our public lands should serve everyone, not just oil, gas, and mining interests. This rule protects park-adjacent landscapes from unchecked industrial energy development, and without it, parks like Grand Teton, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, and Dinosaur National Monument could see oil rigs on their horizons or mines polluting the rivers that sustain them.” - **Beau Kiklis, Associate Director of Energy and Landscape Conservation, National Parks Conservation Association**

“This is an administration that would rather sell off the nation’s public lands for shortsighted profit than honor its duty to ensure long-term sustainable use. By abandoning conservation as a key tenet of land management, the administration is rejecting the overwhelming public support for protecting the public lands we all treasure.” - **Bobby McEnaney, Director of Land Conservation, Natural Resources Defense Council**

California

“It is incredibly disheartening to learn that the Trump administration has directed the elimination of the BLM’s Public Lands Rule. The Public Lands Rule, finalized in 2024, clarified that conservation, access to nature, and safeguarding wildlife and cultural values are an integral part of the BLM’s multiple-use and sustained yield mission, as mandated by Congress through the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The BLM manages approximately 15 million acres of public lands in California – about 14.4 percent of the state. These lands are among the most iconic landscapes in California and throughout the West. It is offensive that the Trump administration is foisting its agenda on all of us who love to visit and recreate on BLM-managed lands in order to prioritize extractive uses over all others on those lands.” - **Linda Castro, Assistant Policy Director, CalWild**

“The Public Lands Rule improves the management of our public lands, empowering the Bureau of Land Management to focus management on the needs of the lands where they work. Rescinding the Public Lands Rule will rip authority from local land managers to place it in the hands of DC bureaucrats whose main goal is to sell our public lands to the highest bidder. All this in opposition to the overwhelming support for our public lands and their protection.” - **Sandra Schubert, Executive Director, Tuleyome**

Colorado

“The Public Lands Rule reaffirmed the foundational principle that the Bureau of Land Management’s multiple-use mission cannot be achieved without uplifting conservation and the health of our public lands. The directive to eliminate this broadly supported tool is the intentional dismantling of existing administrative progress and a politically motivated giveaway to industry. This is yet another step toward the continued erosion of our wild places, and we will not stand by it silently.” - **Soren Jespersen, Interim director at Colorado Wildlands Project**

Idaho

“Idaho’s treasured open spaces provide enormous benefits to the public. The first thing we think of are conservation values: clean water, habitat for fish and wildlife, cultural protections, and recreation. While we recognize the role that livestock grazing, energy development, and mineral extraction play, if you remove the Public Lands rule and the ability to balance these uses with conservation, you end up prioritizing corporate profits over all other uses and the public ultimately loses out.” - **John Robison, Public Lands and Wildlife Director, Idaho Conservation League**

Montana

“People like me – ranchers and farmers in rural Montana – stake our livelihoods on healthy lands and clean waters. As the biggest public land manager in the state, the BLM’s land management policies affect more acres of our interconnected ecosystems than anyone else. The Public Lands Rule is a tool in BLM’s toolbox to work with landowners and other interests to make sure land uses are equitably balanced to keep our lands healthy for future generations. It’s extremely disheartening that this administration is trying to dismantle this Rule less than a year after it went into effect.” - **Wade Sikorski, member, Wild Montana, Fallon County, Montana**

“It took a mountain of effort to make the Public Lands Rule a reality, and we are disgusted by the Trump administration’s decision to reject even the notion of conserving our natural heritage in this way. But we are not out of energy yet. This decision removes important climate tools from the federal government’s toolbox when we’re already behind on fulfilling our promises to the world to address our carbon pollution. We will continue to fight to protect public lands and ensure a livable climate.” - **Barbara Chillcott, Senior Attorney, Western Environmental Law Center**

Nevada

“Nevada is blessed with 48 million acres of public land spanning snow capped mountains, vast desert playas, twisted rock formations and precious creeks and springs. These public lands support a strong mining industry, ranching, energy development, beautiful wilderness areas, critical wildlife habitat and extensive outdoor recreation opportunities. The Public Lands Rule doesn’t threaten any of these activities and resources, it just restates the tools and management direction directly found in law – the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. Nevadans support a balance of development and conservation which is the point of the Public Lands Rule. The administration directing the elimination of the widely supported Public Lands Rule is fearmongering at its worst.” - **Shaaron Netherton, Executive Director, Friends of Nevada Wilderness**

New Mexico

“New Mexico’s 13.5 million acres of BLM-managed public lands are irreplaceable treasures that define the unique character of our state. Unfortunately, unbalanced management of some of these lands has destroyed essential resources like clean air and water, wildlife habitat, and resilient ecosystems. The Public Lands Rule is wildly popular because it established a framework for allowing future generations to enjoy our shared natural and cultural heritage. Today’s action is offensive to the strong majority of Americans who care about our public lands. We will continue to advocate for this common-sense rule.” - **Sally Paez, Staff Attorney, New Mexico Wild**

Oregon

“Oregon's high desert, its cherished fish and wildlife, resplendent wilderness, irreplaceable cultural resources, boundless recreational opportunities, and the communities and economies that depend on these healthy, intact public lands were all beneficiaries of the Public Lands Rule. Who, besides unfettered extractive industry, benefits from its revocation?” - **Mark Salvo, Conservation Director, Oregon Natural Desert Association**

Utah

“America’s wildest public lands face unprecedented threats from the Trump administration and its repeated decisions to prioritize fossil fuel development and extractive industry over clean water, wildlife habitat, and wild open spaces. This is especially the case in Utah, where Trump’s policies are having devastating consequences for the nation’s redrock wilderness. The Public Lands Rule reiterates that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has to put conservation on equal footing with other uses and lays out a framework for the agency to restore degraded landscapes and protect intact public lands for current and future generations. Americans and Utahns widely supported the Rule and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance will mobilize our members and supporters to oppose the Trump administration’s shortsighted effort to undo it.” - **Steve Bloch, Legal Director, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA)**

Wyoming

“In Wyoming, our public lands provide some of the highest quality fish and wildlife habitat in the country, as well as unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities. The BLM’s Public Lands Rule was not only widely supported by the general public, it was thoughtfully crafted to ensure that both wildlife and landscape health are adequately protected as part of the agency’s commitment to multiple-use. The rescinding of this common-sense rule shows that the Trump Administration is dead set on prioritizing energy development and extractive industries over all other uses on our public lands, rather than seeking to uphold balanced land-management practices.” - **Alec Underwood, Conservation Director, Wyoming Outdoor Council**