

# MONTANA NATIONAL FORESTS

VITAL TO PEOPLE, WILDLIFE AND THE ECONOMY



**THE NATIONAL FORESTS** of Montana are a natural treasure highly valued by the state's residents. These public lands support an abundance of wildlife—including many imperiled species—protect pristine wilderness, supply critical drinking water and are integral to economic growth in the state, especially the booming recreation and tourism industries. Conserving the national forests of Montana protects all of these important values.

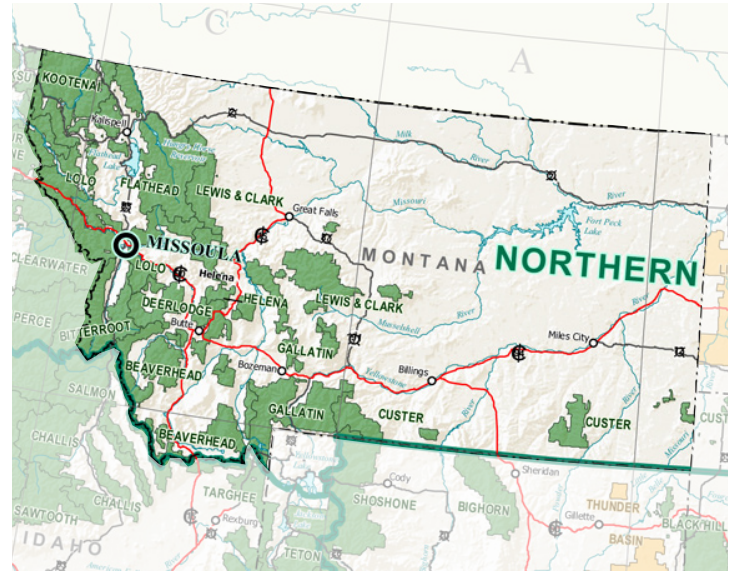
## Habitat for Wildlife

Wolves, fishers, American martens, porcupines, snowshoe hares, elk, deer, dusky grouse, bald eagles, northern goshawks, Arctic grayling, westslope cutthroat trout and many other animals and plants inhabit the national forests of Montana.

At least 12 species listed as candidate, threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act also depend on these public lands, including the grizzly bear, wolverine, Canada lynx, bull trout, yellow-billed cuckoo, greater sage-grouse and whitebark pine.

## Wilderness for Conservation and Recreation

About 3.4 million acres of national forests in Montana are congressionally designated wilderness areas. The largest, the Bob Marshall in the Flathead and Lewis and Clark national forests, is more than 1 million acres. This wilderness area encompasses the headwa-



**Montana has 11 national forests, totaling about 17 million acres.**

ters of the South Fork of the Flathead River and other major streams and more than 100 lakes. It provides habitat for every mammal species native to the Northern Rockies—except plains bison—and is popular for camping, hiking, backpacking, mountaineering, fishing, hunting, paddling, backcountry skiing and horseback riding.

## Water for Communities

National forests provide an estimated 61.3 percent of Montana's annual water supply.<sup>1</sup> Water supplies on national forests will become increasingly important to the state as climate change and continued development of private lands reduce available water.<sup>2</sup>

## Montanans Value Their Public Lands

**91 percent** believe public lands are essential to the state economy.

**70 percent** agree that national forests and other public lands help attract high-quality employers and good jobs.

**57 percent** hike, **60 percent** camp, **43 percent** participate in wildlife-related activities, and **63 percent** hunt and/or fish.

**73 percent** identify themselves as conservationists.

**66 percent** visit public lands six times or more per year, and 47 percent visit more than 20 times per year.

**78 percent** oppose selling public lands to reduce the budget deficit.

Sources: Colorado College, State of the Rockies Project, 2013, 2014 Conservation in the West Polls

## An Engine for Economic Growth

Like other western states with a large percentage of public lands, Montana is outpacing the nation in economic growth. The natural amenities offered by national forests and other public lands give the state a competitive advantage, attracting talent, investment and businesses and contributing to the state's high rate of employment and income growth.

Between 1970 and 2010, employment increased by 297 percent in rural counties in the West with land bases that are more than 20 percent protected federal lands and a whopping 345 percent in counties that are more than 30 percent protected lands.<sup>3</sup> These counties also have higher per-capita incomes (an average \$4,360 more) than other rural counties in the region.<sup>4</sup>

In Montana, total personal income grew by 35 percent from 2001 to 2013, fueled by 79,863 net new jobs—nearly 80 percent in service-related industries, including professional services, recreation, retail and hospitality. Mining, forestry and wood products contributed less than 7 percent of these new jobs to the state.<sup>5</sup>

National forests and other public lands are a huge draw for economy-boosting resident and nonresident outdoor recreationists. In 2011, 402,000 residents and visitors to Montana participated in wildlife watching, while 150,000 hunted and 267,000 fished. Some of the best angling waters in the state are in national forests, including the Bitterroot River, which alone supports 500 to 1,000 fish per mile and more than 100,000 angler days (one person fishing one body of water for any amount of time on a given day) annually.<sup>6</sup> In addition, 12 ski resorts are located on national forests in Montana. The state's ski industry supports more than 1,000 jobs—generating over



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**Montana is a fly-fishing mecca, and many of the state's most famous waters flow through national forests. This includes blue-ribbon trout streams like the Flathead, Bitterroot, Blackfoot, Big Hole, Clark Fork, Beaverhead, Madison, Gallatin and Yellowstone rivers. Fly fishing is a sustainable recreational activity that supports guides and outfitters, fly shops, restaurants and lodging establishments, generating millions of dollars of economic activity in local communities.**

\$25 million in income—and more than 1.3 million skier visits per year.<sup>7</sup>

This recreational activity adds up to some impressive revenue for the state:

- \$1.4 billion from wildlife-related recreation (2011)<sup>8</sup> including:
  - \$627 million (average \$4,133 per hunter) from hunting.
  - \$339 million (average \$1,230 per angler) from fishing.
  - \$401 million (average \$933 per participant) from wildlife watching.
- More than \$83 million from skiing (2009-2010 season).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brown, T. C., M. T. Hobbins and J. A. Ramirez. 2008. Spatial distribution of water supply in the conterminous United States. *J. Amer. Water Resources Assoc.* 44(6): 1474-1487.

<sup>2</sup> Natural Resources Defense Council. 2010. *Climate Change, Water, and Risk: Current Water Demands are Not Sustainable*; available at [www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/watersustainability/files/WaterRisk.pdf](http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/watersustainability/files/WaterRisk.pdf); T. C. Brown and P. Froemke. 2010. Risk of Impaired Condition of Watersheds Containing National Forest Lands. *Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-GTR-251*. U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. Fort Collins, CO.

<sup>3</sup> Headwaters Economics. 2012. *West Is Best: Protected Lands Promote Montana Jobs and Higher Incomes*; available at <http://headwaterseconomics.org/land/west-is-best-value-of-public-lands-mt>. (accessed Jan. 26, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Headwaters Economics. 2015. *Haymakers Report: Montana's Economy, Public Lands, and Competitive Advantage*. (February 2015). Available at <http://headwaterseconomics.org/wphw/wp-content/uploads/Montana-Economy-Report.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Grassy, J. 2014. Cold Storage. *Montana Flyfishing Magazine* 3(4), unpaginated.

<sup>7</sup> Nickerson, N. and K. Grau. 2010. *Economic Impact and Skier Characteristics, 2009-'10 Ski Season*. Research Report 2010-3. University of Montana, Institute for Tourism and Recreation. Bozeman, MT.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2012. *2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, Montana*. FHW/11-MT (RV). Available at [www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/fhw11-mt.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/fhw11-mt.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Nickerson, N. and K. Grau. 2010. *Economic Impact and Skier Characteristics, 2009-'10 Ski Season*.



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