

draft

The management of Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands in Montana has a significant and direct bearing on Montana's environment, education funding, economy, culture, wildlife, and the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens

Evaluating Federal Land Management in Montana

An identification of significant
risks, concerns, and solutions
Environmental Quality Council 2013-14

Environmental Quality Council Members

Before the close of each legislative session, the House and Senate leadership appoint lawmakers to interim committees. EQC members can serve up to three 2-year terms if re-elected and reappointed.

Members must be appointed before the 50th legislative day in accordance with 5-16-101, MCA.*

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* This information is included in order to comply with section 2-15-155, MCA.

This report is a summary of the work of the Environmental Quality Council, specific to the EQC's 2013-2014 study of federal land management as required by Senate Joint Resolution No. 15 and outlined in the 2013-14 work plan. Members received additional information and public testimony on the subject, and this report is an effort to highlight key information and the processes followed by the EQC in reaching its conclusions. To review additional information, including written minutes, exhibits, and audio minutes, visit the ETIC website:

www.leg.mt.gov/eqc



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Evaluating federal land management: The EQC responds

Study task: Evaluate public lands presently managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

Response: Reviewed land management by [county](#). Formed SJ15 Work Group that met bi-monthly through the interim.

Produced [study matrix](#) to identify risk and concerns, the desired corrections, barriers to the desired correction and solutions. Panelists included experts in legal matters related to federal lands, forest managers, representatives of land management agencies, and representatives of other western states.

Finding:

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Recommendations:

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Study task: Survey county commissions whose counties contain 15% or more land area under the management of the Forest Service and/or Bureau of Land Management.

Response: Developed and mailed [survey](#) to 35 counties. Responses received and analyzed from 28 counties. Survey topics included public health, safety, and welfare; environmental quality; economic productivity and sustainability; consistency with state and local objectives; and ownership and jurisdictional responsibilities.

Also [requested](#) same 35 counties to identify [specific projects](#) on federal land in need of forest restoration.

Finding: More than 20 counties said wildfire conditions on federal lands pose a significant threat and the hazard should be reduced to protect public health and safety.

Finding: Most respondents responded that motorized access to public lands is very important and the amount of access should be increased or at least maintained.

Finding: Most respondents said federal funds intended to offset the impacts of federal lands are not equivalent to amount of revenue earned if the lands were privately taxed or funds generated by responsible harvest and resource extraction.

Finding: Eighteen counties said federal land management actions are inconsistent with county objectives. Twelve counties said they want state assistance incorporating local objectives into federal management plans.

Finding: Twenty-three respondents said special interests have significant influence on the ability of federal agencies to develop and implement effective land and resource plans.

Recommendation:

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Study task: Analyze available information pertaining to the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands within Montana. Identify significant concerns or risks associated with these lands as well as solutions and goals to address those concerns or risks relative to:

- environmental quality;
- economic productivity and sustainability;
- public health, safety, and welfare;
- consistency with state and local objectives;
- ownership and jurisdictional responsibilities; and
- other aspects as considered appropriate by the assigned interim committee;

Response: Produced [study matrix](#) to identify risk and concerns, the desired corrections, barriers to the desired correction and solutions. Panelists included experts in legal matters related to federal lands, forest managers, representatives of land management agencies, and representatives of other western states.

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Study task: Identify measures that will help ensure that public lands within Montana are managed responsibly and prudently for present and future generations.

Response:

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Study task: Investigate all lawful mechanisms, including actions implemented in other states, that may aid in achieving desired goals.

Response: Panelists included experts in legal matters related to federal lands, forest managers, representatives of land management agencies, and representatives of other western states.

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Study task: Provide recommendations to agencies and the Legislature of necessary actions to achieve solutions and goals.

Response:

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