



July 31, 2025

Montana Board of Land Commissioners
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
1539 Eleventh Avenue
Helena, MT 59601

Re: Montana Great Outdoors Conservation Easement – Phase 2

Position: Support

Dear Montana Board of Land Commissioners,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, I write to convey our gratitude for approving Phase 1 of the Montana Great Outdoors Conservation Easement that conserved 32,822 acres earlier this year and to express our strong support for Phase 2 of the project. Building on the success of Phase 1, Phase 2 would limit development on an additional 52,930 acres in Flathead and Lincoln Counties to conserve working forests in perpetuity, protect fish and wildlife habitat, and preserve public access for hunting and fishing.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Montana's sportsmen and women depend on open spaces to hunt and fish, and their outdoor sporting traditions are at risk because of the rate at which lands are developed, and fish and wildlife habitat and hunting and fishing opportunities are consequently lost. The Montana Great Outdoors Conservation Easement – Phase 2 would conserve an important wildlife migration corridor and year-round habitat for popular species, including, elk, moose, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and Westslope cutthroat trout, among others, as well as guarantee that public hunting and fishing access is not closed on lands that Montana's sportsmen and women have depended on for two and a half decades. Access is a major limiting factor for participation in hunting and fishing, and Phase

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2's public access agreement would provide significant benefit for Montana's sportsmen and women on the almost 53,000 of land in addition to securing access to adjacent National Forest System lands popular with public land hunters and anglers.

Montana's forest industry is a significant economic driver, and Phase 2 would ensure that the forestland will continue to be managed sustainably for timber and other forest products to support the state's economy. Actively managing forest resources improves forest health and increases resilience to insects, diseases, and wildfire. Phase 2's perpetual working forest easement would ensure that the forestland will continue to be managed to reduce wildfire risk for nearby communities as well as provide a reliable timber supply for local mills.

As reported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 2025, Montana's sportsmen and women generated over \$94.8 million for state-based conservation through hunting and fishing license sales and matching Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program funds.¹ Moreover, hunters in Montana support 12,100 jobs, \$334,000,000 in salaries and wages, and \$47,000,000 in state and local taxes, with a total economic effect of \$1,125,000,000.² By conserving land open to the public for hunting and fishing, the project would further support Montana's outdoor heritage and economy.

In closing, CSF strongly supports the Montana Great Outdoors Conservation Easement – Phase 2, and we respectfully encourage you to approve the project to conserve Montana's working forests and hunting and fishing traditions for future generations. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Marie Neumiller
Assistant Manager, Northwestern States
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

¹ <https://s3.amazonaws.com/cdn.congressionalsportsmen.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/10143849/Montana-ASCF-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

² <https://sportsmensalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2020-Economic-Impact-of-Hunting-and-Shooting-Technical-Report-V2.pdf>

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