

# New Coalition to Protect Public Lands from Administration's Giveaways to Industry

*After 150 million acres lose protections under Trump, groups join forces to pressure companies that conduct or fund extraction to stay out of protected areas*

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, October 3, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In response to recent efforts by the Trump administration to roll back federal public lands protections and weaken bedrock environmental laws like the Endangered Species Act, the Antiquities Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act to allow expanded industrial activity, more than a dozen organizations have joined together to urge companies involved in



Wolves on the open range

mining or other extractive activities, and the banks that fund them, not to conduct or finance any new or expanded commercial activity on any public lands and waters that were formerly or are currently under legal or administrative protections, or that would impact these lands and waters, and to adopt a no-go policy clarifying this position.

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Pillaging our nation's public lands to line the pockets of oil barons, and ranchers beholden to industrial agriculture will have disastrous consequences for generations to come.”

*Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action*

[The coalition's statement of principles can be found here.](#)

“The Trump administration has thrown open the doors to its friends and allies in the fossil fuel and mining industries,” said Amanda Hurowitz, a spokesperson for the coalition. “But today we are standing up on behalf of the large majority of people in this country who support protections for our public lands.”

Federal protections for public lands have enjoyed bipartisan support for decades, and available polling

shows that attacks on public lands are highly controversial. A 2016 Hart Research Associates Poll showed that [91 percent](#) of voters across political parties ranked the protection and maintenance of national parks, public lands, and natural places as an important goal for the federal government.

Public lands are managed in trust by the federal government for current and future generations. Since taking office, the Trump administration has taken the unprecedented action of removing protections from more than [150 million acres](#) of public lands, and trying to remove protections for more than 119 million acres of public waters, areas that have been put into protection for their cultural, ecological, or recreational value. The administration has also offered up nearly 500 million acres of public land and water for oil and gas development.

“The last thing people want is more public lands privatized, strip-mined, or destroyed,” said

Hurowitz. "These are beautiful places that we want our children and grandchildren to enjoy. Handing them over to dirty industry just as we need to be addressing the climate crisis is both irresponsible and unpopular."

The Trump administration has already eliminated protections for public lands across the country, targeting varied ecosystems, treasured lands, and fragile habitat. These rollbacks include dramatically cutting down the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments, opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and previously protected areas of the Arctic Ocean to oil and gas exploration, and reducing protections put in place to safeguard sage-grouse habitat spanning seven western states.

In the weeks ahead, the coalition plans to mobilize both their grassroots members and a wide array of investors to urge companies to adopt no-go policies for developing in protected or previously protected public lands and waters, or in areas that could impact protected or previously protected areas.

Members of the coalition include:

American Hiking Society  
Alaska Wilderness League  
Animal Wellness Action  
Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Friends of the Earth  
League of Conservation Voters  
Mighty Earth  
National Audubon Society  
Sierra Club  
Sitka Conservation Society  
The Wilderness Society  
Utah Diné Bikéyah

Quotes from Coalition Members:

Marty Irby, Executive Director, Animal Wellness Action

"President Trump's Department of Interior has been a catastrophe for our iconic American wildlife since day one. Pillaging our nation's public lands to line the pockets of oil barons, and ranchers beholden to industrial agriculture will have disastrous consequences for generations to



A terrifying wild horse roundup in action

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come.”

Kate Van Waes, Executive Director, American Hiking Society:

“The most pressing threats to public lands are the removal of protections resulting in increased energy development. In the last three years, over 150 million acres of public lands have lost protections making them vulnerable to energy extraction. Such erosions, rather than expanding access, deprive hikers, anglers, hunters, campers, and all other permitted users the opportunity to enjoy their desired form of recreation.”

Davis Filfred (Diné), Chairman, Utah Diné Bikéyah Board:

“As Indigenous People of America, we are stewards of ancestral landscapes like Bears Ears and other cultural landscapes currently under threat from corporate hands. We ask the broader American public to stand with us to protect public lands - which starts with the recognition that Indigenous Peoples have always protected and will continue to protect their homelands.”

Athan Manuel, Director of Public Lands Protection, Sierra Club:

“People value public lands and they support companies that do too. There’s an opportunity now for corporations and financial institutions to speak for public lands with their actions—to make clear they won’t pursue dirty fuel development in special natural places.”

Tom Landwehr, Executive Director, Save the Boundary Waters:

“No bank should want to be known as the financier of the project that destroyed the Boundary Waters Wilderness. People love the Boundary Waters, and as they increasingly vote with their pocketbooks are watching closely what companies stand for. We’re excited to join this effort to help financial institutions understand the many risks associated with participating in the destruction of America’s special places.”

Kristen Miller, Conservation Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“For the past year, the Trump administration has been barreling forward with an aggressive plan to lease the fragile coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This process has ridden roughshod over science, silenced expert dissent, shut out indigenous communities, and ignored the law. The end product will turn the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge into the latest casualty of Trump’s plan to sell out our public lands and waters to the highest bidder, giving Big Oil everything it wants in its continued quest to do Trump’s bidding.

Those oil companies now considering exploiting this national treasure should think twice. With the support of two-thirds of the American public, \$2.5 trillion worth of investors, and major banks like Barclays, the House of Representatives has already taken decisive action against the rush to drill. As the impacts of our warming climate continue to become more and more real, this opposition will only grow. Companies should simply say no to the uneconomical, dubious proposal to develop the unparalleled Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.”

Alex Taurel, Conservation Program Director, League of Conservation Voters:

“The Trump administration’s removal of protections for public lands and waters and indigenous sacred lands is shameful and unpopular. We call on companies to publicly disavow these rollbacks and pledge not to exploit these majestic places. With the United States losing a football field of natural area to development every 30 seconds and the world facing the extinction of 1 million plant and animal species, responsible companies must step up and say no to the Trump administration’s efforts to turn our wildest areas over to big polluters.”

Nicole Ghio, Senior Fossil Fuels Program Manager, Friends of the Earth

“Any corporation or investor looking to profit from Trump’s rollbacks of land and water protections should think again. These actions by the Administration are often illegal and regularly overturned by the courts. Meanwhile, there is massive support for protecting our public lands and waters. Companies looking to make a quick buck will likely find their corporate image ruined for nothing.”

Leda Huta, Executive Director, Endangered Species Coalition

"Our public lands provide millions of acres of vital habitat for wildlife and imperiled species. The Administration's industry free-for-all on our public lands jeopardizes America's legacy of protecting fish, plants and wildlife for our children and our grandchildren."

Nada Culver, Vice President of Public Lands, National Audubon Society

"Birds from every state depend on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and others like the Greater Sage-Grouse in the West are already in crisis. This administration's actions undermining public lands' protections is contrary to what the majority of Americans want. With three billion birds already gone, corporations and banks have an opportunity to lead and protect these special places by declining to invest in commercial development of crucial public lands before it's too late while the courts and Congress address this unprecedented assault."

Matt Keller, Senior Campaign Director, The Wilderness Society

"Americans expect the government to protect our public lands, not sell them off to the highest bidder. But after opening up 150 million acres of our land and water to their friends in the extractive industry, it's clear that the Trump administration and Secretary Bernhardt simply can't be trusted. We're turning our attention to companies to make it clear that just because the Trump administration has given them permission to exploit America's public lands doesn't mean there won't be a massive public outcry if they do."

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Marty Irby

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