

America's Wilderness

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The Wilderness Society



Fired and Fed Up

Montanans attend the "Rally for Public Lands" in Helena's Capitol Rotunda in February 2025. Mason Cummings

America's public lands have been called our 'best idea' for almost two centuries. But within days of President Trump's oath of office, these magnificent treasures—along with the dedicated people who steward them on our behalf—fell squarely in political crosshairs.

After an executive order issued by the President in February promised to slash the government workforce, tens of thousands of employees were terminated across federal agencies, including those that manage public lands. All told,

upwards of 9,000 workers at the U.S. Forest Service will be forced out—that's 30% of its staff—and 2,000+ staff from the U.S. Department of the Interior.

This is just the beginning of a deliberate attempt to dismantle these agencies by reducing their workforces, closing facilities and slashing their budgets—and at a time when visitation soars annually to public lands.

While these actions are being fought in the courts, the realities are painful and costly to agency employees and their families.

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"The public lands are my life. Not just because I worked there. That's where I get my sense of wellbeing and quality of life."

—Scott Fitzwilliams, Former Supervisor of the White River National Forest in Colorado, who took an early retirement offer and stepped down in March.

Quote courtesy of Aspen Journalism

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7 MEET OUR NEW PRESIDENT, TRACY STONE-MANNING



Dear Conservation Champion,

Ninety years ago, The Wilderness Society was founded to protect the last wild places in the United States—that work is ongoing and continuously evolving, and I'm humbled to be a part of it with you.

I come to the organization knowing I stand on very strong shoulders—from Bob Marshall to Jamie Williams and so many in between. Their inspiring work propels us forward.

Granted, it isn't always easy to stay motivated right now. In fact, in a recent survey, many of you shared that you feel concerned, disheartened and tired. I hear you. These feelings resonate with me as I learn about the mass firing of federal workers at land management agencies and watch elected officials orchestrate ways to sell off our shared public lands.

But we also know this: public lands unite us all. And the will of the people will win the day. Your voices and spirit are why we have wild places for us all to enjoy. That won't change.

Hope exists in the places we love and the people we share them with. I'm personally motivated by your enduring commitment to The Wilderness Society's mission, and I feel immensely grateful to be embarking on this journey with you. Together, we can do this!

Tracy Stone-Manning
President

The Wilderness Society recognizes Native Americans and Indigenous peoples as the longest serving stewards of the land.

To learn more visit:


wilderness.org/landacknowledgment

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Questions or comments?

Please send an email to newsletter@tws.org

Design: Owen Design Co.



Terminations ravage already stretched agencies

Our public land management agencies are already severely understaffed and underfunded, with years-long maintenance backlogs they are unable to address. The problems have only gotten worse as extreme natural disasters driven by climate change have become more common.

Cloaked as ‘government efficiency,’ these staffing cuts have one goal: to dismantle public lands and dissolve their professional oversight, so the administration and its congressional allies can argue

for selling off our natural heritage to the highest bidder to pay for tax cuts for the ultra-wealthy (see story on page 4). We will not stop fighting this agenda: our cherished public lands need our voices—just as we need them to continue as havens for wildlife and recreation and sources of clean drinking water, contributing \$1.1 trillion annually to the U.S. economy and supporting five million jobs.

As we have for 90 years, and with you by our side, we will continue to marshal support and advocate for the lands we love and the people who care for them.

Here’s how we expect to see—or have already seen—impacts to public lands:

Curtailed visitor services

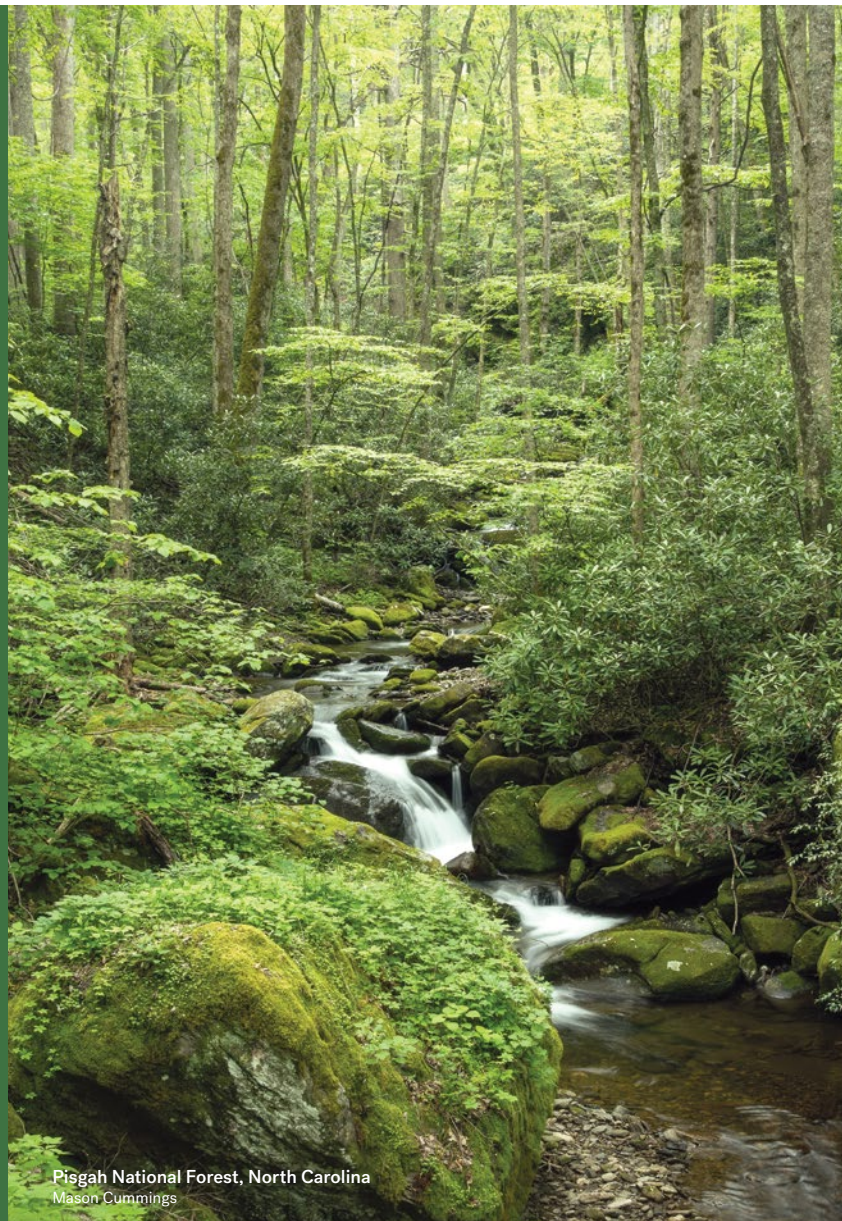
Many public lands will see outright suspension of certain services, including entrance stations, visitor centers and guided tours. At a time when public lands are seeing record numbers, visitors will encounter unkempt trails, locked toilets and overflowing dumpsters at campgrounds.

Diminished emergency response and recovery

Staff terminations have seriously harmed the nation’s ability to prepare for and react to life-threatening natural disasters that occur on public lands. This is a frightening reality for communities, both in the West and Southeast, where conditions are contributing to an uncommon and vicious fire season that puts human lives and ecosystems at risk.

Harm to wildlife and cultural resources

Public lands protect biodiversity and are the homelands of Indigenous people. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service terminations have targeted hundreds of field biologists and environmental scientists who monitor wildlife and document habitat loss. Cuts at the Bureau of Land Management and other agencies mean that fewer archaeologists and land managers are working with Tribal Nations to preserve sacred sites.



Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina
Mason Cummings



Selloff in Sheep's Clothing

While public lands agency staff is gutted, the White House and its allies in Congress are working furiously to undermine the very policies and laws that protect America's public lands system—all veiled in promises to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy or offset the national debt. This concerted effort, through executive orders, court cases and congressional actions, is fundamentally designed to ensure public lands are sold off for private profit.

It's a backwards agenda that has reared its ugly head in the past, first in the 1980s and again in the first Trump administration. Each time it has been met with fierce and unwavering opposition from every

corner of the country. But with extremist ideologies in positions of power, the threat is real.

The Selloff Rap Sheet

Congress has moved this agenda aggressively forward: in May, two Republicans attached an amendment to the House budget reconciliation bill that proposed to sell off more than 500,000 acres of public lands in Utah and Nevada. The surprise move prompted an outcry, including from Wilderness Society supporters. Citing public opposition, Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-MT) led an effort to strip the amendment from the final House bill, although the bill still passed with provisions that will directly harm public lands and people who depend on them.

Specifically, the budget bill would increase logging on national forests, mandate lease sales for oil and gas on public lands and reinstate mining in the watershed for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness—all while blocking the public's rights to go to court. As the measure moves to the Senate, we will continue to fight all harmful public lands provisions.

At the administrative level, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Scott Turner launched a task force this spring to expedite giving away public lands to purportedly address the nation's housing crisis. It fails to mention existing laws that could be used to strategically



At an April 2025 event in Asheville, North Carolina, our Southeastern States Director Jill Gottesman joined many partners in voicing support for public lands.

dispose of small acreage for community needs and calls for the maximum number of acres they could give away. While the executive branch does not have the power to dispose of public lands, these efforts create the model for Congress to use its constitutional power to do so.

The Trump administration is also targeting national monuments and other protected lands to rollback protections and pave the way for energy development on tens of millions of acres' worth of wildlife habitat, ancient cultural sites and outdoor recreation areas. At risk are Chuckwalla and Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni - Ancestral Footprints National Monuments—which were protected with your support during the Biden administration—as well as Bears Ears and many other national monuments.

Intense Public Outcry

People are gathering at statehouses and townhalls, excoriating the Trump

administration and its allies for daring to put public lands and their employees on the chopping block. From Boise to Albuquerque, Helena to Salt Lake City and Asheville, people are showing their frustration and showing up for public lands and the employees who care for them.

Few other issues unite us more than the shared freedom to roam outside. That unity was on full display this winter when The Wilderness Society and its partners supported Montana Rep. Ryan Zinke, a Republican, in reintroducing his “Public Lands in Public Hands” bill with New Mexico Rep. Gabe Vasquez, a Democrat. The legislation would ban the sale or transfer of most public lands by the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service and would require congressional oversight of any public lands disposal. This bipartisan effort echoes what the public feels: the plan to sell off public lands—no matter how disguised it is—is a non-starter.

The Wilderness Society's strategies, trusted presence in local communities, and array of federal policy and legal expertise are pushing back aggressively on these attacks.

United Front: we're bringing stakeholders together to fight this agenda, including hunters and anglers, business owners, veterans and many others

Turning Up the Volume: we're spreading awareness and turning out supporters for public lands at local rallies and town halls

Relationships Matter: we're on Capitol Hill to drive conservation champions to take on-the-record positions against public lands selloff efforts

Good Neighbors: we're helping grassroots partner organizations apply pressure on elected officials to support public lands at all levels



Legislators defend public lands' values in Colorado's State Capitol in March 2025. Megan Waters

Cutting the Public Out of Public Lands

The Trump administration has slashed protections for more than 110 million acres of our national forests—ordering a 25% increase in logging across the forest system that will threaten wildlife and clean drinking water. This is part of a disturbing trend to cut public access and turn public lands over to timber, oil and gas companies under the guise of a phony national emergency.

A secretarial forest order has fast-tracked timber production by short-cutting National Environmental Policy Act requirements—meaning there will be little to no scientific review or public ability to weigh in.

They're not just after the trees: the administration and DOGE are planning to continue to axe the Forest Service's employee ranks, including firefighters who step out of their agency day

jobs and into firefighting gear when flames threaten nearby communities. Trump's cabinet orders are far from a solution that will address longer, hotter wildfire seasons.

We've anticipated these kinds of attacks and are ready to defend our national forests in court. We continue to invest in building strong partnerships across the country, educating the press and urging Congress to oppose these harmful forest policies.

These cumulative attacks are par for the course: the administration has publicly indicated their intent to dismantle multiple public lands regulations adopted last year by the Biden administration, including the Public Lands Rule, the Oil and Gas Leasing Rule, the Western Arctic Rule and policies to modernize the National Environmental Policy Act, which gives people a say in what happens to our natural world. While they plot to undo and destroy, we sharpen our defensive strategies and are strengthened by your incredible support.

Here's what you can do to help us save public lands:

1. Contact administrative officials and voice your concerns
2. Sign up for Wild Alerts at wilderness.org/alert to voice concerns to the administration
3. Attend public lands town hall meetings
4. Say thank you and applaud good actions
5. Help public lands rallies succeed by attending when you can
6. Use your social networks
7. Write opinion columns in your local news outlets



Your stories. Your values. Your legacy.

Act now to ensure your plans are in place to make an everlasting difference for wilderness.

For more information on how to craft your legacy:

wilderness.org/giftplanning
888-736-4897
giftplanning@tws.org

Meet Our New President, Tracy Stone- Manning



FAST FACTS ABOUT TRACY

Favorite wilderness area: Bob Marshall Wilderness Area in Montana

Favorite camp snack or meal: Coffee

Future trip ideas: to float a river in Alaska, or hike deep into Bears Ears National Monument in Utah

Hiking buddies: My husband and our English Springer-Spaniel, Puck

In February, The Wilderness Society officially welcomed Tracy Stone-Manning as our new president! We are excited to have her leadership, energy and vast experience guiding our organization into this new chapter.

With a background in public service, community engagement and environmental policy and advocacy, Tracy has spent her career fighting for wild places and the people who care about them. She most recently served as director of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the nation's largest land management agency, where she oversaw the stewardship of 245 million acres of public lands.

As we get to know Tracy, we want you to get to know her, too. We asked her to share her vision for the future—and answer some of the big questions conservationists are asking today.

What roles do Wilderness Society members have in driving

the mission forward during these particularly challenging times? Well, for starters, change happens when our members stand up, right? Your passion and commitment, that is what is going to drive us forward and make us successful with our mission. The good news is that people are united in their love of public lands. I'm confident and hopeful that that unity will win the day.

What is your vision for the organization in the next few years? We're going to defend our nation's conservation legacy, public lands and the places that are so special to all people. And we're going to do that with our members' voices. Because when people come together, they can move mountains.

What is the best path for advancing conservation efforts given that federal policies have now shifted away from conservation? Over and over in my career, I've seen that

when people work together in communities, it doesn't matter what the political landscape is—they work wonders. And so, at The Wilderness Society, we're going to continue working in place and preparing proposals for protective designations, so that when the political atmosphere is ready for it, we'll be ready for it.

What helps you stay positive and focused when we see growing challenges to The Wilderness Society's vision of people and nature flourishing together? Being outside. Every time I need to think something through, I go for a walk or a hike on our public lands. It's what grounds me. I love to go into wilderness, because the problems of our time don't feel so big there. I feel small personally. So, I try to touch nature and be grounded by it so that we can bring that voice and that wisdom to the work.



You can listen to the full audio interview by scanning the QR code or by visiting wilderness.org/TalkwithTracy



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Deadline: September 30

Red fox, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska
Lisa Hupp, USFWS