



## **Background on the Trump Administrations Abysmal Record on Parks and Public Lands**

Trump is responsible for the largest [reduction](#) of public land protections in U.S. history and [opened](#) industrial-scale development in [migratory corridors](#) and critical habitat that Interior Secretary Bernhardt vowed to maintain.

Bernhardt's Interior is desperately trying to [thwart transparency](#) and skirt [public oversight](#) of himself and his department – industry and lobbyists are [dictating policies](#) that are destroying the West's vast outdoor resource, which provides lasting [economic value](#) to rural Western communities.

Bernhardt became the subject of a multi-faceted [investigation](#) just four days after his **confirmation** for multiple ethics violations related to decisions that benefited former clients. He is the most conflicted member of Trump's cabinet, with some 26-known special interest [conflicts](#).

### **The Trump Administration Has Stripped Protections from 13.5 Million Acres of Public Lands**

Trump's executive actions have **put him well in the red** when it comes to conserving America's lands and waters—which he claimed he'd protect—both for permanent land protections and for mineral withdrawals. In fact, the administration has spent its time in office [stripping](#) protections from a staggering 13.5 million acres of American lands and waters.

### **The Land And Water Conservation Fund Is Vital To Protecting Yellowstone National Park And Other Public Lands In Montana, But David Bernhardt Supports Gutting The Program**

**The Land And Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has been a boon to Yellowstone National Park And Montana.**

A [purchase](#) made through LWCF made it possible to close a gold mine on “The Doorstep Of Yellowstone National Park” in 2010. “Fourteen years after the Clinton White House stepped in to halt a gold mine from being built on the doorstep of Yellowstone National Park, a final piece of the settlement puzzle has been slid into place with the purchase of nearly 800 acres of private lands. The announcement Tuesday that the Trust for Public Land and the U.S. Forest Service had closed on the purchase of 772 acres of land, and its underlying mineral rights, roughly 4 miles beyond the park's northeast entrance was applauded by Montana politicians and conservationists who in the 1990s worried that mining would send mineral



wastes and chemicals into the park via Soda Butte Creek. [...] A total of \$8 million was secured for the two-year purchase from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the primary funding source for land acquisitions by the U.S. government. The appraised value for all 1,468 acres of the mining claims was \$9 million.”

**“LWCF has [invested](#) more than \$579 million to protect Montana’s open spaces, historic sites and increase recreation access.** From national parks and national forests to ballfields and community parks, LWCF has protected places like Bitterroot National Forest, Nez Perce National Historical Park, Lolo National Forest, Lone Pine State Park and, of course, Glacier National Park. Communities that depend on Montana’s thriving public recreation economy, like Missoula, are built on the backbone of LWCF. Montana’s \$7.1 billion outdoor recreation industry is an economic powerhouse — supporting 71,000 jobs which generate \$2.2 billion in wages and salaries and produces \$286 million annually in state and local tax revenue.”

**But there are still places in Montana that need LWCF funding.**

**LWCF funding is [needed](#) to support the Lolo Trail Conservation Project in Montana.** “An appropriation of \$2.85 million from the Forest Legacy Program through the Land and Water Conservation Fund in FY 2020, as requested by the state of Montana, would ensure that the Lolo Trail Conservation Project can move ahead and that its many significant economic, recreation and natural resource values will be protected in perpetuity, before they are lost forever.”

The Lolo National Forest encompasses two million acres of forest lands along the I-90 Corridor stretching from just south of Missoula to the very northwest reaches of Montana. It is an extremely popular destination for millions of visitors each year who enjoy the spectacular scenery and incredible array of outdoor recreation opportunities including outstanding big game hunting and blue-ribbon fisheries. An appropriation of \$4.4 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund in FY 2020 is urgently needed to begin the permanent protection of these very significant lands and prevent their valuable resources from being lost forever.”

**There are at least three proposed LWCF land purchases in Montana that are still pending.** They include land at Mill Creek, Swan Valley, and Marshall Canyon. [Land and Water Conservation Fund: Proposed Land Purchases, [accessed 06/12/19](#)]

**Recently, a long wait on LWCF Funding caused a four-year plan to purchase key elk habitat near Yellowstone National Park to “[fall through](#).”** A land purchase was necessary to protect key elk habitat between Yellowstone National Park and the Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Montana. “The main reason for the acquisition was to provide wildlife



habitat between Yellowstone National Park and the Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area, prime elk winter range at the southern end of the Paradise Valley. Elk regularly traverse the steep mountainside between the two as the seasons change. The land also provides grizzly bear habitat.” Eventually, a private landowner had to negotiate giving the land to the USFS in a swap for a federal parcel within his ranch.

**David Bernhardt has defended the Trump administration’s budget requests that would nearly zero out LWCF funding.**

“The Department Of Interior’s 2020 budget, released yesterday [cuts federal funding for LWCF by 95 Percent and would devastate the National Park Service](#) by eliminating **hundreds of jobs** from park operations and cutting major funds from maintenance and park management,’ Neguse wrote in a statement to the Summit Daily. ‘The president’s budget does not represent the interests of Coloradans and would have a detrimental impact on our economy, our public lands and the American people.’”

**While David Bernhardt was Deputy Secretary of the Interior, DOI [defended](#) Donald Trump’s restrictive budget request.** “Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Tuesday defended the \$1.6 billion in funding cuts that President Trump has proposed for his department, telling a Senate hearing that ‘this is what a balanced budget looks like.’”

Donald Trump’s **FY 2018 budget request would have [cut LWCF by 84 Percent](#).** “Trump’s budget makes deep cuts to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. LWCF uses a tax on federal offshore oil- and gas leases for recreation projects and to create parks. The program has raised more than \$3 billion over more than a half-century and enjoys wide bipartisan support. ‘Trump’s budget proposes to cut LWCF by 84 percent, from \$400 million down to \$64 million.’”

Donald Trump’s **FY 2019 budget request went even further-- it would have [cut LWCF by 98 percent](#).** “The proposed budget would cut LWCF to \$8 million, down 98 percent from the \$400 million earmarked in Fiscal Year 2017 and less than 1 percent of the maximum authorized annually under full funding, which is \$900 million...the Trump administration’s budget request has drawn criticism from a host of influential conservation groups and elected leaders who worry the Interior Secretary’s support is eroding, and they’ve zeroed in on the proposed cuts as evidence that critical funding for air and water quality, which prop up Montana’s economy and are ingrained in its values, are in jeopardy.” [The Flathead Beacon, [02/18/18](#)]

**David Bernhardt testified before a Congressional committee to “[defend](#)” the FY2020 budget request.** “Interior Secretary David Bernhardt and Energy Secretary Rick Perry are due on Capitol Hill this week to defend their budget requests. Their appearance will come as



lawmakers search for a bicameral compromise on spending levels for fiscal 2020 and as communities pressure members to ink a deal on a disaster package. Bernhardt is making his first House appearance since being sworn in last month. He will testify before the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Environment.”

### **The Government Shutdown Hurt Montana’s Local Economies And Gateway Communities**

Governor Steve **Bullock** [called](#) “...for a quick end to the federal government shutdown, which he said is having clear negative effects on Montana national parks and on the communities surrounding them. ‘It’s led to trash piling up at Yellowstone and Glacier, it’s led to the cancellation of visits, to the inability to do offseason work, it’s hurting the local economies of our gateway communities,’ he said. ‘Our parks and our public servants are not bargaining chips for policies.’”

**Montana businesses** [said](#) they took “a big hit” because of the government shutdown. “With National monuments closed due to the government shutdown, this includes the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, just an hour away from Billings. As a result, one small business which relies heavily on the surrounding tourism is taking a big hit. ‘Govt employees might be getting their pay withheld, so it will affect us. the tribe now is low on money and because of that it will certainly be reflected on our sales and our food sales as well,’ said Putt Thompson, the owner of the Custer Battlefield Trading Post.”

**Over 2,300 Interior employees in Montana, in different sub-departments of Interior, were** [furloughed or worked without pay](#) during the government shutdown. “In Montana, an estimated 2,300 Interior Department employees, including those working for the following agencies, are furloughed or working without pay. The National Park Service supports Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks, encompassing more than 3 million acres. The Bureau of Indian Affairs funds critical services for 42,000 American Indians based in Montana, including health care, law enforcement, housing, disaster relief, and infrastructure maintenance. The U.S. Geological Survey conducts research on natural resource issues, including earthquakes, which have been a concern in the state since a magnitude 5.8 earthquake occurred in 2017. The Bureau of Land Management Montana/Dakotas State Office manages 8.3 million acres of federal lands and about 47.2 million acres of federal mineral estate. The Bureau of Reclamation is the nation’s largest wholesale water supplier and second-largest hydropower producer. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates 23 national wildlife refuges in the state, including the National Bison Range.”

During the government shutdown, **Glacier National Park** [limited emergency services](#) and **halted visitor services**. “Glacier National Park spokeswoman Lauren Alley said roads and



trails in Glacier National Park will remain accessible to visitors, but emergency and rescue services will be limited. There also will be no NPS-provided visitor services at Glacier National Park, including public information, restrooms, trash collection, and facilities and roads maintenance. Vault toilets may still be available though not maintained. Plowing will be limited to areas that serve residential areas." [KRTV3, [12/22/18](#)]

The government shutdown **stopped Glacier National Park from doing [vital summer hiring](#)**. "Up at Glacier National Park, spokeswoman Lauren Alley said she would try to find out how backlogged the park's seasonal hiring process got after a month of inaction. But she wasn't sure she could get an answer on Monday. 'Hiring is a lot of what we do in the winter, and January is when the hiring managers would expect to be doing interviews and calling references between now and February. But today they've got really pressing deadlines with payroll.' They're also investigating reports of unsupervised visitors flying drones and running dogs off-leash inside the park's boundaries while rangers were furloughed."

### **Bernhardt Praised President Trump During The Shutdown**

**During the shutdown, David Bernhardt thanked President Trump for his "incredible leadership."** David Bernhardt [tweeted](#) that President Trump "is showing incredible leadership by providing Congress with a common sense path forward to reopen our government and deliver border security!"