



AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING STATE LAND LAWS RELATED TO ACCESS; PROVIDING A TAX CREDIT FOR QUALIFIED ACCESS TO STATE LANDS; CREATING THE UNLOCKING STATE LANDS PROGRAM; DEFINING PARCELS NOT PREVIOUSLY DEEMED LEGALLY ACCESSIBLE; PROVIDING CRITERIA FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPATION; PROVIDING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY; AND PROVIDING A DELAYED EFFECTIVE DATE, AN APPLICABILITY DATE, AND A TERMINATION DATE.

WHEREAS, the Legislature wishes to increase access by the public to publicly owned, state lands; and  
WHEREAS, increasing access to public lands will provide additional opportunities for activities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and other recreational opportunities as determined by the commission; and  
WHEREAS, the unlocking state lands program will provide incentives for participating landowners to increase public access to state lands.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

**Section 1. Credit for unlocking state lands program.** (1) A taxpayer is allowed a credit against the taxes imposed by Title 15, chapter 30 or 31, in the amount of \$500 for each qualified access to state land, as defined in 77-1-101, that is provided. The maximum credit that a taxpayer may claim in a year under this section is \$2,000.

(2) If the amount of the credit exceeds the taxpayer's liability under Title 15, chapter 30 or 31, the amount of the excess must be refunded to the taxpayer. The credit may be claimed even if the claimant has no taxable income.

(3) For purposes of this section, "qualified access to state land" means an access established through a taxpayer's property to a parcel of state land for recreational use and certified by the department of fish, wildlife, and parks pursuant to [section 2].

(4) If the property through which access is provided is owned by multiple taxpayers, the taxpayers may claim a proportionate share of the \$500 credit based on their respective ownership interests in that property.

(5) If qualified access to the same parcel of state land is provided through separate properties owned by different taxpayers, the taxpayer for each property may claim a \$500 credit.

**Section 2. Unlocking state lands program -- purpose -- commission rulemaking authority.** (1) The legislature finds that increasing access to public lands will provide additional opportunities for activities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities as determined by the commission.

(2) The department may establish and administer a voluntary program to encourage access through private land to parcels not previously deemed legally accessible to be known as the unlocking state lands program.

(3) Private land is not eligible for the unlocking state lands program if outfitting or commercial hunting restricts public hunting opportunities on that land.

(4) If the parcel not previously deemed legally accessible is leased state land under Title 77, chapter 1, only the lessee with a qualified access to that state land under [section 1] is eligible for the unlocking state lands program.

(5) (a) A contract for participation in the unlocking state lands program is established through a cooperative agreement between the landowner and the department that guarantees reasonable access to state land through the landowner's private land. This contract serves as certification that the landowner is providing qualified access to state land and is eligible for the tax credit identified in [section 1]. The contract must include a certification number for identification purposes. The department shall provide a copy of the contract to the landowner and notify the department of revenue of the certification number.

(b) Contracts may be established with landowners who, prior to [the effective date of this act], provided access to state land that was otherwise not legally accessible under subsection (9). Landowners who establish contracts under this subsection (5)(b) are eligible to receive the tax credit identified in [section 1].

(6) The commission shall develop rules for establishing contracts under this section regarding:

- (a) duration of access;
- (b) types of qualified access; and
- (c) reasonable landowner-imposed limitations.

(7) The department shall provide public notice of any available qualified access to state land established through the unlocking state lands program.

(8) Recreational users of access established by the unlocking state lands program shall remain in the prescribed access route as defined by the contract in subsection (5).

(9) For purposes of this section, "parcels not previously deemed legally accessible" means state land that cannot be accessed by:

- (a) public road, right-of-way, or easement;
- (b) public waters;
- (c) adjacent federal, state, county, or municipal land that is open to public use; or
- (d) adjacent private land because that landowner has not granted permission to cross.

**Section 3. Codification instruction.** (1) [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 15, chapter 30, part 23, and the provisions of Title 15, chapter 30, part 23, apply to [section 1].

(2) [Section 2] is intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 87, chapter 1, part 2, and the provisions of Title 87, chapter 1, part 2, apply to [section 2].

**Section 4. Effective date.** [This act] is effective January 1, 2014.

**Section 5. Applicability.** [This act] applies to tax years beginning after December 31, 2013.

**Section 6. Termination.** [This act] terminates December 31, 2018.

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,  
HB 0444, originated in the House.

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Chief Clerk of the House

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Speaker of the House

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day  
of \_\_\_\_\_, 2013.

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President of the Senate

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day  
of \_\_\_\_\_, 2013.

HOUSE BILL NO. 444

INTRODUCED BY JACOBSON, B. BENNETT, BLASDEL, CONNELL, DOANE, FLYNN, HUNTER, KARY,  
LIESER, MCNALLY, MEHLHOFF, MILLER, O'HARA, PIERSON, POMNICHOWSKI, PRICE, VAN DYK,  
VANCE, WASHBURN, WELBORN, WILMER

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