



# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

# RECEIVED

AUG 26 2013

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JOE KOLMAN, Legislative Environmental Analyst

## Beaverhead

### SJ-15 SURVEY OF MONTANA COUNTY COMMISSIONS

This official state survey is required by the passage of Senate Joint Resolution No. 15 by the 2013 Legislature for a study evaluating the management of certain federal lands in Montana, assessing risks, and identifying solutions. Your county was selected for this survey because 15% or more of the land in your county is managed by a federal agency.

Surveys returned by Aug. 23 will be distributed to the EQC for the September meeting. If it is not possible to meet that deadline, please return the survey by Nov. 1. Attach any supplemental explanations, comments, suggestions, or other information your board finds pertinent.

#### PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)

1. Do current wildfire conditions on federal lands within your county pose a significant threat to:  
 Public Health and Safety       Public Property       Private Property

2. Do you believe fire hazard on federally managed lands should be reduced to protect public health and safety within your county?  
 Yes       No       Unsure

3. Regarding the water supply your citizens use, does current federal land management of watersheds:  
 Optimize water yield       Diminish water yield       Have no impact

4. How important is it for people of your county to have motorized access to public lands for sustenance activities such as gathering wood, picking berries, harvesting wild game, etc.?  
 Very Important       Not Important       Unsure

5. Is there an adequate supply of motorized roads on federal lands in your county to accommodate emergency ingress/egress, facility maintenance, public access, and resource management?  
 Yes       No       Unsure

6. Regarding multiple-use recreational access routes on federal lands, does your county desire:  
 Increased Multi-Use Access       Reduced Multi-Use Access       Keep

Access As Is

**ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)**

7. Do you believe current fuel loads on any of the federal lands within your county could result in severe, uncontrollable, or catastrophic wildfires? (If so, provide geographic location in attachment)

Yes       No       Unsure

8. Is a high intensity wildfire on federal lands likely to cause a loss of important fish & wildlife habitat or harm Threatened or Endangered Species in your county (e.g. grizzly bears, lynx, sage grouse, black-footed ferret, bull trout)?

Yes       No       Unsure

*FISH WILDLIFE HABITAT*

*ENDANGERED SPECIES*

9. Are environmental threats such as noxious weeds and bark beetle adequately controlled on federal lands within your county?

Yes       No       Unsure

10. Does the air quality in your county fall below acceptable health standards due to smoke originating from fires on federally managed lands?

Yes       No       Unsure

**ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY AND SUSTAINABILITY: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)**

11. Is the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT revenues) your county derives from federally managed lands equivalent to the amount that actual land taxation of these lands would bring?

Yes       No      Please estimate PILT as a percentage of county budget.

*2013 8.4%*

12. Is the amount your county derives from the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funds equivalent to the amount that your county could derive from responsible harvest or extraction of natural resources?

Yes       No      Please estimate SRS as a percentage of county budget.

*2013 16%*

13. Is the economic productivity and number of related private sector jobs commensurate with the resource production capacity of the federally managed lands within your county?

Yes       No       Unsure

14. Are federal policies for Threatened or Endangered Species adversely impacting private land owners, businesses, industries, or citizens within your county?

Yes       No       Unsure

15. Has federal land management resulted in adverse impacts to your county's economy?

Yes       No       Unsure

16. Do you believe changes in federal land management are necessary to increase your county's economy, employment opportunities, or tax base?  
 Yes       No       Unsure

**CONSISTENCY WITH STATE AND LOCAL OBJECTIVES: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)**

17. Are federal land management actions consistent with your county's objectives?  
 Yes       No       Unsure

18. Would your county like state assistance incorporating local government objectives into federal land management actions?  
 Yes       No       Unsure

**OWNERSHIP AND JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**

19. Has your county experienced conflicts with federal ownership or jurisdictional responsibilities?  
 Yes       No      (Please attach detailed description of conflicts)

20. How much influence do you believe special interests have on the ability of federal agencies to develop and implement effective land and resource management plans on federal lands in your county?  
 None       Moderate (please explain)       Significant (please explain)

21. On a separate sheet, please describe your county's most significant concerns with federal land management, including current and past relations and communications with federal agencies and other relevant factors you believe legislators should be aware of, and provide any ideas that may help reduce risks or resolve concerns.

Thank you for your assistance. Please return your County Commission's response to:

Environmental Quality Council  
ATTN: Joe Kolman, SJ15 Survey  
Room 171B, Capitol Building  
P.O. Box 201704  
Helena, MT 59620-1704

Submitted by: *C. Thomas Rice* CHAIRMAN

Date: *8/23/13*      Attested by: *Debra L. Scott, BHP Clerk & Recorder*

If you have questions or would like more information please contact Joe Kolman, staff for the EQC, at (406) 444-3747 or jkolman@mt.gov or Sen. Jennifer Fielder, the sponsor of SJ15, at (406) 210-5944 or by email at Sen.JFielder@legmt.gov

**Question 19:**

1. Under Forest Service regulations, private fire wood harvesters are prohibited vehicle access beyond 30 feet of a Forest Service road. Whereas, the BLM allows 300 foot vehicle access. The Forest Service's response is that they are unable to change this regulation.
2. Refuge Revenue Sharing Act. The Red Rock Refuge is unable to get federal appropriations to pay its county revenue sharing payment.
3. Travel management. Multiple use access on road closures.
4. Lack of communications. Example: Title II money sequestration.
5. Schedule "A" agreements. Forest Service depends on the County to maintain its roads. There have been no Schedule "A" Agreements for several years due to the Forest Service's lack of money.

**Question 20:**

1. All timber harvest activities, such as fire salvage sales and standing green timber sales, are appealed and litigated to the detriment of Beaverhead County.
2. Watershed assessments by both the Forest Service and the BLM are appealed or objected to by environmental groups.

3. Endangered Species Act dramatically changes the management of private lands.
4. Partnership Strategy: Two small specific interest groups are drastically affecting federal legislation and forest management to the detriment of Beaverhead County.

**Question 21:**

1. Constant turn-over of supervisory personnel on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.
2. Wilderness designation severally impacts Beaverhead County's economy.
3. See comments in Questions 19 and 20.