



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

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AUG 26 2013

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HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1704
(406) 444-3742

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JOE KOLMAN, Legislative Environmental Analyst

Powell

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)

- Do current wildfire conditions on federal lands within your county pose a significant threat to:

Public Health and Safety Public Property Private Property
- Do you believe fire hazard on federally managed lands should be reduced to protect public health and safety within your county?

Yes No Unsure
- Regarding the water supply your citizens use, does current federal land management of watersheds:

Optimize water yield Diminish water yield Have no impact
- 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
- 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
- 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

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.

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.

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:



Date: 8/21/13

Attested by:


Shane S. Gray
Powell County 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

Environmental Quality:

7. The east side of the Deer Lodge Valley was hit by the Pine Bark Beetle approximately eight (8) years ago. The County provided \$80,000 to do a pre NEPA study. Senator Tester arranged a one million dollar appropriation for a contracted NEPA study to allow a stewardship program on 30,000 acres of bug kill. The last Forest Service proposal was for a 2,000 acre harvest of zero value timber and that is being litigated.

11. Fifty percent (50%) of the land in our county is federally owned. The PILT payment is split with one-half going to law enforcement and one-half to the general fund. When the PILT payment is what is termed fully funded, it is at approximately \$600,000. With \$300,000 in a million dollar budget, it's approximately thirty percent (30%) of the law enforcement budget. This year, our law enforcement preliminary budget is \$150,000 short. When I look at the amount of federally owned land in our county, the majority of which is timbered and multiply that by the average tax on timber, the full PILT payment should be \$1,500,000. Without a PILT payment, we may have to reduce law enforcement to two deputies 24/7 coverage.

12. The fully funded SRS amounts to ten percent (10%) of our county budget or sixty-six percent (66%) of our road budget.

19. The District Ranger made the decision to let a forest fire burn against the wishes of the County Commissioners and DES, the State Forester and the Forest Service fire crews.

21. The biggest concern with federal management is the lack of management. A healthy forest must be managed like you would a garden or crop. The plant population must be balanced with the available soil, water and sun light. Forests that are properly managed and thinned are much less likely to have a catastrophic wild fire. Whether it is EPA, Forest Service policy, budget cuts or litigation, a very small amount of Forest Service timber is being managed properly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "D. J. [unclear]", written in a cursive style.