ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

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(406) 444-3742

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AUG 26 2013
LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY OFFICE

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DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE
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Stillwater

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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:

_X_ Public Health and Safety _X_ Public Property _X_ Private Property

2. Do you believe fire hazard on federally managed lands should be reduced to protect public health and safety within your county?

_X_ Yes ____ No ____ Unsure

3. Regarding the water supply your citizens use, does current federal land management of watersheds:

____ Optimize water yield ____ Diminish water yield _X_ 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.?

_X_ 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 _X_ No ____ Unsure

6. Regarding multiple-use recreational access routes on federal lands, does your county desire:

____ Increased Multi-Use Access ____ Reduced Multi-Use Access _X_ 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)

_X_ 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)?

_X_ Yes _____ No _____Unsure

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

_____ Yes _X_ 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 _X_ 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 _X_ 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 _X_ 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 _X_ No _____ Unsure

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

_X_ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

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

_X_ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

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

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

OWNERSHIP AND JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

19. Has your county experienced conflicts with federal ownership or jurisdictional responsibilities?
X 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) X 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: Gerald W. Dell Stillwater County Commission Chair

Date: 8-22-2013 Attested by: Dennis Skupak commissioner

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

SJ-15 Survey
Question 21 - Attachment
Comments

Stillwater County has had a good relationship with the local federal agencies personnel. These agencies have to follow direction from their higher ups and those directions at times have not been supported by Stillwater County.

We list the following significant concerns which effect Stillwater County:

- Outfitting has to follow very strict rules that make it difficult to make ends meet.
- Grazing allotment acreage reduction and increased fees has hurt the livestock producer. AUM reduction on grazing allotment has also adversely effected the livestock producer.
- Equal access to justice. Taxpayers should not have to pay legal expenses for groups or people that delay or block development of natural resources on federal lands.
- Emphases of federal land management should get back to multiple use rather than recreation over natural resources.
- "One size fits all" approach to reclamation bonds is resulting in unreasonable escalation of costs.
- The loss of Categorical Exclusions for mineral explorations on federal lands causes added expense and delays economic development for rural counties and other local governments.