

CONNECT. PROTECT. ELECT. TURNING MONTANA VALUES INTO PRIORITIES.

Montana Conservation Voters

MCV MATTERS

Happy May, Montana Conservation Voters!

As summer approaches, momentum is building — and for good reason. A lot has happened, and even more lies ahead.

The 2025 legislative session has officially wrapped up. The 69th Montana Legislature brought both important wins and tough setbacks for conservation. While we celebrated meaningful progress, we also faced deeply frustrating moments — reminding us just how much work remains.

But through it all, Montanans showed up. You showed up. You testified, emailed, called, signed petitions, and traveled to Helena to speak out. Your voices helped defend public input, protect environmental safeguards, and uphold the values we all share: transparency, public access, and a healthy future for our state.

In the face of challenges, a bipartisan coalition still managed to advance two major conservation funding bills — with one signed by the Governor! These wins are a direct result of your tireless advocacy.

Later this month, we'll release our **2025 Montana Legislative Scorecard** — a full breakdown of key votes, major issues, and where lawmakers stood on protecting Montana's land, air, water, and democracy. Check the legislative updates section below to learn how to get early access!

And we're not slowing down. This summer, Team MCV is hitting the road! Join us at one of our upcoming Pint Nights to connect with legislators, fellow conservation advocates, hear more about the session, and learn how you can stay involved.

However you choose to engage — in person, online, or through your actions — we're grateful to stand alongside you. Together, we'll keep Montana the Last Best Place.

Yours in conservation,



Whitney Tawney

Executive Director

Montana Conservation Voters



Please note: A previous version of this email misstated the status of SB 537. Please find the corrected version below.

AND THAT'S A WRAP: THE 2025 LEGISLATURE HAS ADJOURNED

With the 69th Montana legislative session now in the books, we are keeping a close eye on Governor Gianforte's desk for final decisions on several major conservation priorities. This moment also gives a chance to reflect on the biggest wins — and disappointments — of the session.

Protecting an Impartial Judiciary

A flurry of bills aimed at politicizing Montana's courts — **SB 42, HB 295, HB 751, HB 838, and SB 543** — met fierce public opposition. Only SB 42 advanced beyond its chamber, and none made it to the governor's desk. Montanans sent a clear message: **We want a fair, independent judiciary.** Our courts play a pivotal role in protecting our right to clean water, clean air, and public access. Keeping them free from partisan influence is a win for democracy — and for all of us.

Energy and Natural Resources: Progress and Setbacks

One major opportunity still hangs in the balance: **SB 188**, which would enable more community solar programs in Montana. This bill gives Montanans more energy choices and a chance to lower utility bills. We're urging the governor to stand with consumers — not just with NorthWestern Energy and its outdated fossil fuel model.

Meanwhile, two disappointing bills — **HB 285 and SB 221** — have been signed into law. These measures weaken the **Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)** by limiting the scope of environmental reviews. MEPA is a cornerstone of our constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment. These rollbacks strip away essential protections and put our air, water, lands and communities at risk.

We also saw the governor veto **HB 477**, a bipartisan bill to phase out styrofoam in the food service industry. This common-sense legislation had broad support and would have helped reduce toxic waste while creating opportunities for Montana farmers through sustainable alternatives. The veto was a setback for public health, the environment and homegrown innovation.

Conservation Funding: Holding the Line

In the last week of the session, **HB 932 and SB 537** both passed — two critical bills aimed at protecting and expanding how marijuana tax revenue is used.

HB 932, signed into law by the governor, ensures continued funding for Habitat Montana, state parks, trails and nongame wildlife programs. **These bills safeguard the current allocation of marijuana revenue for Habitat Montana, state parks, trails, and nongame wildlife conservation** while providing funding for mental health and veteran support.

SB 537, still waiting to be sent to the governor, allocates additional revenue to support **mental health, homelessness, and law enforcement** — without undermining conservation funding.

Coming Soon: The 2025 Legislative Scorecard

The session may be over, but accountability is just beginning. This month, we'll release our **2025 Legislative Scorecard**, a comprehensive guide to how every lawmaker voted on key bills affecting Montana's environment and democracy.

Want early access?

**Become an MCV member today** and be among the first to see who stood up for public lands, clean air and water, and fair elections — and who didn't.

Your membership powers our fight for a more sustainable and transparent Montana. It keeps you informed — and holds lawmakers accountable.

**Join now to stay ahead and make a difference.**

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

TELL THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION: NO RATE HIKE

Montanans are already feeling the strain from last fall's 28% electricity rate increase. Now, NorthWestern Energy is back — asking for another 20% hike to cover its \$310 million methane gas plant in Laurel and other costly fossil fuel projects. This isn't just bad policy — it's dangerous for families across the state already stretched thin.

Why the Hike?

Because NorthWestern gets a guaranteed profit on every capital investment — especially fossil fuels. The more they spend, the more they earn. But it's not the executives or shareholders footing the bill — it's everyday Montanans. Instead of investing in cheaper, cleaner renewable energy, NorthWestern is doubling down on outdated, expensive fossil fuels.

A Crucial Hearing Is Coming

The Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) is holding a public hearing on the proposed rate hike starting June 9 in Helena. This is our chance to show up and make our voices heard. MCV is launching an all-hands-on-deck campaign to fight back — organizing buses to the hearing, running ads, phonebanking, hosting events, and mobilizing Montanans across the state.

Here's How You Can Help Right Now:

— Make a Donation to MCV: We're working to raise \$30,000 immediately to fuel this campaign.

Donate TODAY to stop the rate hike!

— Sign the Petition: Tell the PSC: Montanans can't afford another rate hike.

Make your voice heard in just 30 seconds

TAKE ACTION: Tell Montana's Federal Delegation — Public Lands Are NOT for Sale

In Washington, D.C., buried deep in a 1,116-page budget reconciliation bill, is a dangerous provision that could put **half a million acres of our public lands on the auction block.**

These are the lands where we hike, hunt, fish, and camp. If Congress doesn't act to strip this language from the bill, **those lands could be sold to the highest bidder** — opening the door to luxury resorts, private golf courses, and gated communities built by billionaires and big corporations.

The result?

Locked gates. "No Trespassing" signs. Lost access to the public lands that belong to all of us.

This dangerous provision is **in addition to the threat** that's facing the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Montana's public lands in the White House's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget, which outlines sweeping cuts to the Interior Department and U.S. Forest Service that total more than \$5 billion.

Tell Congress: Stand Up for Montana's Public Lands

Selling off our public lands won't solve the federal budget. But it will:

Cut off public access

Threaten clean air and water

Destroy wildlife habitat

Eliminate environmental oversight

Shut Montanans out of decisions in their own backyards

This is more than a policy fight — **it's about protecting what makes Montana special.** And once these lands are gone, they're gone for good.

**Contact Montana's congressional delegation and demand they push back** against proposed cuts to land management agencies and the sale of public lands in the federal budget.

Because our public lands aren't for sale — and Montanans won't stand by and let them go.

SAVE THE DATE: PINT NIGHTS ARE COMING TO YOU

Montana Conservation Voters is launching our 2025 Summer Road Tour, and we're inviting you to join us for an evening of local brews, meaningful conversation, and community connection.

Tour Stops:

Helena — June 2 | 5–8 PM | **Brothers Tapworks** ([RSVP HERE](#))

Whitefish — June 4 | 5–8 PM | **Blackstar** ([RSVP HERE](#))

Livingston — June 7 | 5–8 PM | **Katabatic Brewing Company** ([RSVP HERE](#))

Missoula — June 30 | 5–8 PM | **GILD** ([RSVP HERE](#))

Bozeman — July 9 | 5–8 PM | **Bozeman Taproom** ([RSVP HERE](#))

Billings — July 24 | 5–8 PM | **Thirsty Street Brewing Co.** ([RSVP HERE](#))

Join us to meet the MCV team, get updates on the 69th Legislature, and learn how you can take action on key conservation issues facing Montana. Each stop features local brews, with a portion of proceeds supporting MCV's work to protect our state's lands, waters, and communities.

HONORING THE LEGACY OF RICHARD “BOB” BRENT

We are deeply honored to share the story of Richard “Bob” Brent of Helena — a beloved angler, seasoned fishing guide, and lifelong champion of Montana's wild places — who passed away on March 31 after a courageous battle with Alzheimer's.

In an incredible and unexpected act of generosity, Bob left a legacy gift to MCV estimated at over \$100,000, primarily in stocks. Though he had never donated to MCV or the MCV Education Fund during his lifetime, this profound gesture speaks volumes about his commitment to protecting the lands and waters he loved so deeply.

Bob's gift will have a lasting impact, helping us continue the work of protecting Montana's outdoor way of life for future generations.



WHO PAYS WHEN PUBLIC LANDS CHANGE HANDS?

Last month, a new report sounded the alarm on the enormous financial risk of transferring federally managed public lands to state control in Montana. The findings are clear — and deeply concerning. If Montana were to assume responsibility for managing these lands, it could cost taxpayers an estimated **\$7.9 billion** over the next 20 years.

This staggering price tag comes from the long list of obligations the state would be forced to take on, including wildfire suppression, deferred maintenance, invasive species management, and mine reclamation. These aren't hypothetical challenges — they are very real, very expensive, and currently funded at the federal level. Shifting them to the state would overwhelm Montana's budget and divert resources away from schools, infrastructure, healthcare, and more.

And with no sustainable funding plan in place, the next step becomes predictable — and dangerous: selling off public lands to private interests. Once sold, these lands are gone for good. Public access disappears. Wildlife habitat shrinks. Our outdoor heritage suffers.

This report is a wake-up call for Montanans. The true cost of a land transfer isn't just financial — it's cultural, environmental, and generational.

**Click the button below to read the full report and learn why keeping public lands in public hands is the right path forward.**

READ IT HERE

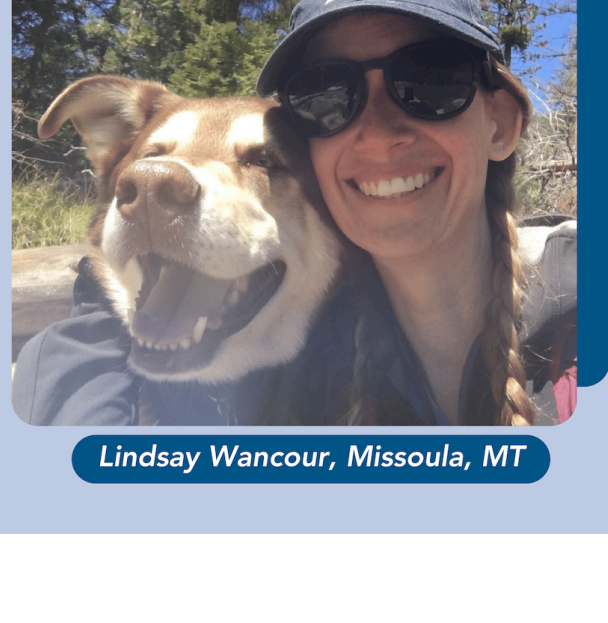
FIELD NOTES

With the end of the 2025 Montana Legislature, we're taking a moment to reflect on the months of long hearings, packed committee rooms, and hard-fought debates. It's been a whirlwind from day one to the final gavel, and while the challenges were plenty, so were the moments that reminded us why this work matters. Read on for Lindsay's take on how we navigated it all.

"If you had asked me on January 6, the first day of the legislative session, how I would be feeling at the close, it would not have been pretty. Leading into the session there were countless bills requested threatening our public lands, conservation funding, and our democracy. As the session got underway it felt like we were constantly on defense, playing whack-a-mole with bills intended to 'reform' our judiciary, strip conservation funding mechanisms, and ease public land transfers. There were few bills early on that we were supporting, with a notable standout — HB 229 — thanks to Debo Powers' leadership. Sadly, this great bill that would align MEPA with the Held v. Montana decision didn't make it out of committee and back to defense we went. Team MCV was in full throttle working day in and day out to uphold Montana values and our state's future.

I am pleased to report that, while the hard work didn't cease, we did begin to usher in some wins. Each time a bill that created a partisan judiciary, or created a special court to dilute the Supreme Court was voted down, we found more hope and optimism to fuel the work. For the third session in a row, the Legislature failed to pass a bill that overhauled marijuana tax revenue, cutting the conservation funding that drove voters to the booth back in 2020. The silly resolutions to attack our Wilderness Study Areas and support Utah's land grab attempts were stopped dead in their tracks.

Across the state, conservation organizations strategized together on grassroots efforts and lobbying in Helena. As a united front, and with bipartisan support, we were able to celebrate both conservation and democracy victories this session. While many of our wins were in the form of bad bills dying, we also are celebrating good bills making it to Governor Gianforte's desk. Shoutout to SB 224 and sponsor Senator Shane Morigeau, this new law creates Indigenous People's Day on the second Monday of each October! In our final push of the session, we are energized to continue calling Governor Gianforte to ask him to sign SB 188 into law. This bill, passed with bipartisan support, would allow Montanans to buy community solar shares, diversifying how we get our energy, and increasing accessibility to solar. Whether it passes or not, I am grateful we are able to end the session supporting a bill that looks to the future, rather than fighting one that degrades our great state."



Lindsay Wancour, Missoula, MT

Member of the Month



Katy Meyers  
Kalispell, MT

Why are you an MCV member?

I hope my grandchildren can share some of the same outdoor opportunities that I have been blessed to enjoy! Conservation and stewardship are the keys to a positive future!

What's your top conservation issue and why?

I guess preserving protections for all public lands would be number one, but maintaining clean air and water is a close second.

Where is your favorite outdoor spot in Montana?

My favorite outdoor spot is wherever I am: from Jewel Basin to Glacier National Park, to Lindbergh Lake.

SAVE THE DATES

June 2: Team MCV's 2025 Summer Pint Night Tour, Helena ([RSVP HERE](#))

June 4: Team MCV's 2025 Summer Pint Night Tour, Whitefish ([RSVP HERE](#))

June 7: Team MCV's 2025 Summer Pint Night Tour, Livingston ([RSVP HERE](#))

June 16: Municipal Candidate filing closes

June 30: Montana's 2025 Summer Pint Night Tour, Missoula ([RSVP HERE](#))

July 9: Team MCV's 2025 Summer Pint Night Tour, Bozeman ([RSVP HERE](#))

July 24: Team MCV's 2025 Summer Pint Night Tour, Billings ([RSVP HERE](#))

September 9: Annual General Primary Election Day

October 11: Annual Galt, Livingston ([RSVP HERE](#))

November 4: Municipal Elections

STAY CONNECTED

The 69th Montana Legislature has ended but there are still ways to engage on conservation and democracy issues in the state. Want to stay in-the-know? Follow MCV on social media for real-time updates from across Montana. There you'll find all the details about our upcoming Summer Road Tour and so much more! Click the icons below and drop us a follow. We can't wait to see you!

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