

Celebrating our Public Lands

Proposed Wyoming Public Lands Day Legislation

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OVERVIEW

The draft legislation proposes a **Wyoming Public Lands Day** established on the **last Saturday in September**. It requires the Governor to issue an annual proclamation encouraging the observance of this day. The proclamation is flexible and can highlight the importance of public lands to the state, the many benefits of our public lands, encourage volunteer stewardship activities, and encourage schools to participate with a day off as a hunting and outdoor recreation day for our state's youth. The bill also includes a repeal of archaic 1970s law that required wholesale transfer of federal lands to the state by 1980.

BACKGROUND

- Two states have created their own Public Lands Days to recognize the importance of public lands to their states and residents: Colorado passed legislation in 2016 making the third Saturday in May its official Public Lands Day; Nevada passed legislation in 2017 designating the last Saturday in September.
- The last Saturday in September has been recognized as National Public Lands Day since 1994. This proposed legislation would use the same date. The timing would work well with hunting and pre-hunting activities for Wyomingites, and help amplify conservation stewardship activities planned on that day.

WHY A WYOMING PUBLIC LANDS DAY?

- This bill creates the opportunity for Wyoming people of all stripes and interests to celebrate the legacy and values of our public lands, which are an essential part of our way of life here. Our wild open spaces, free roaming wildlife, outstanding recreational opportunities, and the state's economy depend upon our public lands. They are in Wyoming's DNA—public lands are what makes us Wyoming.
- The bill is an affirmation of Wyoming support for keeping our public lands public and open for public access to everyone, regardless of an individual's income or background. As an annual event, the Public Lands Day will serve as a reminder of these values as well as an opportunity to highlight outdoor opportunities for families and residents. Numerous polls and citizen activism has shown that there is strong public support for our public lands.
- This proposed legislation, at its heart, is about livability and quality of life in Wyoming—values that will make or break our future. Economic growth and opportunity in the 21st Century rely on human capital, on the ability to attract talented and entrepreneurial people. Access to public lands is a top draw if we want to attract young professionals and families. It is in our self-interest to protect public lands and keep them open to the public.
- Unlike other states' legislation, this proposed bill also recognizes the importance of youth in our outdoor and hunting heritage with a specific encouragement for their engagement with the Public Lands Day.
- Outdoor recreation and tourism* is Wyoming's fastest growing industry and it is almost entirely based on access to public lands, and it is also key to the diversification of the state's economy. This second largest economic sector in Wyoming depends upon sound stewardship of and access to our public lands.

* A recent report by the Outdoor Industry Association shows outdoor recreation generates 50,000 direct jobs and \$5.6 billion in spending in Wyoming; the Wyoming Office of Tourism reports that tourism creates 32,000 jobs and \$3.2 billion in consumer spending, annually (figures for 2016).