

# Celebrating our Public Lands

SF 67 - Wyoming Public Lands Day Legislation

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## OVERVIEW

The draft legislation proposes a **Wyoming Public Lands Day** established on the third Saturday in May, with observance by the public and public schools suggested. 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.)

## 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 is modeled after the Colorado bill, but the date could be changed as the bill is amended. The Keep it Public coalition is interested in the September date due to its proximity with hunting seasons.

## 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 our public lands public. As an annual event, the Public Lands Day will serve as a reminder of the values we treasure in our public lands. Numerous polls and citizen activism has shown that there is strong public support for our public lands.
- The public lands legislation is a good way to recognize and better emphasize the importance of outdoor recreation and tourism to our state. This part of our economy is Wyoming's fastest growing industry and it is almost entirely based on access to public lands, and 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).*