

**Resolution: 21-05**

**Resolution Opposing the Federal Government's "30 x 30" Land Preservation Goal**

**Submitted by Valley CD, 2021**

WHEREAS The Montana Conservation Districts are mandated by statute (75-15-102 MCA) to protect the soils, water, citizens, and economic base of Montana; and

WHEREAS, Montana is a large state containing about approximately 94,105,600 Million acres of land. The primary economic drivers are farming, ranching, and multiple use of Federally owned lands. Many of these farms and ranches depend on grazing permits on Federal lands to be viable. We assert that cooperative management of these lands by farmers and ranchers and the federal agencies at a local level is more beneficial to the environment than "Preservation" and

WHEREAS, the federal government owns approximately 27 million acres of the land within the state and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service(USFS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Corps of Engineers (COE) are responsible for managing these federal lands. In addition, lands held by the USA in Trust to the Tribes total about 8.2 million acres. The State of Montana owns an approximate 5.2 million acres managed by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MT FWP). The private lands comprise approximately 60, 754,560 acres.

WHEREAS, Under the Multiple-Use Mandate BLM lands in Montana are managed to maintain a natural state through scientifically applied management of land uses including livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, hunting and other recreation, and mineral development.

WHEREAS, The FWS and COE lands in the wildlife refuge areas such as C.M. Russel Wildlife Refuge, are protected and managed primarily for wildlife, with managed livestock grazing.

WHEREAS, the Tribal Trust rangelands are managed by the Tribes in a natural, sustainable state through monitoring of grazing leases and environmental controls on oil and gas development.

WHEREAS, The State of Montana lands are primarily rangeland protected from cultivation and managed to maintain a natural state, and

WHEREAS, layering additional protections on these lands will not assure "Preservation" . Current management practices employed by private landowners and the government agencies are maintaining a natural state. Reduction or elimination of grazing on these lands would leave them highly susceptible to wildland wildfires, and weed infestation; all of which degrade the natural biodiversity and human environment; and

WHEREAS, because of the predominance of federal land in the state of Montana, the well- being, health, safety, welfare, economic condition, and culture of the County, its businesses, and its citizens depend on the way these lands and their resources are used and access to these lands; and

WHEREAS, placing additional private lands into permanent conservation status will cause dramatic and irreversible harm to the economies of many states, including Montana, and in particular rural counties whose citizens depend on private lands for their livelihoods; and

WHEREAS, many of Montana's businesses and its citizens are involved in or otherwise depend on industries that utilize federal lands and their resources, including livestock grazing, oil and gas exploration and production, mining and mineral development, recreational industries, hunting and other outdoor recreation; and

WHEREAS, these industries are important components of the Montana economy, and are major contributors to the economic and social wellbeing of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, on January 27, 2021, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., issued Executive Order 14008 entitled Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Aboard (86 Fed. Reg. 7,619); and

WHEREAS, in Section 216 of Executive Order 14008, President Biden directed the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture and other senior officials, to develop a program to conserve at least 30 percent of the lands and waters in the United States by 2030, which is called the "30 x 30" program; and

WHEREAS, under the 30 x 30 program, some 680 million acres of our Nation's lands would be set aside and permanently preserved in its natural state, preventing the productive use of these lands and their resources: and

WHEREAS, there is no constitutional or statutory authority for the President, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, or any other federal agency to set aside and permanently preserve 30 percent of all land and water in the United States, and no such authority is referenced in Executive Order 14008; and

WHEREAS, the 30 x 30 program, if implemented, is likely to cause significant harm to the economy of Montana, and injure the State's businesses and its citizens by reducing economic outputs from private agricultural lands, depriving them of access to federal lands and preventing productive use; and

WHEREAS, the withdrawal of some 680 million acres of federal lands from multiple use and placement of such lands in permanent conservation status will cause dramatic and irreversible harm to the economies of many western states, including Montana, and in particular rural counties whose citizens depend on access to federal lands for their livelihoods; and

WHEREAS, the 30 x 30 program, if implemented, will conflict with the plans, policies and programs within several counties in Montana as expressed in many County Growth Policy's which obligates the federal government to coordinate its policy development with local County as also required by the Federal Land Management and Policy Act (FLPMA); and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 14008 at 216(a) directs the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with other relevant federal agencies to "submit a report to the Task Force within 90 days of the date of this order recommending steps that the United States should take, working with State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments, agricultural and forest landowners, fishermen, and other key stakeholders, to achieve the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Montana Association of Conservation Districts as follows:

1. The Board opposes the 30 x 30 program, including its objective of permanently preserving 30 percent of the Nation's lands in its natural state by 2030, or any similar program that will set aside and prevent the productive use of millions of acres of our lands.

2. The Board supports the unfettered private ownership of land at the County level, recognizing the Nation's need for food and fiber, minerals, and energy and opposes expansion of conservation easements intended to meet the goals of the 30x30 program. Conservation easements would freeze management and development of the land, impacting productivity of the land and future tax revenue to the County. Additional Conservation Reserve set-asides intended to meet the goals of the 30x30 plan will also reduce the economic output from our agricultural sector; harming local businesses and tax revenue to the county
3. The Board supports the continued management of the BLM-managed lands under principles of multiple use and sustained yield, recognizing the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, energy, timber, food, and fiber, and in careful coordination at the local level to ensure consistency with County land use plans and land management policies, as required by law.
4. The Board supports maintaining and enhancing public access to public lands and opposes limitations on public access for the purpose of fulfilling the 30 x 30 program's objectives.
5. The Board recognizes and supports the State of Montana's water rights system, including the doctrine of prior appropriation and other state laws and programs governing water rights and water use, and opposes any federal designation of waters and watercourses within the County that would impair or restrict water diversions and uses authorized under Montana law.
6. The Board supports reasonable national, regional, and global greenhouse gas emissions policies and goals that are comprehensive, practical, cost-effective, and do not unnecessarily single out specific industries or activities but opposes the use of global climate change as an excuse to set aside large tracts of land as preserves or open space to fulfill the 30 x 30 program's objectives.
7. The Board maintains that the designation of Federal lands as wilderness, wilderness study areas, wildlife preserves, open space, or other conservation land to fulfill the 30 x 30 program's objectives may lawfully occur, if at all, only through the planning process mandated by the Federal Land Management and Policy Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, including public notice and an opportunity to comment, analysis and disclosure of the impacts of such land acquisitions on the well-being, health, safety, welfare, economy, and culture of local residents, its businesses, and careful coordination with local County to ensure consistency with County land use plans and land management policies.
8. The Board also maintains that any non-federal lands or other rights that are acquired to fulfill the 30 x 30 program's objectives should be acquired only from willing landowners and for the payment full and fair market value for all rights and interests acquired, and not through regulatory compulsion, and only after analyzing and considering the impacts of such land acquisitions on the well-being, health, safety, welfare, economy, and culture of the County, its businesses, and its citizens.

