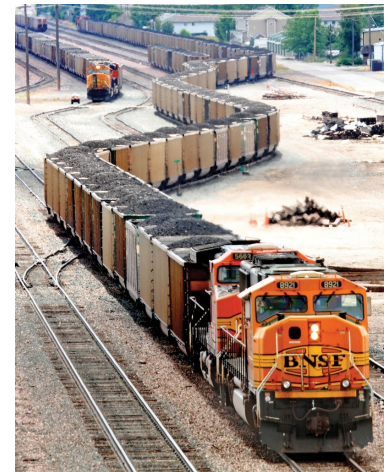


While mining is one method of converting mineral resources into economic wealth and capital that ultimately can benefit society and our communities, mining and its associated activities also dramatically alter large landscapes over the long term. Furthermore, mining leads to the exploitation of natural resources beyond the sought-after minerals, with negative impacts to biodiversity, our water and air resources, and community health. Mining and associated development activities are known to spread invasive species, fragment the landscape and critical wildlife habitats, and displace wildlife. Impacts can exist at a variety of scales and time frames, with some activities disrupting the entire life cycles of various wildlife species. Some consequences of mining, such as the creation of acid mine drainage, can be nearly irreversible. As an outgrowth of mining's habitat impacts, Montana's outdoor economy, including tourism and outdoor recreation, is put at risk.



In most cases, reasonable planning and mitigation strategies have the ability to support the responsible and well-sited extraction of Montana's valuable mineral resources without undermining sound and responsible wildlife and habitat management. Adequate bonding for natural resource extraction and exploration is critical to addressing mining's hazards so that damage can at least be mitigated if not prevented.

The policy of Montana Audubon regarding Mining is to:

- Educate the public and decision makers about the threats mining can pose to important wildlife and habitat areas and to Montana's human community quality of life
- Educate managers and decision makers about the potential conflict between mining and threatened/endangered species or species of concern
- Educate managers and decision makers about the potential conflict between mining and certain priority habitat areas, like riparian areas, Important Bird Areas, areas of critical environmental concern, etc.
- Support the role of policy makers in limiting harm to the environment when development does take place, including supporting appropriate bonding and habitat mitigation/protection measures
- Work with policy makers to understand the external costs of mining and to encourage mitigation for mining's negative impacts on water, air, and biological resources
- Recognize that mining contributes to our society but can be accomplished in an environmentally conscious manner