

By mandate, state lands in Montana managed by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation must be put to beneficial use so that the state may raise funding for Montana's common schools and other endowed institutions. State lands resource decisions regarding timber, mineral, and surface development are formally approved by the State Board of Land Commissioners. The group consists of Montana's top five elected officials: the Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Commissioner of Securities and Insurance. Other state lands, like State Parks, do not share the mandate to supply school funding and are instead managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and regulated primarily through legislative and agency processes.



This unique role of DNRC-managed state lands means they are regularly leased for grazing, agriculture, forestry, or other working land uses. Some state lands are also recognized for natural qualities, such as the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area/Important Bird Area. While state lands are public lands, they do require State Land Recreation Use Permits, typically included with hunting or fishing licenses. The interspersed ownership of lands in Montana means that state land management decisions can impact the adjacent public or private land. Like lands under other management in Montana, state lands contribute to an important mosaic of wildlife habitats. For example, state lands in sage brush habitat contribute directly to Greater Sage-grouse core areas. Other state lands support important riparian corridors, grasslands, forests, and wetlands. Uncontrolled or poorly managed development of state lands poses the same threat to habitat wildlife that we see with poor management elsewhere.

## The policy of Montana Audubon regarding State Lands is to:

- Educate the public and decision makers about the important role state lands play in conserving habitat and wildlife species
- Educate the public and decision makers about how permitted activities on state lands may affect wild life and wildlife habitat;
- Support the ability of conservation easements to be granted in perpetuity on certain state lands to protect against development;
- Support the limited development of state lands, including State Parks;
- Support the public's ability to recreate on state lands;
- Support state land use regulations that provide protection for wetlands, riparian areas, streams, and rivers;
- Support state land use regulations, like no "sod-busting," that protect and enhance sagebrush habitat;
- Support regulation of the location of gravel pits;
- Advocate for continued public participation in State Board of Land Commissioner decisions