

Working lands include farms, ranches, and forestlands that are used by humans to support themselves. In Montana, working lands form a large portion of the state and are critical to wildlife conservation in addition to supporting our economy through agriculture, beef production, or natural resource extraction. Over time, the working lands in Montana have been subject to a range of management techniques, some damaging to the landscape permanently or overtime and others that would be considered quite “hands off.” As our society continues to grow and demand more from working lands, it is more important than ever to make sure we protect them and work to enhance or restore them.



Though maximizing the uses of working lands is important for humans, land conversion, especially of grasslands is one of the greatest threats to wildlife habitat. Adopting conservation practices, like those associated with the Audubon Conservation Ranching program, can help landowners add value to their working lands. And adding value to open land can help keep land open to wildlife. Working lands open to wildlife can also add value to the landowner and public through enrollment in block management hunting programs, conservation or agricultural easements, or other public land access programs.

The policy of Montana Audubon regarding Working Lands is to:

- Educate the public and decision makers about the conservation values and threats facing working lands, especially working grasslands and riparian areas
- Support working lands regulations that provide protection for wetlands, riparian areas, streams, rivers, and forest lands (e.g., preventing clear cutting right up to a stream)
- Support the regulation of the location of gravel pits, especially as these mines often are located in riparian areas
- Work with landowners to protect or increase the conservation value of their working lands
- Identify and advocate for critical sagebrush and grassland areas that are also working lands