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SB44-15/16: Regarding Federally-Owned Public Lands

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The Associated Students of the University of Montana
Resolution Regarding Federally-Owned Public Lands
March 16th, 2016
SB44-15/16

Authored by: Brennan Cain, Student-At-Large; Sam Forstag, ASUM Senator
Sponsored by: Antonio Morsette, ASUM Senator; Ryann Carlson, ASUM Senator

Whereas, Montana’s public lands are an essential part of our natural heritage;

Whereas, Public lands are part of our high quality of life, with 71% of Montanans utilizing these beautiful areas annually;

Whereas, Public lands are a major driver of Montana’s economy, producing six (6) billion dollars of annual economic activity statewide;

Whereas, Our public lands secure 403 million dollars in annual state tax revenue;

Whereas, 70% of business owners say “the Montana outdoor lifestyle” was a factor in deciding to locate or expand their business in Montana;

Whereas, Montana counties containing significant public land added jobs at an annual rate almost four (4) times faster than peers;

Whereas, Protected natural amenities like pristine scenery and wildlife help sustain property values and attract new business investment throughout our state;

Whereas, There is a growing effort from groups such as the American Land Council to sell federally-owned lands back to the states in which they reside;

Whereas, Legislative efforts, such as the Sportsman’s Heritage and Recreation Enhancement Act and Congress’s 2015 decision not to renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund, are detrimental to public lands;

Whereas, Montana Legislatures produced twelve (12) bills compromising our public lands in the 2015 legislature;

Whereas, Western states do not have budgets for the maintenance and upkeep of these lands, and would thus need to sell much of them into private ownership;

Whereas, Public lands are an integral piece of The University of Montana’s (UM) efforts to recruit and retain students;

Whereas, UM depends on federally-owned public lands for educational opportunities, such as field work and experiential learning;
Therefore, Let It Be Resolved, that the Associated Students of the University of Montana (ASUM) supports the continued public ownership of lands in our state;

Therefore, Let It Be Resolved, that ASUM condemns any efforts to transfer our federal public lands into state ownership;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, that a copy of this resolution and a letter voicing ASUM’s support of public lands be sent to: Governor Steve Bullock, U.S. Senator Steve Daines, U.S. Senator Jon Tester, Congressman Ryan Zinke.

Passed by Committee: ____________________________, 2016

Passed by ASUM Senate: ____________________________, 2016

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Sam Forstag, Betsy Story,
Chair of Sustainability Board Chair of the Senate