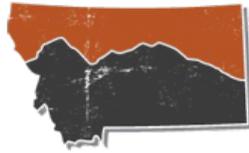


PROTECTING THE WATER, WILDLIFE AND OUTDOOR HERITAGE OF THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT.



BUSINESS FOR  
**MONTANA'S**  
OUTDOORS

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June 6, 2013

Dear Friend:

The guest column below first appeared in the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* on June 10, 2013. It speaks to the value of Montana's public land as our common currency - and ought'n we work together in a bi-partisan fashion to protect this capital asset. It's a compelling read from the president of Business for Montana's Outdoors. We hope you enjoy it, and maybe even check out BMO's website.

~ *We Thought You'd Like to Know!* ~

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## **Guest column: Protecting Montana's currency through access, conservation**

By Jeff Welch, Bozeman, guest writer

The currency of New York, it is said, is money. The currency of Washington is power. And in Los Angeles, the currency is fame. Here in the West, our currency is land.

No matter our political differences, whether you live in a VW van or on a 20-acre ranchette, whether your business is bison or oil wells, our love for the land, for nature, for the great western landscape is almost universally the gold standard in our lives. For most of us, we are even willing to sacrifice all those other things that drive the rest of the country – money, power and fame – so that we can live out here, surrounded by our currency – land.

So why does protection of our public lands often become a partisan or controversial issue? When a billionaire blows his fortune on a Ponzi scheme or when a politician loses power over another scandal we say "how could they be so irresponsible?" Yet here in the West we squander our currency every day on shortsighted decisions that can forever alter our greatest asset – our public lands. And hardly anyone says a thing.

I'm part of an organization of more than 26 Montana companies called [Business for Montana Outdoors](#) and we want to change that equation. We believe that conservation and access should be placed on equal ground with development interests when it comes to managing our public lands. As business owners, we absolutely understand the importance of resources and development to our economy.

But we also believe – and know, first hand – that protection of public lands is good for business too. According to a recent study by Headwaters Economics, western non-metro counties with more than 30 percent of federally protected public lands increased jobs by 344 percent; a rate of nearly five times more than those without.

Specifically in Montana, from 2000-2009, our economy created 73,732 new jobs. Ninety-five percent of this growth came from service related industries, the fastest growing of which included health care, real estate, and professional services.

Recently, some of our members met with Sens. Max Baucus and Jon Tester, and Congressman Steve Daines. The welcome we received was encouraging, particularly by our newest member, Congressman Daines. Despite some of the more extreme voices in the U.S. House of Representatives, he seemed to very much understand the value of protected public lands. He's a businessman too.

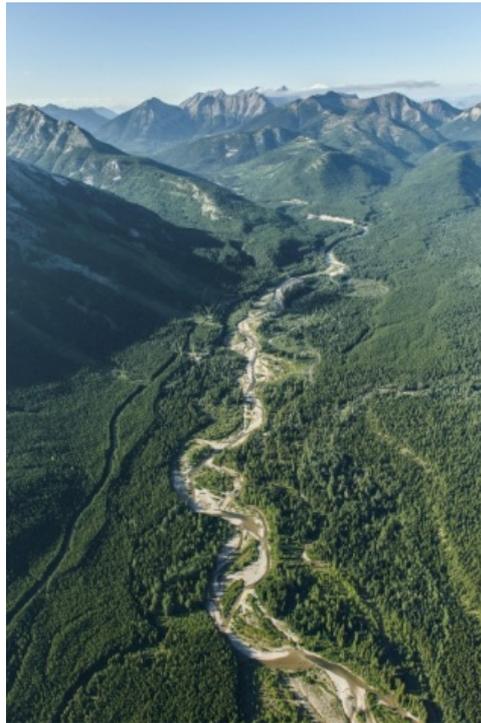
There is another saying in this state that Montana is like one big Main Street. So if we all love to camp, hunt, fish, hike, bike, ride horses, be outside, shouldn't we – as neighbors – be able to figure out some good solutions to better preserve what we love? Shouldn't we be able to rise above irresponsible Washington "either-or" debates and make things happen? That's what our group hopes to do – to use our voice as business leaders to showcase the economic value to our outdoor way of life.

Common sense policy pieces like [The North Fork Watershed Protection Act](#), [Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act](#), [Forest Jobs & Restoration Act](#), and [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) are solid, pragmatic ideas that are good for Montana. All Montanans should be able to roll up their sleeves, work out differences with their neighbors and put these ideas to work.

From a business standpoint legislation like this helps reinforce our competitive advantage: access to high quality public lands helps us recruit new businesses to Montana and retain talented employees who value our quality of life. It builds our brand as a great place to do business. It attracts entrepreneurs and investment that we otherwise would not get.

If our currency is land, let's figure out how to protect our asset. Let's set ourselves up to pass that asset down to our children and grandchildren. We'd do it with other forms of currency. Let's do it with our own.

*Jeff Welch is the president of [MercuryCSC](#), a marketing firm with 23 employees based in Bozeman.*



***S.255 and H.R. 2255 Bi-Partisan Legislation  
the "North Fork Watershed Protection Act" referred to in the  
above guest column is now a poster child for public land  
legislation in Montana with the Montana congressional delegation  
working together to pass broadly supported conservation legislation.  
The Act would withdraw minerals on federal lands in the North  
Fork Flathead watershed from leasing, match similar legislation  
passed in B.C. in 2011, and resolve a 37-year conflict with our northern  
neighbors on appropriate resource development in the transboundary  
watershed. (Photo: [Jaime Rojo](#))***

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***Please Help Us Complete This Effort***  
**Headwaters Montana has devoted considerable  
resources to build broad public support for  
protecting the North Fork Flathead watershed.**  
**~ Thank You! ~**

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