



- [Close Window](#)
- [Print This Page](#)
- [Expand All](#) | [Collapse All](#)

## Protecting Montana’s Wild Public Lands

|                              |                   |                         |                                 |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Applying Organization</b> | Wild Montana      | <b>Application Date</b> | 5/14/2026                       |
| <b>Applying Contact</b>      | Haley Eakin       | <b>Status</b>           | Submitted                       |
| <b>Record Type</b>           | Member Collective | <b>Created By</b>       | Haley Eakin, 5/14/2026, 3:51 PM |
|                              |                   | <b>Create Account</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/>        |

### Project Overview

|  |  |                                   |             |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Project Name</b>                          | Protecting Montana’s Wild Public Lands | <b>Requested Amount</b>           | \$49,910.00 |
| <b>Project/Campaign Name</b>                 | Protecting Montana’s Wild Public Lands |                                   |             |
| <b>Type of Project</b>                       | Designation; Defense                   | <b>Project Multiple Locations</b> |             |
| <b>Project Location (State or Territory)</b> | MT                                     | <b>Longitude</b>                  | -112.68171  |
| <b>Latitude</b>                              | 46.95494                               |                                   |             |

### Organization Details

|                                |                        |   |  |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Organization Name</b>       | Wild Montana           | <b>Primary address for organization</b>       | 80 South Warren Street<br>Helena, Montana 59601<br>United States |
| <b>Contact Name</b>            | Haley Eakin            | <b>Contact Title</b>                          | Foundations Manager  |
| <b>Contact Email Address</b>   | heakin@wildmontana.org |   |  |
| <b>Annual Operating Budget</b> | \$3,818,173.00         | <b>Tax Status/Organization Type</b>           | 501c3 Organization   |
| <b>Staff Size</b>              | 30                     | <b>Main Phone</b>                             | (406)443-7350  |
| <b>Total Membership</b>        | 4,400                  | <b>Organization Website/Social Media Feed</b> | https://wildmontana.org/   |
| <b>BIPOC-led</b>               | No                     | <b>C-Suite Staff</b>                          |  |

### Grant Details

|                             |  |                               |  |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Awarded Amount</b>       |  | <b>Awarded Date</b>           |  |
| <b>Funding Program</b>      |  |                               |  |
| <b>Primary Project Type</b> |  | <b>Secondary Project Type</b> |  |
| <b>Term Start Date</b>      |  | <b>Term End Date</b>          |  |

### Proposal Questions

|  |  |                         |   |
|--|--|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Mission/History Of Organization</b> | Wild Montana unites and mobilizes communities to keep Montana wild. Founded 68 years ago by a small, scrappy group of conservationists, Wild Montana has grown into one of the | <b>Location Details</b> | Wild Montana will mobilize our network of over 100,000 supporters and our platform as a trusted messenger on public lands to both defend public lands from threats and advance durable, |
|--|--|-------------------------|---|

state's leading public lands organizations with seven regional volunteer chapters, more than 100,000 supporters stretching across the state and country, and a national impact. Mobilizing the power of our grassroots network, our work has resulted in 16 wilderness areas, the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, an oil and gas lease-free Badger-Two Medicine, millions in state funding for trails, wildlife, and recreation access, and other legislative, administrative, and executive victories that have protected millions of acres of public lands from irresponsible development and degradation.

locally driven conservation initiatives that support the resilience of our public lands and communities.

Wild Montana seeks support from The Conservation Alliance to support two priority efforts in the year ahead: Advance protections for 400,000 acres of the Blackfoot watershed while expanding recreational opportunities in this area beloved by local communities and visitors alike.

Defend 8 million acres of Montana's BLM public lands by educating and mobilizing our supporters to oppose efforts to use the Congressional Review Act to overturn Resource Management Plans (RMP), rulemakings that endanger public lands and resources, and other efforts to weaken protections and open doors for unchecked development across BLM lands.

Protecting the Blackfoot watershed: Wild Montana's efforts over the past years has positioned us to take advantage of a critical moment to advance a proposal that unifies two longstanding collaborative efforts – the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project and the Lincoln Prosperity Project – into a single, community-driven land protection proposal to protect the Blackfoot watershed. The Blackfoot watershed, the famous backdrop for Norman Maclean's A River Runs Through It and critical habitat for bull trout, grizzly bears, wolverines, and more, has been recommended as wilderness by the U.S. Forest Service for decades, yet remains unprotected. This effort brings together communities to advance a shared vision to protect the wild character of the Blackfoot watershed, enhance access to outdoor recreation, and support the local rural economy.

Defending Montana's BLM Lands BLM is the largest federal land manager, managing over 8 million acres in Montana and over 245 million acres nationwide. Current efforts to weaken management and roll back protections threaten BLM lands in Montana across the country and set dangerous precedents. Wild Montana's history of involvement in every RMP process in the state, as well as quarterly oil and gas lease sales and advocacy in defense of landscapes where leases pose threats to critical wildlife habitat and connectivity in landscapes such as the Big Hole and Terry Badlands, has positioned our organization as a state and national leader in the fight ahead to defend BLM lands from irresponsible development and degradation.

|                      |  |   |   |
|----------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Final Success</b> | Final success will look like mobilizing Montana’s communities, businesses, and decision makers to protect 400,000 acres of the Blackfoot watershed in western Montana and ensure that 8 million acres of public lands in the state managed by the BLM are protected from reckless development. | <b>Impact on Climate and Bioversity</b> | The initiatives supported by this grant will enhance climate resilience, biodiversity, and landscape connectivity across Montana’s public lands, spanning from the state’s eastern sagebrush plains to the temperate forests of the northwest.  |
|                      |  |   | <p>Ranked in the 98th percentile for species intactness according to landscape modeling by top scientists, the Blackfoot watershed is home to grizzly bears and wolverine; the Bob Marshall’s largest mountain goat herd, one of the lower-48’s most productive lynx breeding areas; and includes undammed headwaters where bull trout and cutthroat trout return to spawn. Further, the proposal will safeguard connectivity critical to helping species adapt to a changing climate and advance climate resilience at the community level through forest restoration and wildfire mitigation work designed to reduce wildfire risk near rural communities while improving long-term forest health and wildlife habitat. On an ecosystem scale, the proposal will link the Crown of the Continent and Greater Yellowstone Ecosystems, securing migratory pathways and supporting greater Northern Rockies genetic diversity. At a landscape scale, protections will help link the Mission Mountains Wilderness with the Bob Marshall Wilderness.</p> |
|                      |  |   | <p>Specifically, the proposal will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Designate 135,000 acres of new Wilderness in the Blackfoot watershed and 63,000 acres as Conservation Management Areas, protecting critical wildlife habitat, landscape connectivity, and the headwaters of the Blackfoot River.</li> <li>- Designate the Wales Creek and Hoodoo Mountain Wilderness Study Areas as Backcountry Conservation Areas, providing consistent land management and increasing opportunities for access, wildfire fuel mitigation, and wildlife habitat improvement efforts</li> </ul>  |
|                      |  |   | <p>Defending Montana’s 8 million acres of BLM lands is critical to preserving biodiversity and connectivity by linking larger ecosystems, including the Greater Yellowstone and Crown of the Continent, through intact prairie, sagebrush, badlands, foothill, and rangeland habitats that provide migration corridors and seasonal habitat for elk, mule deer, pronghorn, sage grouse, and countless other species. BLM lands dominate the eastern half of the state, as well as significant acreage in southwest Montana, and nearly all remaining intact sagebrush habitat is managed by the BLM. Wild Montana’s strategy in the year ahead will not only defend the state’s</p>   |

## Expected Economic & Recreational Impact

Collectively, Wild Montana's efforts will protect the healthy, wild public lands and access that support the state's robust outdoor economy and quality of life.

The Blackfoot proposal will support Montana's growing outdoor economy by protecting and expanding the recreation opportunities that draw visitors and support businesses throughout the region. The proposal includes permanent winter access for snowmobiling, 25 miles of new mountain biking trails, and an opportunity to create a connected off-highway vehicle trail loop, ensuring better access for sportsmen, hikers, mountain bikers, and snowmobilers and attracting visiting recreators who support local tourism businesses, outfitters, lodging providers, restaurants, and other small businesses in nearby communities including Lincoln, Ovando, and Seeley Lake. The project also establishes 179,000 acres of Forest Restoration Areas, supporting forest restoration, wildfire mitigation, and active management that reduces wildfire risk to nearby communities while supporting forest health and wildlife habitat. By proactively addressing wildfire risk, the proposal helps protect homes, businesses, recreation infrastructure, and local economies increasingly threatened by severe wildfire seasons.

Beyond the Blackfoot, outdoor recreation is one of Montana's fastest-growing economic sectors, supporting 6% of Montana's workforce and generating 5% of the state's gross domestic product according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Much of this recreation economy depends on access to the state's vast BLM-managed lands, which provide opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, wildlife viewing, and other recreation that sustain local communities and businesses. Nationally, BLM lands host over 80 million recreation visits annually. Protecting BLM lands in Montana and nationally is critical to sustaining the public access and healthy public lands that are the backbone of the outdoor recreation economy.

## Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

BLM lands but also BLM lands nationwide.

Wild Montana is a lead organization building public demand through advocacy, strategic communications, and grassroots organizing to advance a proposal to protect the Blackfoot watershed and defend Montana's BLM lands. Outlined below is Wild Montana's strategy to advance these two priority campaigns:

Protecting the Blackfoot Watershed County Commission and Local Leader Support:

- Secure letters of support from the Powell, Lewis & Clark, and Missoula County Commissions through coordinated grassroots, grasstops, and business engagement strategies to demonstrate broad public support for the proposal
- a) Collect signatures from at least 1,500 individuals and 100 businesses supporting the Blackfoot proposal
- b) Mobilize at least 150 supporters to participate in key county commission meetings and public events
- Maintain ongoing communication with county commissioners, local leaders, and other key stakeholders to build support and proactively address concerns as the proposal advances

Communications and Public Awareness:

- Develop and launch a dedicated campaign website
- Create communications guidance, including messaging and a communication style guide, for creative and outreach on the Blackfoot proposal
- Develop a communications strategy for the proposal to be implemented in collaboration with partner organizations
- Host 2-3 Wilderness Walks in the Blackfoot landscape to deepen public connection to the landscape and build a list of action-takers to engage at key moments
- Host 3 events with Montana-based businesses to raise public awareness and support for the proposal, in collaboration with The Conservation Alliance and our Business for Montana's Outdoors business members
- Engage in one-on-one outreach to key stakeholders to share the reimagined Blackfoot proposal, including local businesses, outfitters, recreation groups, and others
- Create Blackfoot-inspired art in collaboration with a local artist, and host an event to garner media coverage and increase community awareness of the proposal.

Federal Legislation and Decision-Maker Engagement:

- Finalize bill language and legislation

branding in collaboration with the upper and lower Blackfoot working groups

- Continue regular outreach and engagement with Representative Zinke, Senator Daines, Senator Sheehy, Representative Downing, and their staff to secure bill introduction and build support
- Following the primary election, engage candidates for Montana's open congressional and Senate seats to build awareness and support for the proposal for the event that reintroduction is needed in a future Congress
- Maintain active engagement with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes to ensure their priorities and values are incorporated in the proposal

#### Defending Montana's BLM Lands Advocacy and Decision-Maker Engagement:

- Coordinate with national partners to build a strong administrative record and submit technical comments to defend against attempts to dismantle BLM lands, including the use of the Congressional Review Act on RMPs and other land management documents, regulatory rollbacks that endanger public lands and resources, quarterly oil and gas lease sales, and other actions
- Generate substantial public pushback from our network, demonstrating that Montanans strongly oppose attacks on BLM lands
- Build a relationship and engage in ongoing, regular communication with the State BLM Director to advocate for wildlife habitat, recreation access, and conservation priorities on Montana's BLM lands

#### Communications and Public Awareness

- Engage strategically identified voices to publicly oppose the use of the CRA on RMPs and other public land planning documents and other attacks on BLM lands through outreach, relationship-building, and recruitment of spokespeople
- Educate and organize our grassroots supporter network, business network, and the public on the Congressional Review Act, the potential consequences of Congress's use of the CRA to overturn Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans, and other threats facing BLM lands through engaging, digestible social media, email, blogs, and outreach, also connecting these attacks to the large systematic effort to dismantle public lands at play

Partnership with TCA would significantly strengthen this effort. We are interested in engaging TCA's business community along with our coalition of Business for Montana's Outdoor business members

**Key Decision Makers** For our BLM lands defense campaign, we are seeking to influence the Bureau of Land Management and Department of the Interior, and will employ a variety of tactics to effectively do so. Key decision-

#### Working With Business Community

makers for the Blackfoot proposal include Montana's congressional delegation and Lewis and Clark, Powell, and Missoula county commissioners. Wild Montana and collaborative partners have spent years building relationships with these offices and commissions to secure the support needed to advance this proposal.

Rep. Zinke's retirement appears to be motivating him to consider his public land legacy, and we have been in discussions with him and his staff over the last several months about the Blackfoot proposal. In past weeks, his staff indicated that he is interested in introducing the legislation this spring and we are partnering with him and his office to prepare for introduction in the coming months.

At the same time, we are pursuing a long-term strategy to build broad ownership of the proposal regardless of the timeline for passage by engaging the offices of Daines, Sheehy, and Downing on the proposal, including setting the stage for Rep. Zinke's office to actively court these offices for cosponsorship or Senate companion legislation. Rep. Zinke's staffers are actively pitching a united delegation approach. The goal is that if Downing or Sheehy cosponsors or introduces a House version, they will be on the line to reintroduce it in the next Congress. There are also side benefits to this approach that will serve us in the next congress. Rep. Downing serves on House Committee on Natural Resources, and Sen. Sheehy is interested in joining the Senate Natural Resources committee after Sen. Daines' departure. If the bill does not move forward in this Congress, having our two senior delegates on their respective Natural Resources committees could be impactful. After the primary election, we will also begin engaging candidates for MT-01 House Seat and 2nd Montana Senate seat to build awareness and support if the bill needs to be reintroduced.

— particularly companies outside Montana — to broaden support across the political spectrum and demonstrate the national importance of protecting the Blackfoot watershed. Public education within the state will also be key, and we would like to partner with TCA and businesses connected to the Blackfoot and Clark Fork watersheds to raise awareness and build public support.

#### **Elevate Voices**

The Blackfoot proposal has been community-led from the beginning and reflects decades of collaboration among diverse stakeholders to create a shared vision for the landscape's future. The Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act and Lincoln Prosperity Proposal emerged through enduring partnerships among conservationists, snowmobilers, timber interests, recreationists, local officials, business owners, and community members committed to protecting the Blackfoot's wild character while supporting recreation access, local economies, and community resilience. For more than 20 years, these groups

#### **Measurable On-Ground Outcomes**

1. Secured letters of support from the Powell County, Lewis and Clark, and Missoula County Commissions for the Blackfoot proposal, in response to targeted relationship building, communications, and a petition to the Blackfoot area County Commissions with signatures from more than 1,500 individuals and 100 businesses supporting the Blackfoot proposal.
2. Strong, visible public demand for the Blackfoot proposal across Montana and nationally, demonstrated through earned media coverage, public engagement metrics, event participation, and growth in grassroots advocacy actions.

have worked to build trust across interests often seen as conflicting. The Blackfoot watershed includes the homelands of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), who endorsed the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act. Throughout the development of the current proposal, the upper and lower Blackfoot working groups have engaged CSKT leadership, Natural Resource staff, and tribal members to incorporate their priorities and values into the proposal, and will remain committed to ongoing consultation as the effort advances. This collaborative approach has kept local voices at the center of decision-making and built broad public support. Today, 83% of Montana voters support the proposal, according to the University of Montana's 2026 Crown of the Continent and Greater Yellowstone Initiative poll. Continued community engagement — including mobilizing Montanans to contact decision-makers and publicly support the proposal — will remain central to the campaign.

Collaborative conservation also guides Wild Montana's work defending BLM lands. We collaborate closely with regional and national partners, sharing research and resources to help protect cultural resources, sensitive landscapes, and public health from industrial development on rural public lands.

#### **TCA Funding Plan**

While the Blackfoot proposal and BLM defense campaign are top organizational priorities, they currently lack dedicated funding needed to capitalize on this critical moment. A Member Collective Grant would support communications, events, public education, and staff time and travel to advance these campaigns. Support from The Conservation Alliance would also demonstrate strong backing from the outdoor business community, a key factor in securing county commission endorsements and decision-maker support.

#### **Other Relevant Application Details**

3. Introduction of federal legislation to protect more than 400,000 acres in the Blackfoot watershed, enhance recreation access, and support local economies.
4. Led state opposition against efforts to weaken management of Montana and national BLM lands, demonstrated through key stakeholders' engagement, earned media, advocacy, administrative comments, and other legal action as appropriate.

#### **Confidential Items**

Representative Zinke's agreement to introduce the Blackfoot legislation this spring is currently confidential as we work with his staff to determine a plan for public announcement.