



These lands are Our Wild. Let's keep them public.

# New Mexico Rejects State Takeover of America's Public Lands

New Mexico is home to 22.9 million acres of public lands that include places like the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Bandelier National Monuments, Carlsbad Caverns National Park and Cibola and Gila National Forests. Our public lands support recreation and hunting opportunities as well as the lakes and rivers that provide drinking water for our communities.

These lands and their resources – Our Wild – are managed by federal agencies on behalf of all Americans. Public lands are a unique American legacy that provide families with irreplaceable memories in the outdoors, schools and communities with rich educational opportunities and sportsmen and women millions of acres to hunt and fish. These lands and the opportunities they create are in danger. Some state and congressional lawmakers seek to rob Americans of our public lands, handing them over to state governments for their discretion and eventual sell off.

Records show that the state of New Mexico has a history of prioritizing profit over public interest. Unlike public lands, New Mexico state trust lands are constitutionally mandated to be managed for maximum short-term profit, and can be sold or developed at any time—**New Mexico has sold off 4 million acres of its lands since statehood, cutting off public access. This bad idea is gaining momentum, with eight bills introduced to confiscate public lands since 2013.** Currently one person, **State Land Commissioner Aubrey Dunn**, has sole discretion over the decision to sell state trust lands and has expressed views that could undermine the future of Our Wild.

If we lose access to our public lands, we risk losing our American land heritage and the economic engine driven by hundreds of thousands of homegrown outdoor recreation-related jobs and a robust tourism industry. Not only are New Mexicans strongly against a state takeover of public lands, 11 of 12 western Attorneys General, including New Mexico's, concluded that there is **no legal merit to this extremist effort to seize public lands from Americans.**

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**A state takeover of public lands would punish New Mexico taxpayers with unreasonable economic burdens—the potential for higher taxes, budget cuts in state departments like education and restricted recreational freedoms. The argument that the state could manage public lands better than the national government has been proven illogical and unworkable.**

- Taxpayers would shoulder an additional **\$218 million** annually to fight wildfires, maintain roads and trails, treat noxious weeds and conduct habitat restoration.
- In 2011 alone, the Forest Service spent **\$155 million** on fire suppression in New Mexico, exceeding the state's entire law enforcement budget that year.



## Outdoor recreation is restricted on New Mexico state trust lands:

- A purchased annual recreation permit is required to hike and watch wildlife.
- Recreational shooting is prohibited.
- Camping is only allowed with written permission.
- Off-road vehicle use and campfires are prohibited.

## Thriving communities and local economies depend on public lands.

### Outdoor recreation generates:

- **\$6.1 billion** in consumer spending in New Mexico and **68,000** New Mexican homegrown jobs.
- New Mexico sportsmen spend more than **\$579 million** annually, **90%** of them depend on public lands to hunt or fish.

## Despite state legislative efforts to seize national public lands, residents continue to fight back.

- Bernalillo, Santa Fe, Taos, San Miguel and Doña Ana Counties, representing over **1 million New Mexico residents**, have passed resolutions formally opposing a state takeover of public lands.
- Taos County has a **proud legacy of conservation and preservation**—handing public land over to the state “goes against the grain,” says State Sen. Carlos Cisneros.

## What New Mexicans think:

- 78%** of voters don’t support the sale of federal public lands as a way to reduce the budget deficit.
- 85%** think protecting natural areas for future generations is a “very important” priority.
- 84%** say that public lands are an “essential” part of New Mexico’s economy.
- 69%** agree that public lands help attract high quality employers and good jobs to the New Mexico.

**“These privatization schemes would devastate outdoor traditions such as hunting and fishing, that are among the pillars of Western culture and a thriving outdoor recreation economy.”**

**U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich**

### References

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