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Two Montana areas make national list of wild areas at high risk of resource development

New report shines spotlight on important wild lands that must be protected

Bozeman, MT—A [new report released today](#) by The Wilderness Society raises the alarm about both the Badger-Two Medicine and Paradise Valley, as well as other wild lands across the U.S. threatened by extractive industries eager to exploit the resources on or underneath them, including oil, gas and gold.

‘Too Wild To Drill’ identifies 15 unique places found on public lands that are at high risk of drilling, mining and other development—and the damage and destruction that inevitably follow. These lands provide Americans with important benefits such as clean air and water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, sacred sites, and jobs and other socioeconomic benefits.

Jack Gladstone, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe and founder of Blackfeet Headwaters Alliance explains that, “the Blackfeet people have lived on this land for thousands upon thousands of years and the Badger-Two Medicine region is our refuge. It is one of the last geographical strongholds for our ancient culture. We will not stand by and watch the Badger-Two Medicine desecrated by oil and gas interests.”

Energy development can damage landscapes, often permanently. Impacts resulting from infrastructure like well pads, oil rigs, roads, fences and pipelines include air and water pollution from haze, spills, chemicals and dust, as well as phenomena like industrial traffic, gas flares and other light pollution, and loud noise that can disrupt communities and wildlife.

“Both the Badger-Two Medicine and Paradise Valley are extremely important to Montana’s heritage and our recreational assets,” stated Peter Aengst, Regional Director of The Wilderness Society. “There is a place for resource development on our public lands but these places are national treasures that are simply too important to our natural heritage and way of life to open up to development.”

According to the report, both the Badger-Two Medicine and Paradise Valley are facing a range of development threats, including two proposed mines in Paradise Valley, one just steps away from the northern border of Yellowstone National Park. This proposed mine is not only near our nation’s first

national park, but also directly adjacent to heavily recreated public lands including the prized Yellowstone River fishery. More and more of Montana's economy is reliant upon our natural assets and the recreation they provide, which these two proposed mines directly risk.

Additionally, two oil and gas companies have refused to accept that their leases located in the heart of the Badger-Two Medicine were issued illegally. They are now challenging the government's decision in court. Failure by the current administration to defend the cancellations could lead to roads and exploratory drilling in the Blackfoot Tribe's ancestral homeland.

The Wilderness Society issues a new version of 'Too Wild To Drill' every few years to call attention to vulnerable places on public lands. In this edition, places highlighted include the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of the most remote and wild places left in the world.

"Stopping gold mines at Yellowstone's gateway will protect the healthy local economy and jobs," said Joe Josephson of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. "Our public lands near the park, the wildlife, and the Yellowstone River all fuel this economy and we need to protect all of this from risky projects."

Energy companies already have more leases than they can apparently use. Of the [27 million acres currently under lease](#) to oil and gas companies—an area about the size of Tennessee—more than half are sitting idle. And the coal industry already has 20 years of reserves under lease on public lands.

While oil, gas and coal companies and their activities have an indisputably disproportionate influence on public lands, other imminent threats to treasured public lands identified by 'Too Wild To Drill' include uranium and sulfide-ore copper mining and groundwater extraction.

The release of 'To Wild Too Drill' falls in midst of [numerous reviews of public lands policies](#), ordered by President Donald Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, that are taking place behind closed doors with little or no public oversight or accountability.

This month also marks the end of the 180-day review period established by President Trump's ["Energy Independence and Economic Growth" Executive Order](#). The directive requires federal agencies to review any regulations that could "potentially burden" fossil fuel development. The Trump administration is known for its close ties to the extractive industries.

"We must set aside our wildest, most pristine places for future generations to enjoy," Peter Aengst said. "Selling out our public lands for a foolhardy pursuit of energy dominance and profiteering is not an option for these special places—once they're gone, we can never get them back."

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