

Now is the time to be heard on keeping lands public

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Dear Editor,

In all of America, there is perhaps no place as wellknown or revered by hunters as the wild

Missouri Breaks and surrounding prairies and rivers. From the rugged Rocky Mountain Front to willow thickets on the muddy Musselshell, from Montana's second largest elk herd to prairie grouse rising in front of a pointing dog, the Lewistown office of the Bureau of Land Management is responsible for some of the most important public lands, wildlife and recreation country in the entire world. It is important to understand that the BLM's Lewistown District is, right now, compiling a new Resource Management Plan to guide the stewardship of these lands for decades to come. We've reached a time of decision for Montana's public lands, a time when sportsmen's concerns over their future and our public lands are at a peak. Loss of hunting and other access to private farm and ranchland in Montana, as across the West, is becoming a critical problem. Wildlife habitat on private lands is being lost to an agricultural industry responding to booming new global markets. Energy development has demanded, and will continue to demand, tradeoffs from wildlife and public lands recreation. All of these factors increase the importance of the Lewistown RMP to every stakeholder in these public lands.

If you use the BLMmanaged

lands on the Lewistown District, now is the time to tell the BLM

that it is of the utmost importance to conserve the best intact habitats and backcountry hunting lands now, with concrete land management strategies that are clearly defined in this Resource Management Plan. All of us who use these lands know that they represent some of our last best opportunity to enjoy the Montana heritage of hunting and outdoor recreation, and to pass it on to our children. The stakes are high for our future.

Larry Copenhaver, Helena

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