# Your Land, Your Voice.

*A plain-language guide to what is happening on public land, why it matters to anyone who spends time outdoors, and how a few specific words from you can change which way a decision goes.*

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## ONE MORE VOICE, ONE MORE POINT OF VIEW

I got to know the bill. I read what the critics and supporters had to say, considered the context, and thought about how these things come about. I thought there might be room for one more voice, one more point of view, maybe even one more idea. This is the short version of Tymmber Outdoor Memo 023. Let me know what you think.

## WHAT IS GOING ON

About 28 percent of the country is federal land, which means it belongs to all of us [37]. Two decisions about it are open right now. Congress is considering a 417-page bill that would make it faster for companies to get permits for energy and mining projects [1]. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has also proposed ending the Roadless Rule, a 2001 rule that limits new roads and logging on about 44.7 million acres of national forest [27][29]. The public comment window on the Roadless proposal closed on October 6, and a final decision is still ahead [31].

## WHY YOUR VOICE MATTERS

A public comment is not a vote, and the government says so [48]. What counts is the reasoning and the real-world experience in it: how you use a place, what you have seen change, what a decision would cost you or your town. Agencies must answer relevant and significant comments, and a court can send a decision back if they do not [48].

Right now most comments come from organizations. In the Roadless Rule record, about 71 percent of entries came from 49 groups [4]. Meanwhile 183.2 million Americans spent time outdoors in 2025 [5]. Those groups do necessary work, but they speak for their members and their funders. You can speak for yourself.

## WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS

**When money is steady and tied to a clear job, wildlife has come back.** Elk fell to about 41,000 in 1907 and now number more than a million. White-tailed deer fell to 500,000 or fewer around 1900 and now number roughly 30 million. Wild turkeys fell to about 30,000 in the 1930s and now number over 7 million [7][8][9]. Part of the reason is a tax that hunters and shooters pay on guns and ammunition. It has raised more than $15.3 billion for state wildlife agencies since 1937, and the states spend it on habitat, public access, hunter education and research [50]. Bald eagles went from 417 nesting pairs in 1963 to about 71,400 in 2020 after the pesticide dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) was banned [10][49].

**When no one owns the problem, wildlife has kept falling.** North America has about 3 billion fewer birds than in 1970 [11]. The reported causes include lost grassland, intensive farming, pesticides, outdoor cats and window collisions [49]. Greater sage-grouse are down 78.8 percent since 1966 [13].

## THE LAND IS ASKED TO DO MORE

The U.S. population grew from 76 million in 1900 to 331 million in 2020 [36]. Federal land per person fell from about 8.4 acres to about 1.9, using today's acreage for both dates, so the figures show direction and not an exact count [36] [37]. The National Park Service had 323 million visits in 2025 [44] and a $24.2 billion maintenance backlog [45]. The land is being asked to supply energy, timber, forage, rural paychecks and a place to rest. The care we pay for has not kept pace.

> **THE IDEA IN ONE PARAGRAPH**
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> When a project on public land ends, for any reason, the site should become a new place for people and wildlife. A plan is filed with the permit, written with the people who live nearby. The company sets aside the money to clean up. The company and the public then share the cost of the new place, whether that is a trailhead, a wetland or a wildlife area. The public share comes from money the government already collects on that kind of project, so it does not depend on a yearly budget fight. A short wildlife report, written in plain language by a nearby university and paid for by the project's sponsor, is filed with the permit so that what is known about local wildlife is on the record.

Why would a company agree? In return it gets a known end-of-life cost on day one, permit protection tied to following the plan, staged release of its cleanup money, and a community that wants the site at the end (Memo 023, Section 10). Why should taxpayers pay a share? Because the public owns the land and will use the new place. Taxpayers also already pay when a sponsor walks away: the Bureau of Land Management's bond minimums for oil and gas wells were set in the 1950s and 1960s, and the Government Accountability Office found 84 percent of sampled bonds were likely too small [21].

## WHO SPEAKS FOR US

Special interest groups are ordinary organizations of people with a shared stake. A ranchers' association, a mining trade group, a conservation charity and a riders' coalition all qualify. Most of us reach a decision through one of them, which is a feature of the system. It helps to know who is behind a message. Five questions are worth asking of any group, including Tymmber Outdoor: who funds it, who runs it, who gains financially if its side wins, what it says it wants in its own words, and how it asked its members.

## THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO

1. **Write a short comment or letter.** Send it to your senators and representatives about the permitting bill, and to the Forest Service when a decision opens for comment. Use the template below.
2. **Tell the groups you want them to talk.** BlueRibbon Coalition focuses on access, and More Than Just Parks focuses on keeping land wild. They overlap more than the public argument suggests. Memo 023 invites both to respond.
3. **Pass this along** to someone who spends time outdoors and has never written to an agency.

### A COMMENT TEMPLATE (FOUR SENTENCES)

1. *Who I am:* "I am a [hiker / hunter / rider / angler / rancher / parent] from [town]."
2. *Where I go:* "I use [place] about [how often] for [what]."
3. *What I have seen:* "Over [years], I have seen [change in access, wildlife, fire, trash, water]."
4. *What I ask:* "When a project on public land ends, I ask that the site become a place for people and wildlife, with a plan and cleanup money in place from the start."

## A NOTE ON WHO IS WRITING

Tymmber Outdoor is a startup business that seeks to sell outdoor products and advocates for more people spending time outdoors. That is our core interest and you can find more across this entire website. The full memo, with every source, is Memo 023: Ensuring the Outdoor Recreational Voice Always Has a Seat at the Table

BRACKETED NUMBERS LINK TO THE SOURCE LIST IN MEMO 023. FIGURES ARE AS REPORTED IN THOSE SOURCES AND ARE SUBJECT TO CORRECTION.