RECEIVED

OCT 25 2017

Ravalli County Commissioners

ANACONDA-DEER LODGE COUNTY
Courthouse - 800 South Main
Anaconda, Montana 59711
Telephone (406) 563-4000
Fax (406) 563-4001

October 18, 2017

Dear Fellow Montana County Commissioners:

On October 3, 2017, the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Board of Commission unanimously adopted Resolution No. 17-34 (attached), a Resolution Publicly Stating the Value of Public Lands to Anaconda-Deer Lodge County's Economy, Recreation, Heritage, and Quality of Life; and Opposing Any Effort to Claim, Take Over, Litigate For, Sell, or Transfer Ownership of Federal Public Lands to the State or Local Governments within Anaconda-Deer Lodge County, Montana and Supporting Continued Federal Ownership of Federal Public Lands.

A little over two years ago, public lands across the West, including in Montana, fell under threat. In 2015, a total of 37 individual bills were proposed in 11 Western states, all of which were aimed at taking away federal public lands and turning them over to the states where they would likely be sold off to private entities. Communities across the West, including those in Montana, made their voices heard and in 2017, pro-transfer bills were defeated at the local level. Although land transfer legislation has largely been defeated at the local level, special interests and lobbyists are pushing their agenda in Washington D.C. by convincing Eastern lawmakers from states that have few public lands that counties in Western states support the idea of transferring ownership of public lands to state and private ownership.

State trust lands are constitutionally mandated to be managed for maximum profit. If federal public lands are transferred to individual states, the lands will be managed strictly for revenue generation. Local communities throughout Montana will bear the brunt of the cost of management and fire suppression, and lose millions of dollars in federal Payments in Lieu of Tax (PILT) dollars. The public lands that Montanan's enjoy year-round for camping, fishing, hunting, and recreation will be sold off. Montana's public lands provide fish and wildlife habitat and opportunities for outdoor recreation, hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping. These activities drive tourism and bring revenue into communities and create jobs.

The idea of land transfer is short-sighted and ill-conceived and distracts from the constructive work of addressing how Montanan's should properly manage its natural resources.

As fellow Commissioners, we encourage your Commission to pass a similar Resolution supporting federal land management of local public lands and honor the dedicated federal employees who manage the public lands and wildlife in your county.

Should you have any questions, please contact our Clerk of Commission, Julie Pooley, at (406) 563-4002 or jpooley@adlc.us.

Sincerely,

Terry Vermeire, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Commission Chairman

Paul Smith, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Commission Vice-Chairman

Kevin Hart, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Commissioner

Steve Gates, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Commissioner

Jim Whealon, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Commissioner

RESOLUTION NO. 17-34

A RESOLUTION PUBLICLY STATING THE VALUE OF PUBLIC LANDS TO ANACONDA-DEER LODGE COUNTY'S ECONOMY, RECREATION, HERITAGE, AND QUALITY OF LIFE; AND OPPOSING ANY EFFORT TO CLAIM, TAKE OVER, LITIGATE FOR, SELL, OR TRANSFER OWNERSHIP OF FEDERAL PUBLIC LANDS TO THE STATE OR LOCAL GOVERMENTS WITHIN ANACONDA-DEER LODGE COUNTY, MONTANA AND SUPPORTING CONTINUED FEDERAL OWNERSHIP OF FEDERAL PUBLIC LANDS

WHEREAS, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County includes many beautiful, natural landscapes including deserts, mountains, rivers, reservoirs, and other natural treasures; and

WHEREAS, many of those stunning places are public lands owned by all Americans; and

WHEREAS, public land under the management of the US Forest Service and the US Bureau of Land Management, constitutes a substantial percentage of the land in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County; and

WHEREAS, these federal public lands are essential to the quality of life in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County providing public recreational opportunities for wildlife watching, hiking, hunting, fishing, skiing, backpacking, horseback riding, bicycling, sightseeing, and numerous other outdoor recreational activities; and

WHEREAS, these federal public lands provide essential habitat for fish and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, these federal lands contain many historically significant irreplaceable cultural sites and landscapes that are spiritually significant; and

WHEREAS, wildlife and scenic landscapes on public lands attract outdoor recreation and tourism that are significant drivers of the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County economy; and

WHEREAS, the unified consistent management of federal land by federal land management agencies across the nation best protects the national values and utility of the public lands for all Americans and the values on which Anaconda-Deer Lodge County is dependent; and

WHEREAS, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County business owners attract many employees because of the iconic landscapes and recreational opportunities afforded by federal public lands; and

WHEREAS, there is broad consensus in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County of the need for effective management of our federal public lands and wildlife, and that collaborative approaches in which federal public lands management agencies cooperate with Montana Parks and Wildlife, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County officials and our community are more likely to produce effective management than would ownership or management of federal public lands by the State of Montana; and

WHEREAS, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County residents are actively collaborating among diverse interests and with public land managers to improve land management and public access; and

WHEREAS, federal public land management agencies employ residents of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County who are passionate and experts at their jobs despite lack of adequate federal funding, pay taxes, and contribute to our community; and

WHEREAS, Americans from throughout the country value these public Lands as a part of our national heritage and as our inalienable birthright as Americans; and

WHEREAS, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County forests are naturally prone to fire, including periodic large-scale fires, as part of the ecosystem in which they have evolved over the millennia, although a warming climate has accentuate the process; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County, Montana as follows:

> That the Board of County Commissioners opposes any effort to claim, take over, litigate for or sell off federal public lands within Anaconda-Deer Lodge County except pursuant to processes established by Congress in the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and other applicable laws, following public participation and site based analysis of wildlife, ecological, and community implications of the proposed land transfer.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF Anaconda-Deer Lodge THAT:

1. The Board of County Commissioners strongly supports federal land management in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County and the irreplaceable value public lands bring to our county's economy, recreation, heritage, and quality of life.

2. The Board of County Commissioners enthusiastically commends the dedicated federal employees who manage America's public lands in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County and the dedicated employees of Montana Parks and Wildlife division who manage wildlife in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County in partnership with federal land managers.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Commission of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County at a regular meeting held on the **3rd day of October, 2017**.

Terry Vermeire, Chairperson
Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Commission

ATTEST:

Julie K. Pooley
Clerk of Commission

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Ben Krakowka
County Attorney