

Don't Sell Off Our American Birthright

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America's public lands embody a revolutionary promise. Rejecting the European model that reserved the best lands and wildlife for the crown, our nation established that our majestic natural treasures would be the birthright of every American. These lands are not only central to our identity—the places we hunt, fish, and recreate across generations—they also serve as the foundation of America's outdoor recreation economy, which supports more than five million jobs and contributes mightily to our US economy.

A recent proposal in the Senate's budget reconciliation package threatens to begin liquidating this natural inheritance of every American. The provision would force the disposal of more than a million acres of federal land across the West. While this is not an assault on our iconic national parks, wildlife refuges, and other designated lands, it does target the lands of the Bureau of Land Management where tens of millions of Americans hunt, fish, and hike. Importantly, these same public lands that are proposed to be sold also provide vital public access for sportsmen and women to other adjoining public lands. This is a bad deal for taxpayers, a threat to our way of life!

It just doesn't make fiscal sense to liquidate capital assets that generate a compounding \$1.1 trillion return annually for a one-time payment of what is, in the grand scheme of things, a relatively small amount of money. That's not just selling the family farm; it's selling it for a fraction of a single year's harvest.

To be clear, we are not opposed to all land transfers. There are instances where land swaps or targeted sales make sense to meet specific community and housing needs, improve management, expand access, or enhance ecological connectivity. Responsible governance, however, demands an orderly and transparent process.

We already have proven, long-established frameworks for this. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 created a transparent, public process to ensure any land disposal serves the national interest. The

Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA), which was improved with bipartisan support during the first Trump Administration, established a smart, market-based system where proceeds from the sale of parcels are reinvested into acquiring high-priority conservation lands and creating new access for sportsmen and women. We should make these laws work better, rather than circumventing them.

The reconciliation proposal abandons these safeguards, using a procedural shortcut to bypass public input and silence the voices of local communities. Worse, it raids the dedicated conservation fund created by FLTFA, diverting nearly all of the sale proceeds to the general Treasury and breaking the conservation covenant that guarantees a net-gain for conservation, wildlife, and public access.

All of us at Bass Pro Shops and the National Wildlife Federation are proud to remain steadfast in our commitment to stand united with the sportsmen and women we are blessed to serve.

This is why we have been working with a broad and unprecedented coalition that has risen in opposition. Nearly every major hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, and conservation organization in the country—representing tens of millions of sportsmen and women—have formally urged the Senate to reject this provision. We stand united that our focus should be on the restoration and improved management of our public lands “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people”—not selling them to the highest bidder! Heeding this call, the House of Representatives, under the leadership of former Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke and Rep. Mike Simpson, wisely rejected a similar provision. The Senate should do the same.

The choice is clear: Uphold President Theodore Roosevelt’s legacy of wise stewardship or erode our nation’s outdoor heritage.

Let’s not sell off our American birthright.

Mr. Morris is a noted conservationist and the founder and Lead Outfitter of Bass Pro Shops. Mr. O’Mara is president and CEO of the seven million members strong National Wildlife Federation.



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Join these respected conservation organizations united in opposition to this proposed legislation:



The National Wildlife Federation, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, Trout Unlimited, Wild Sheep Foundation, Boone and Crockett Club, Mule Deer Foundation, Delta Waterfowl, National Deer Association, American Fisheries Society, American Fly Fishing Trade Association, American Sportfishing Association, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Bonefish & Tarpon Trust, Camp Fire Club of America, Izaak Walton League of America, National Association of Forrest Service Retirees, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Public Lands Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, The Wildlife Society, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and many more.

