



PROTECTING MONTANA'S AIR, WATER, AND OPEN SPACES: *A Year in Review*





DEAR FRIENDS,

One year ago, I joined the Environment Montana Research & Policy Center team as our new State Director. I'm proud of the work we're doing to protect Montana's environment, and I want to share with you some of our biggest achievements so far.

The work in this booklet reflects a diversity of issues, strategies and policy areas in which we are making a difference. Whether the objective is cleaner water, clearer air or healthier people, Environment Montana Research & Policy Center and our allies are working to win important victories despite overwhelming odds. Within these diverse stories there is a common thread: research, education, organizing and, along with our sister 501c(4) citizen organization Environment Montana, advocacy.

Yet, despite the successes of our past year, the challenges facing Montana's environment and our society remain daunting. The degradation of our wild open spaces, the continued threats to public health from pollution, and the dominance of special interests over pressing issues show that we need renewed and emboldened activism in the years ahead.

As we enter the new year, we are resolved to replicate and expand upon our early successes in the hopes of bringing about a cleaner, greener and healthier future for us all.

Sincerely,
Skye Borden



WORKING TO PROTECT MONTANA'S ENVIRONMENT

Environment Montana Research & Policy Center builds on decades of experience educating citizens and conducting research about our environment. Our staff combine independent research, practical ideas and effective educational campaigns to win tangible results that improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

We work every day to move the needle of public opinion towards policies that will help us achieve a cleaner, greener, and healthier Montana. We envision a future where healthy lakes and rivers are safe for swimming and fishing; where our favorite public lands are protected from drilling; and where clean sources of energy like solar and wind power our communities.

We know Montanans support the environment, but too often, special interests pollute our air and water and destroy our

natural areas without consequences. That's why our staff, interns and volunteers educate thousands of people in communities from Malta to Missoula about pressing environmental issues such as lead contamination in schools. Our online team engages committed environmentalists on the top issues that matter to them while creating content that expands the ranks of the environmental movement.

We promote common sense policy solutions and goals that the clear majority of Montanans agree on, like increasing our use of solar energy and protecting our public lands. Our organizers recruit and mobilize coalition partners from all walks of life, from academics and community leaders to parents and elected officials. Meanwhile, we release hard-hitting reports to generate and keep a steady stream of media coverage on the issues, reaching the local television, radio and print news sources throughout the state.



PROTECTING OUR CLIMATE

“We are the first generation to feel the sting of climate change, and we are the last generation that can do something about it.”

- Washington State Gov. Jay Inslee

BACKCOUNTRY ADVOCACY FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Montanans see that our changing climate is already altering the places that we love. Anglers face longer, more frequent river closures. Hunters push farther into dry mountainsides that were once reliably covered in snow. And all Montanans suffer as earlier, longer wildfire seasons draw us indoors and away from our favorite summer lakes, trails, and parks.

That’s why we’re hitting the trail – and the slopes – to educate, engage, and activate a new coalition of Montanans in the fight for climate action.

Last year, we engaged outdoor enthusiasts by meeting them where they were – literally. We traveled to trailheads and backcountry spots throughout the state, sparking simple acts of first-time climate advocacy, coupled with meaningful follow-up and further opportunities to become involved.

STANDING UP FOR SOLAR

Behind the scenes, electric utilities, fossil fuel interests and powerful industry front groups have been chipping away at key protections for solar users in Montana. Our research reports, media outreach, and public events shine a light on these attacks and suggest a better pathway forward to a clean energy future.



OUR WORK IN ACTION: The Trailhead Tour

Last summer, we kicked off a statewide Trailhead Tour to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change on Montana's public lands. At trailhead tabling events from Glacier's Logan Pass to Yellowstone's Mammoth Hot Springs and dozens of points in between, we recruited hundreds of hikers, bikers, anglers, and other outdoor enthusiasts to pose with our climate change banner and send postcards to decisionmakers. This year, we're hitting the trail once again, and we'll expand our outreach to include more places, more people, and a broader range of advocacy activities.





PROTECTING OUR WATERWAYS

When it comes to our streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands, they all deserve protection. Period. That's why we're working to defend the Clean Water Act.

STANDING UP FOR CLEAN WATER PROGRAMS

Montana's waterways are critical to the health and welfare of our families, our communities, and wildlife.

We've come a long way since the bad old days when mining and logging companies polluted our riverbanks and clogged our streams with waste. But, we still have a long way to go, and proposed rollbacks to the clean water rule threaten to stall the progress we've made.

This year, we will continue to fight for clean water in Montana with hard-hitting research reports, media outreach, public educational events and advocacy.

SAVING OUR LAST BEST RIVERS

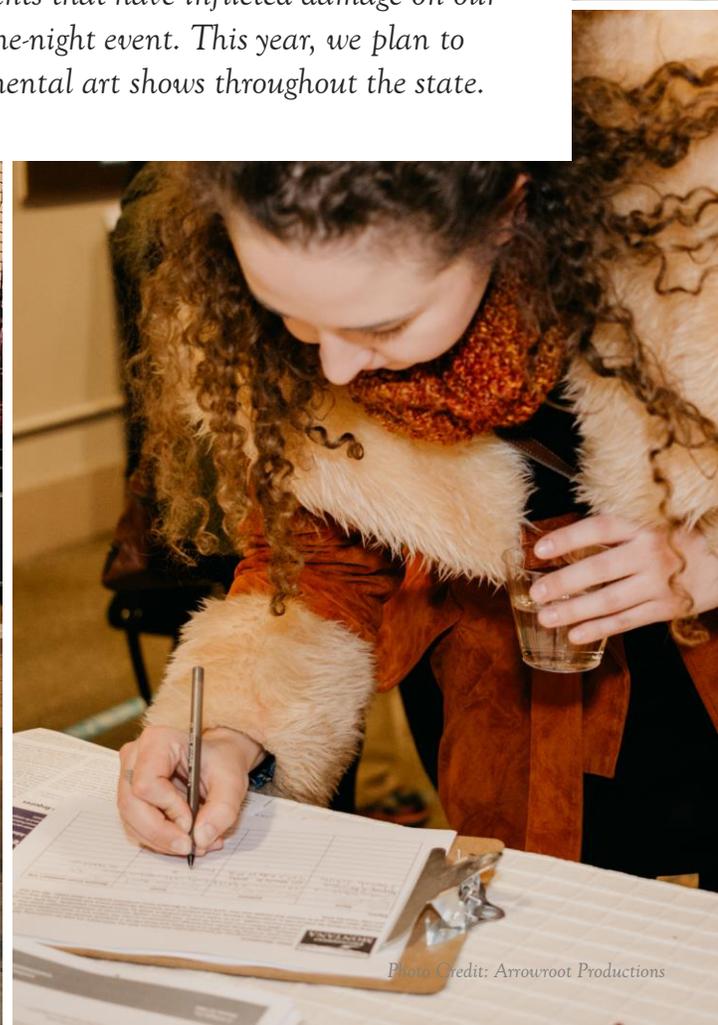
Montana is home to some of the wildest, most pristine rivers in America. The gorgeous scenery and unparalleled recreation on these wild rivers boosts our quality of life, and they serve as the backbone to our state's booming outdoor tourism industry.

Unfortunately, as the battle over the Smith River has made clear, not even our most cherished rivers are safe from development. This year, we're working to permanently protect these rivers by establishing them as Wild and Scenic Rivers.



OUR WORK IN ACTION: Clean Montana Waters Art Show

In December, we hosted an educational art show during Missoula's monthly First Friday art walk to raise awareness about cuts to the EPA's clean water programs. The show blended local photography and paintings celebrating Montana's waterways, contrasted with historical photos of dams, mines, and various pollutants that have inflicted damage on our waterways. More than 200 people attended the one-night event. This year, we plan to expand our artist outreach with a series of environmental art shows throughout the state.



PROTECTING OUR HEALTH

The children we know and love today can live cleaner, healthier lives in a greener world, but only if we can keep our environmental protections in place and make them stronger. It's up to us.

GETTING THE LEAD OUT

Our children need safe drinking water – especially where they go to learn and play each day. Unfortunately, lead is contaminating drinking water at schools across the state. Lead is a potent neurotoxin that affects how our children learn, grow, and behave.

We're working to get the lead out of Montana's schools by:

- Working with school districts to encourage voluntary lead testing, and
- Educating decisionmakers on the need for universal lead testing and reporting in all Montana schools.

DEFENDING THE PLACES WE LOVE

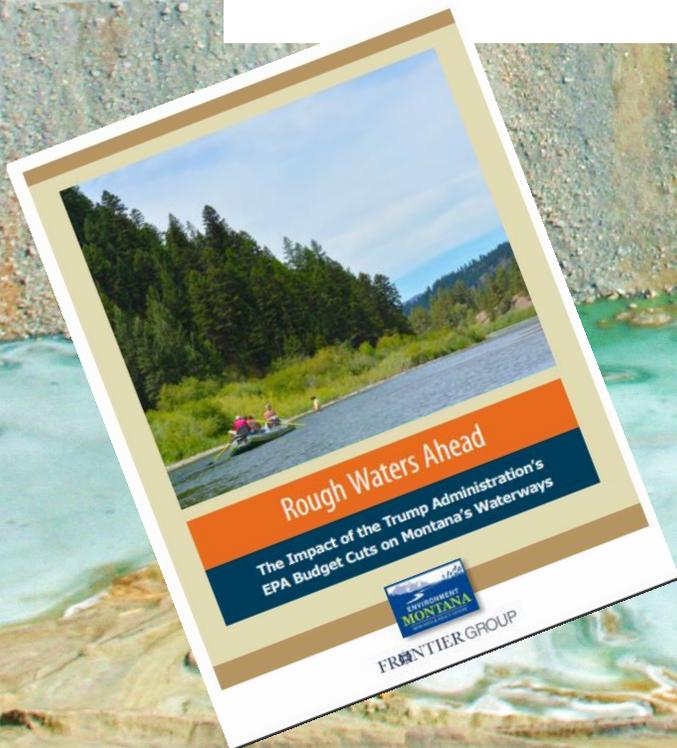
If Washington, DC dismantles our environmental protections, Montanans will be left with dirtier air to breathe, dirtier water to drink, a more rapidly changing climate, and more degraded public lands. We're fighting against rollbacks in environmental protections by:

- Speaking out against the repeal of important protections, including the clean water rule and clean power plan, and
- Educating decisionmakers about the importance of fully funding EPA programs, including Superfund.

OUR WORK IN ACTION: Rough Waters Ahead Report

This fall, we partnered with Montana Trout Unlimited to release a report on proposed budget cuts to Montana's clean water programs.

The report featured nine different local drinking water, river restoration, and Superfund projects that would have their funding slashed. It was covered by news outlets throughout the state, including Montana Public Radio, ABC Fox Montana, and the Missoulian.





PROTECTING OUR PUBLIC LANDS

What writer Wallace Stegner called America's "best idea," protecting natural areas for the benefit of all, not just the privileged few, has endured for more than 150 years. Now we're working to protect these special places from Ryan Zinke's worst idea – selling them off to the highest bidder.

FIGHTING DRILLING ON PUBLIC LANDS

The abundant wildlife and unspoiled landscapes of western Montana's public lands are one of the state's best assets. Yet, instead of protecting these special places, Interior Secretary (and former Montana Representative) Ryan Zinke is working to open them to oil and gas drilling.

This year, we're fighting oil and gas leases in our favorite places by:

- Mobilizing grassroots opposition to speak out against lease auctions and participate in official comment periods,
- Generating earned media about proposed leases on ecologically valuable lands, and

- Writing op-eds, letters to the editor, and blog posts about upcoming lease auctions.

PRESERVING OUR PARKS

From Glacier National Park to the Upper Missouri River Breaks, Montana's national parks and monuments are what makes the state America's last best place. Unfortunately, these special places are under attack.

We're working to protect our parks by:

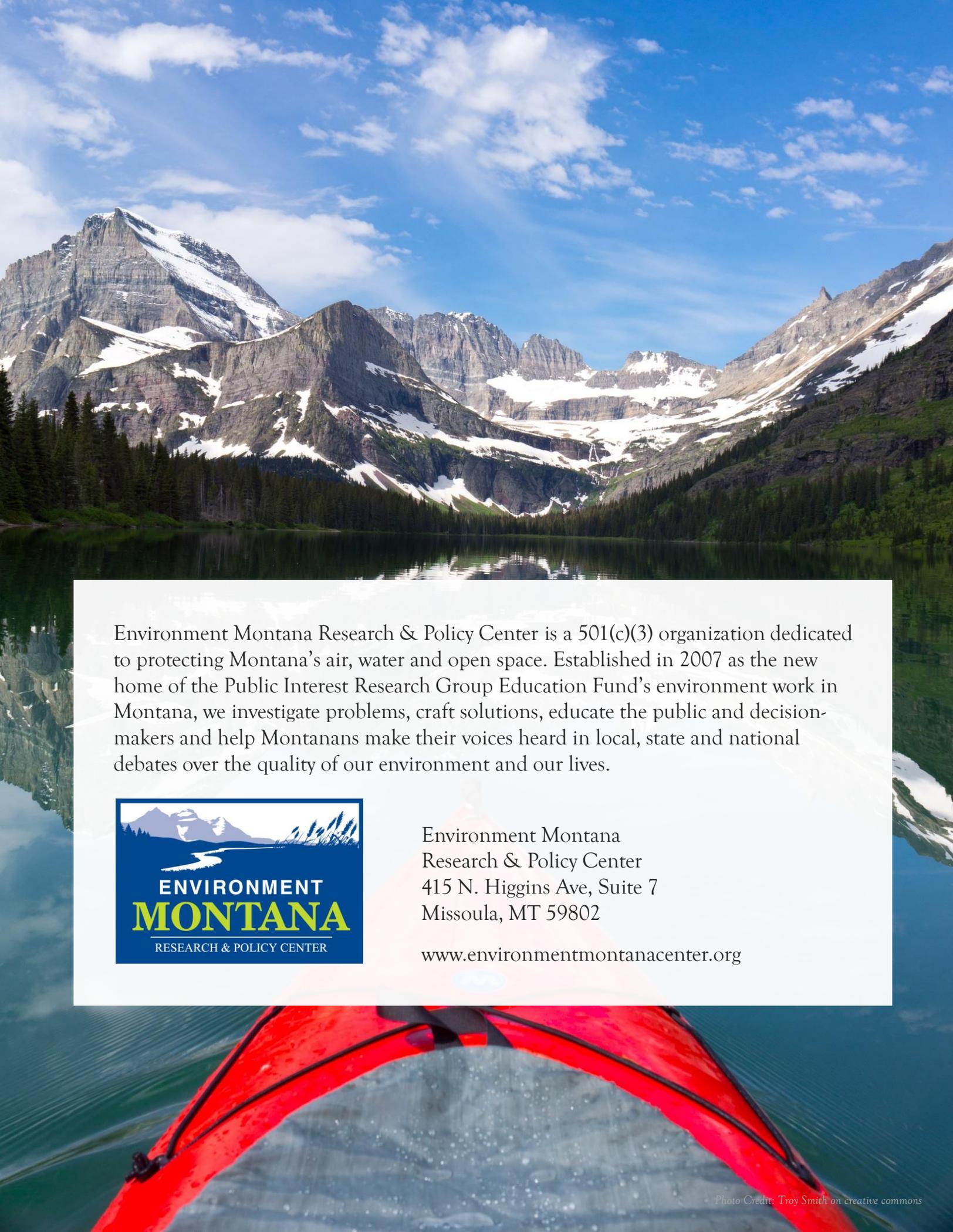
- Raising awareness about the need to repair our crumbling national park infrastructure, and
- Mobilizing Montanans to speak out against the shrinking of our national monuments.



GROWING THE MOVEMENT

Today's young people will be the leaders of tomorrow. Whether we are partnering with emerging artists, organizing a youth panel discussion on climate change, or rallying students to protect public lands, our work aims to engage a new generation of advocates from a diverse array of backgrounds.





Environment Montana Research & Policy Center is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to protecting Montana's air, water and open space. Established in 2007 as the new home of the Public Interest Research Group Education Fund's environment work in Montana, we investigate problems, craft solutions, educate the public and decision-makers and help Montanans make their voices heard in local, state and national debates over the quality of our environment and our lives.



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