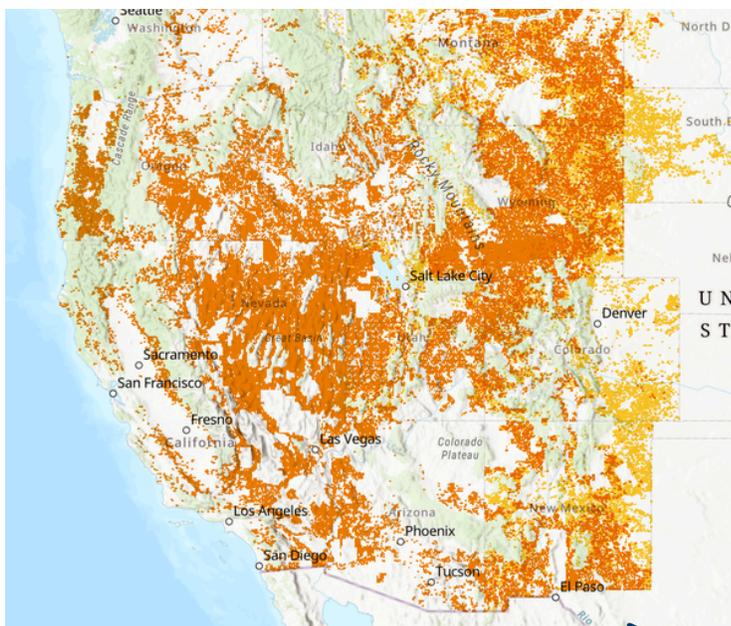


MONTANA'S PUBLIC LANDS

THE NEW OIL & GAS LANDSCAPE



For decades, public lands in Montana were managed with a balance of uses—recreation, conservation, grazing, timber, and responsible energy development. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) acted as a steward, ensuring no single interest dominated and that public input mattered. But recent policy shifts have severely limited the BLM's options, and the agency's ability to incorporate new, local information, thereby dramatically changing that landscape.



On July 4, 2025, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) became law, marking one of the most significant shifts in public land management in decades. Before OBBBA, the BLM had discretion to weigh ecological, recreational, cultural, and community concerns when deciding which lands were “available” for oil and gas leasing. This safeguard ensured that leasing decisions balanced energy development with conservation and public use.

In Montana, the BLM manages:

- 8.1 million acres of national public lands
- 39.6 million acres of subsurface mineral rights

Over 200 million acres nationwide now open for lease to private companies

In 2024, BLM lands contributed **\$9 billion** to the economy of Montana and the Dakotas (which are managed by the same BLM office) and supported over **29,000 jobs in these states.**



All facts and figures from BLM reports ([2024 Public Lands Statistics](#), [Oil and Gas Statistics](#), [Valuing America's Public Lands 2024](#)) unless otherwise indicated.

THE STATE OF OIL AND GAS ON MONTANA'S PUBLIC LANDS



Leasing is an irrevocable commitment of resources conveying a right to development of the lease. Even if leases go undeveloped, they are managed for oil and gas as the priority use over other important multiple-uses like hunting, angling, outdoor recreation and fish and wildlife habitat.

In Montana, public lands support a booming recreation economy and there's a surplus of land for the oil and gas industry, which at last count had **750,000 acres of unused leases**.

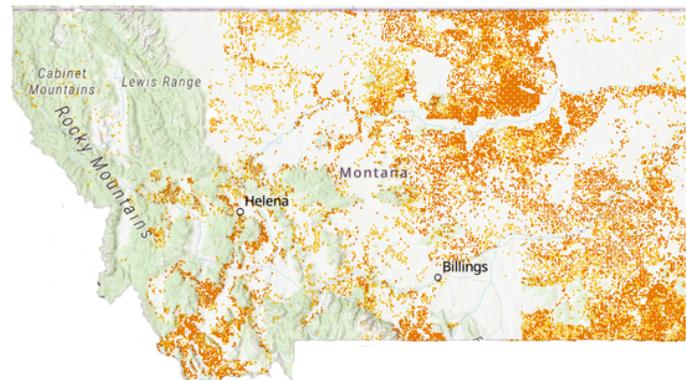
IN MONTANA, 50% OF PUBLIC LANDS LEASED BY OIL AND GAS SIT UNDEVELOPED, YET NEW LEASING CONTINUES

WHAT'S CHANGED:

- **Mandatory Lease Sales:** BLM must offer at least 50% of open parcels
- **Rollback of Safeguards:** Only stipulations in land management plans apply, even if decades old.
- **Eliminated \$5/acre lease nomination fee:** Fee helped direct leasing to appropriate areas.
- **Reinstated \$1.50/acre leases:** a practice Congress repealed in 2022 because 99% never produce oil or gas.

These changes undermine fiscal responsibility and threaten the ecological integrity of public lands—especially coldwater ecosystems vital to native and wild trout. Collectively these rollbacks may incentivize speculative leasing and increase development pressure in sensitive watersheds, including those critical to native and wild trout.

LANDS NOW OPEN TO LEASING



- BLM lands open to oil and gas leasing
- Split-estate lands open to oil and gas leasing

Nearly 19 million acres of public and split-estate lands in Montana are open for leasing, including 2.7 million acres in native trout habitat

Visit
www.tu.org/oilandgasreform
to learn more and take action.