

Daily **Montanan**

COMMENTARY

The five horsemen of the apocalypse

Trump administration's proposed actions would harm public lands, hurt endangered species and change the landscape forever

MIKE BADER AUGUST 25, 2026 4:11 AM



📷 A grizzly bear killed by hunter gunfire in the Aspen Creek drainage west of Cody in 2014. Grizzly bears have died at a high rate so far in 2024. Some 16 deaths are being investigated, which means the bears were likely killed in self-defense. (Courtesy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

The Trump Administration has released five horsemen to run roughshod over America the Beautiful, playing out their version of Manifest Destiny 2.0 at the expense of all that is good and whole.

In seemingly separate, but connected actions, the very agencies entrusted with protecting our national heritage seek to drive threatened and endangered wildlife off the landscape like the native Americans before them. Under a cloak of “efficiency” and “local control,” they are wreaking havoc leading to plunder and lawlessness, clearing the way for bulldozers and industrial anarchy.

First, the Department of Interior redefined “harm” under the Endangered Species Act so that habitat destruction is no longer considered harmful to threatened and endangered species. That’s

like saying we could take away food, shelter, heat, water and clothing from people and it would have no effect on their well-being. No harm, no foul.

Second, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service proposed to remove Endangered Species Act protection for grizzly bears less than two years after concluding that a host of cumulative threats puts the species at increased risk of extinction throughout their range in the lower 48.

Third, the Fish & Wildlife Service proposed an expanded “4(d) rule” that Interior Secretary Doug Burgum says turns grizzly bear management over to the states that want trophy hunting and to kill them whenever near livestock, even on public lands. Like failed state management of wolves, the proposed rule creates expanded exemptions for killing grizzly bears and would give out kill permits like Halloween candy.

Fourth, the Department of Agriculture proposed canceling the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Tens of millions of acres of the wildest National Forests would be opened to new roads, logging, motorized use and other development. This despite that 99% of the comments from the American people oppose this industrial land grab. Say goodbye to connecting isolated grizzly bear populations and say hello to dramatic reductions in elk, Montana’s five-week general hunting season, bull trout, salmon, old growth forests and clean water supplies for humans.

Fifth, the Department of Agriculture has proposed to shred National Travel Management Planning on National Forests, opening the way to off-trail cross-country travel by ATVs, snowmobiles and 4-x-4s. Management of motorized access to seasonally protect sensitive wildlife and fish habitat would go out the window, replaced with a system of motorized mayhem.

Taken in sum, these five horsemen would unleash an environmental apocalypse.

Other actions have already eroded the National Environmental Policy Act, limited public comment and other mechanisms meant to maintain checks and balances. They are dismantling a system of land and wildlife management years in the making that has sustained ecosystems, restored elk populations and brought wildlife back from the brink of extinction. These connected actions also undermine the public’s right to have a say over management of its own lands.

Many organizations are fighting the good fight but they need your help. Please get informed and involved. These connections actions must be stopped before the soul of America is permanently wounded.