

MONTANA CHALLENGE

Powerful economic and demographic forces are taking place throughout Montana and the Rocky Mountain West. These forces are challenging Montana communities to re-examine the basic tenets of economic development and the role of natural resources. Once valued almost exclusively as a source of timber, mineral, and agricultural commodities, Montana's natural resources are increasingly seen as key "quality of life" assets essential in attracting the people and businesses creating economic opportunity and prosperity. As the old adage that "people follow jobs" gives way to "jobs follow people", Montana is coming to understand the importance of environmental quality to economic development.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the U.S. Forest Service, and other cooperators sponsored a multi-year initiative called the *Montana Challenge* to gather 30 years of data – demographic, economic, social, tourism and recreational uses, legal – to study and document the changing role of natural resources in Montana's economy. The *Montana Challenge* paints a clear picture, drawn from in depth data analyses by leading researchers and experts, of the critical connection between the health of Montana's extraordinary environmental assets and Montana's economic and cultural prosperity.

SuzAnne Miller, a native of Butte who grew up roaming the mountains and fishing the streams of Southwest Montana, will discuss the results and implications of the *Montana Challenge* as it pertains to our communities, management of our resources, and our economic future. Her hour long presentation will be followed by a community discussion.

SuzAnne M. Miller, a native of Butte, Montana, has over 35 years of experience in biometric, biological, social science, and economic research, project administration and management, and state, federal, and international government service. She attended the University of Montana and graduated from the University of Washington, where she did graduate work in biomathematics. Collaboration and partnerships have been a central part of SuzAnne's career; she initiated and supported numerous multiparty cooperative agreements, research collaborations, stakeholder groups, and partnerships involving government, private, and non profit entities to address a wide range of public policy issues. SuzAnne has an extensive background in both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Her career focus has been on integrating socioeconomic information into natural resource public policy discussions and development.