

The Montana Challenge

Remaining the *Last Best Place* in a Changing West

The Montana Challenge begins with a question posed by the U.S. Forest Service and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

How can management of Montana's fish and wildlife resources best contribute to Montana's social and economic well being?

By employing prominent socioeconomic researchers from across the Rocky Mountain region, and digging for authoritative public-sector data, *The Montana Challenge* establishes an unexpectedly vital role of fish, wildlife, and wild lands in Montana's culture *and* economy.

- **Three Montanas.** The Rocky Mountains are the fastest growing section of the U.S. in population, personal income, and total employment; while the Great Plains are in population and economic decline. Montana's counties reflects this trend with:

- rapid growth along the mountains in the west
- slower growth along the Rocky Mountain front
- rapid decline in the eastern plains

- **Quality of Life.** "Quality of life" is driving the Rocky Mountain West's population and economic growth.

- natural resource amenities are key to quality of life
- identifying and promoting natural resource amenities in eastern Montana could benefit the economy

- **Economy in Transition.** Montana and other Rocky Mountain states are in the midst of a transition from an economy based on natural resource commodities to a human resource based economy where jobs follow the people.

- Montana's prosperity depends on attracting people who create economic opportunities.

- **Fish, Wildlife, and Wild Lands are Montana's Brand.** Healthy ecosystems, healthy fish and wildlife populations, and broad public access create Montana's unique and desirable lifestyles.

- Montana's wild resources – fish, wildlife, vast natural landscapes – draw people and economic activity

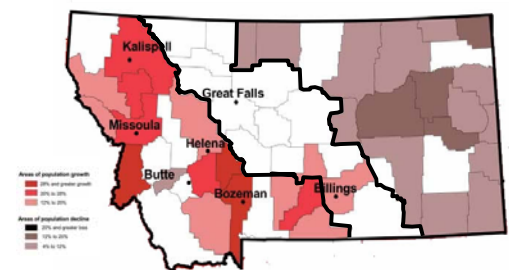
- **Diversity Equals Strength.** Diversity is a source of strength for ecosystems and economies.

- Human resource sectors are the most rapidly growing sectors of Montana's economy – especially in the western region
- Montana's traditional natural resource based economic activities--timber, agriculture, energy, mining--remain important to Montana – especially in the eastern region.

- **The Montana Challenge.** Montana's challenge is to both utilize and protect its natural resources.

- How can fish, wildlife, and natural landscapes contribute to quality of life and draw economic activity to the eastern region of the state?
- How can Montana respond to natural resource pressures created by rapid growth in the western region of the state?

Montana's Three Regions



The Montana Challenge

Remaining the Last Best Place in a Changing West

- How can Montana support traditional resource industries and enhance resource amenities?

IMPLICATIONS of *The Montana Challenge* include the following:

- **The Economic Value of Montana's Natural Resources Exceeds Commercial Value Alone**
 - Both direct (commercial) and indirect economic values must be considered in weighting resource management alternatives.
- **Public Access to Montana's Natural Resource is Critical to Economic Development**
 - Montana's unique quality of life depends on broad public access to healthy natural systems and abundant fish and wildlife
- **Enhancing Montana's Natural Resources Enhances Montana's Economy**
 - Investing in Montana's fish, wildlife, and natural landscapes brings both direct and indirect economic benefits.

NEXT STEPS for *The Montana Challenge* including addressing the following issues:

- **Quality of Life and Resource Extraction**
 - What economic and environmental opportunities and challenges have Montana's resource industries faced since 1970?
 - How has resource extraction contributed to, or detracted from, Montana's economic and environmental quality and how have they addressed increased economic emphasis on Montana's quality of life?
- **Quality of Life and Public Access**
 - In quantifying changes in public access, how should access methods, time and season, duration, specific locations, alternative routes, and other factors be considered?
 - How do changes in public access impact social and economic values, and how have changes in access impacted Montanans use of fish and wildlife and the communities and businesses that support those uses?
- **Healthy environment and healthy economy.**
 - What is the full range of services provided by Montana's natural environment, and how is economic value of environmental services such as clean water, clean air, and quality of life defined and quantified by Montanans?
 - What are the direct and indirect economic benefits derived from environmental restoration efforts, and how do jobs involved in restoration compare to those in the resource commodities industries?

For more information, visit *The Montana Challenge* web site at <http://fwp.mt.gov/tmc>.