

# GIVING AWAY OR SELLING OFF OUR PUBLIC LANDS



Our nation's system of public lands is uniquely democratic, open to everyone no matter their wealth, class, history, or background. As the Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park reads, our American lands are “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”

Every American has the right to participate in decision-making about national parks, national forests, and other public lands. In other words, Americans living in New York have as much say about public lands as those living in Utah.

## Public lands belong to all Americans, but this privilege is under attack

Throughout the West, a network of special interest groups and politicians are attempting to transfer our national public lands to state, local, and private control. Dozens of bills to achieve this goal have been introduced in state legislatures, and the debate has even reached the U.S. Congress, which has taken steps to undermine our system of public lands.

These political attacks are an affront to our heritage and to the collaborative spirit needed to manage our lands and resources wisely for this and future generations.

# Keep It Public

68% of Western voters agree:  
Our national public lands belong to  
all Americans

Source: Colorado College State of the Rockies Project 2015 *Conservation in the West Poll*

## Transferring our lands would reduce access and is costly

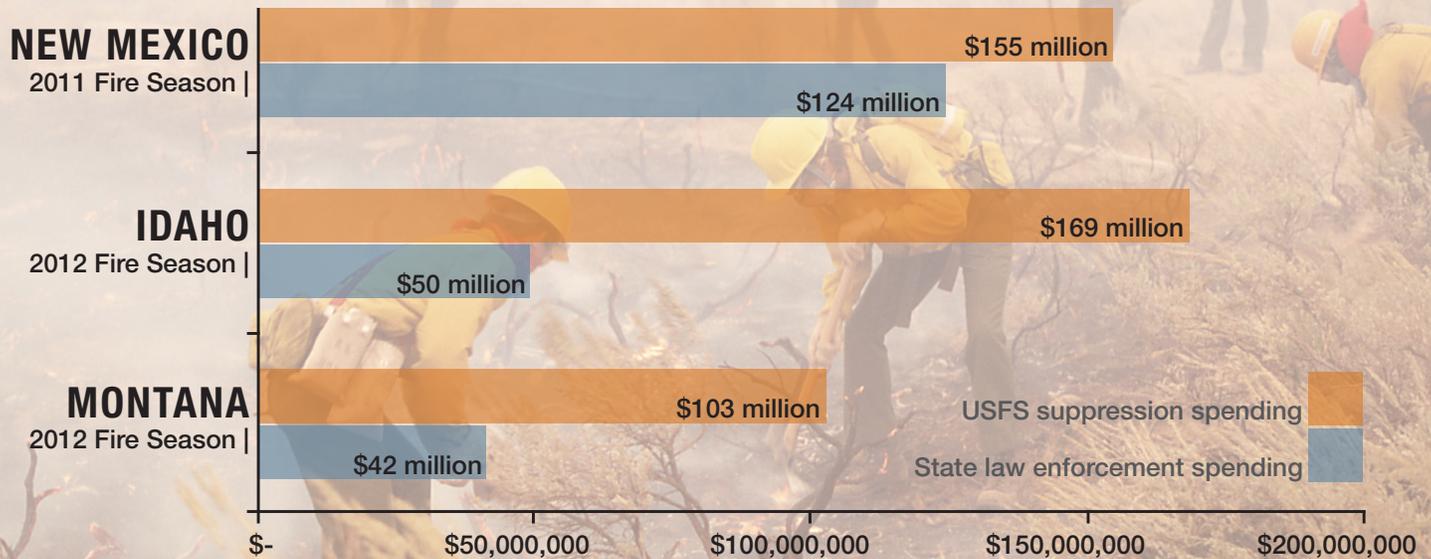
Studies have shown that efforts to transfer national public lands to the states would [reduce access](#) for recreation, hunting, and fishing. That's why sportsmen and outdoor groups have [fought strongly](#) against such proposals. And, nearly two dozen Western newspapers have [editorialized](#) against it.

Additionally, transferring and selling off our lands would be extremely costly to both state and U.S. taxpayers. Economic studies have shown states could only afford the costs of managing public lands under extremely [unrealistic and idealized scenarios](#).

If American lands were transferred to the states, state taxpayers would have to take on the costs of fighting wildfires. Wildfire suppression spending by the U.S. Forest Service in each Western state is so large that it can exceed what many Western states spend on police protection and law enforcement.



# Wildfire | Forest Service suppression costs can exceed law enforcement budgets in Western states



## Here are some key facts about our public lands and the land transfer movement.

- More than [two-thirds of Western voters](#) believe that national public lands belong to all Americans and not just to the residents of a particular state.
- The American Constitution Society [analyzed](#) the constitutionality of land transfers, and determined that “states have no constitutional power to force federal land transfers.”
- Sportsmen like the [Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation](#), [Backcountry Hunters and Anglers](#), and the [National Wildlife Federation](#) have opposed transferring public lands to the state, and outdoor enthusiasts and have [rallied against it](#) in six Western capitals.
- Western politicians have spent a combined \$816,000 of taxpayer money to study selling off or giving away national public lands and are [proposing](#) to spend millions more.
- The transfer public lands movement is rooted in extremist ideologies like county supremacy and “[coordination](#).”