

# America's National Public Lands Belong To All of US



America's public lands belong to everyone in our country. Our national forests, national monuments, wildlife refuges and other national public lands are part of our country's outdoor heritage and must continue to be passed down to our future generations.

**Veterans share a strong connection with the outdoors and believe that protecting our national public lands is a patriotic duty.**

## The Value of National Public Lands for Veterans

**Veterans value national public lands for many reasons, including:**

### **RECREATION AND RECOVERY**

Like so many Americans, veterans count on our national public lands for fishing, hiking, camping and hunting. Some veterans turn to the outdoors to heal from the trauma of war and renew bonds with family members after long deployments. Protecting these lands is one way that America can give back to its heroes who have paid such a high price for our freedom.

### **OUR GIFT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS**

Our parents and grandparents made it possible for Americans to enjoy such a strong outdoor heritage. We must continue to protect our public lands so we can pass this heritage down to our children and grandchildren.

### **OPPORTUNITIES TO BE MORE ACTIVE**

Too many of America's children stay inside watching TV, playing video games or spending time online – and not enough time enjoying all the outdoors has to offer. Veterans place a great deal of value in being outdoors and believe that we need to protect our national public lands because they provide families with opportunities to be more active and enjoy the outdoors.

### **HISTORY AND HERITAGE**

Members of our military were the first protectors of our public lands and our military history is protected in these lands – from Civil War battlefields to new monuments such as Fort Ord and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monuments.



“Public lands belong to us all. As veterans, we want to see these lands protected for future generations. After all, we served overseas to ensure these lands and this country remain free for all to enjoy.”

– ANDREA SANDOVAL, OIF VETERAN, SERGEANT FIRST CLASS, US ARMY



“Many veterans have a natural love of the outdoors. We fish, hunt, hike and otherwise enjoy our public lands with friends and family members. And getting outdoors is a wonderful way to reintegrate when we return home from war.”  
– JON SOLTZ, SERVED IN THE ARMY IN KOSOVO AND IRAQ.

“Future generations need to learn about our environment through the lands of our Ancestors. All across America, our public lands provide a space for children to run free and explore.”  
– JESSE DESROSSIER, BLACKFEET NATIVE,  
US MARINE CORPS, IRAQ VETERAN

“We must keep the places we love to hunt and fish in good condition, so that our kids and future generations of vets will have the same opportunities to enjoy them that we have today.”  
– MAJOR GENERAL DONALD EDWARDS, US ARMY (RET.)

“Personally, I want to see our public lands protected because of their critical role in my mental and physical health. Access to public lands like Hunter-Frying Pan Wilderness helped me to survive my transition to civilian life.”  
– ADAM MCCABE, OIF MARINE CORPS VETERAN,  
HUTS FOR VETS



# The Threat: States Cannot Afford the Costs of Taking Over Our Public Lands

America's public lands belong to everyone in our country, but some policymakers in western states – including Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Wyoming, New Mexico and Utah - are trying to take this land away from the American people.

These policymakers are demanding that the national government turn over hundreds of millions of acres of public land now managed by the US government to the individual states. If they succeed in seizing these lands, state governments and state taxpayers would assume full responsibility for these public lands, including paying for all related costs such as preventing and fighting wildfires.

A single wildfire can cost \$100 million to fight and these states don't have the necessary resources to handle the costs of managing this land, especially in states that require a balanced budget.

**To pay these expenses, states will be forced to raise taxes or sell off this public land to the highest bidder. Americans could lose millions of acres of public land to private developers, gas and oil companies and other private interests.**

“States have no right to sell off our public lands to the highest bidder. They belong to the American people. As veterans we fought for these lands overseas, and we see it as our patriotic duty to defend them at home. It really is that simple.”

– BRANDON BRYANT, US AIR FORCE VETERAN


“It's not fair to make state taxpayers pay the full cost of managing lands that rightly belong to all Americans.”

– GRAHAM CLUMPNER SERVED AS A US ARMY RANGER IN AFGHANISTAN

## THE HIGH COSTS OF WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT

Since 2001, the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) have spent an **average of \$3.13 billion each year** to protect communities from wildfire. This number does not include millions of dollars spent on wildfire suppression, preparedness and rehabilitation.

In recent years, the US government's annual budget for wildfire suppression and protection has more than tripled from the amount needed in the 1990s.



FOR SALE

# VVF's Position:

## We ALL share the responsibility for managing our national public lands.

As veterans, we understand that we don't always get a second chance to ensure that a mission is carried out successfully.

The states do not have the resources to handle the costs of managing our public lands, especially the high costs of wildfire management. If the states take control of America's public lands, we will lose access to places that veterans and their families have visited for decades and that we want future generations to enjoy. We cannot let that happen.

The Vet Voice Foundation is opposed to any type of proposal that involves the states assuming full responsibility for the management of national public lands.

### We do support:

- ★ Keeping public lands that belong to all Americans under the management of the US government to ensure that they will be protected for future generations.
- ★ Making sure that the National Park Service, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management and other agencies have the resources that they need to adequately care for and maintain America's public lands.
- ★ Creating land management plans that continue to include a wide range of state and local stakeholder involvement.

“These lands are our heritage, our culture as Americans. They belong to all of us. As veterans it is our duty to ensure that our public lands are protected and preserved for future generations. It is just as much a sacred duty as going to the polls to vote.”

– TONY CANO, A VETERAN OF THE IRAQ WAR FROM LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO.



Founded in 2009, the mission of Vet Voice Foundation is to mobilize veterans to become leaders in our nation's democracy through participation in the civic and democratic process. VVF seeks to harness the energy and drive of the dedicated men and women who have fought for their country, and put it to work at home and in their communities on the important issues they face, such as health care, jobs, the environment, and housing.

Vet Voice Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, for charitable and educational purposes.

For more information, please visit

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