



**THE NATIONAL FORESTS** of Wyoming are a natural treasure highly valued by the state's residents. These public lands support an abundance of wildlife—including many imperiled species—protect pristine wilderness, supply critical drinking water and are integral to economic growth in the state, especially the booming recreation and tourism industries. Conserving national forests means protecting all of these important values.

## Habitat for Wildlife

Wyoming national forests are home to a dazzling diversity of wildlife, including black bears, mountain lions, bobcats, martens, minks, swift foxes, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, bison, bats, pikas, prairie dogs, snowshoe hares, beavers, bald eagles, greater sage-grouse, sandhill cranes, cut-throat trout and brook trout.

These public lands also provide vital habitat for several species protected under the Endangered Species Act such as the Canada lynx, grizzly bear, gray wolf, yellow-billed cuckoo, Kendall warm springs dace and Preble's meadow jumping mouse.

## Wilderness for Conservation and Recreation

About 3.1 million acres of national forests in Wyoming are congressionally designated wilderness areas.<sup>1</sup> These wild expanses are world-renowned for camping, hiking, backpacking, mountaineering, fishing, hunting,



**The U.S. Forest Service manages more than 9 million acres in Wyoming, including one national grassland (light orange on map) and 10 national forests (green on map), five within the state and five that cross state lines.**

paddling, backcountry skiing, horseback riding, wildlife watching and other outdoor pursuits.

Fitzpatrick Wilderness in the Shoshone National Forest boasts 44 active glaciers, Gannett Peak—the highest point in Wyoming, 75 miles of streams and 60 lakes. Popo Agie Wilderness also in the Shoshone National Forest protects 300 alpine and subalpine lakes. Gros Ventre Wilderness in the Teton National Forest offers 250 miles of trails and attracts hundreds of hunters in search of moose, elk and bighorn sheep annually. Jedediah Smith Wilderness in the Targhee National Forest provides habitat for the federally threatened grizzly bear and the rare and imperiled wolverine, as well as bighorn sheep, elk and moose.

## Wyomingites Value Their Public Lands

**94 percent** believe public lands are vital to the state's economy.

**74 percent** believe public lands create good jobs in the state.

**73 percent** identify themselves as conservationists.

**67 percent** camp, **58 percent** hike, and **47 percent** are birders and wildlife watchers.

**75 percent** believe access to hiking, biking, hunting and fishing is very important.

**74 percent** believe conserving natural areas for future generations is very important.

**72 percent** believe conserving wildlife habitat is very important.

## Water for Communities

National forests are critical to western water supplies. These forested lands absorb rainfall, refill underground aquifers, cool and cleanse water, slow storm runoff, reduce flooding and sustain watersheds for people and wildlife.<sup>2</sup> In Wyoming, national forests provide an estimated 53 percent of the state's annual water supply.<sup>3</sup> As climate change and development continue to reduce available water, water supplies on national forests will become increasingly important.<sup>4</sup>

## An Engine for Economic Growth

Wyoming and other western states with a large percentage of public lands are outpacing the nation in economic growth. Between 1970 and 2010, employment across the West increased by 297 percent in rural counties with land bases that are more than 20 percent protected federal land and a whopping 345 percent in counties that are more than 30 percent protected lands. These rural counties also have higher per-capita incomes (\$4,360 more) than other rural counties in the region.<sup>5</sup>

The natural amenities provided by national forests and other public lands give Wyoming a competitive edge, attracting talent, investment and businesses and contributing to a high rate of employment and income growth. From 2001 to 2011, personal income in the state grew by 44 percent.<sup>6</sup>

Wyoming is also a major—and growing—tourism destination. In 2014, 10.1 million visitors stayed overnight in the state, 11 percent more than in 2013.<sup>7</sup> National forest attractions such as the seven ski areas on federal forest land, the scenic byway through Bighorn National Forest and numerous other places offering a



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**Fitzpatrick Wilderness in the Shoshone National Forest features 44 active glaciers, 60 lakes, 75 miles of streams and Gannett Peak, the highest point in Wyoming.**

full range of recreational pursuits are top draws.

Wildlife-related activities are especially popular. In 2011, 518,000 residents and visitors participated in wildlife watching, 303,000 fished and 140,000 hunted in Wyoming.<sup>8</sup>

In 2012, outdoor recreation alone generated 50,000 jobs (direct employment) in Wyoming and \$1.4 billion in salaries and wages.<sup>9</sup> Outdoor recreational activities also account for some impressive revenue for the state:

- \$4.5 billion in consumer spending (2012).<sup>10</sup>
- \$1.1 billion spent on wildlife-related recreation (2011).<sup>11</sup>
- \$300 million in tax revenue for state and local governments (2012).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Forest Service. 2013. *Land Areas of the National Forest System*. FS-383. U.S. Forest Service. Washington, D.C. (accessed January 2015).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Forest Service. 2000. *Water and the Forest Service*. FS-660. U.S. Forest Service. Washington, D.C. (accessed January 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Brown, T. C., M. T. Hobbins, J. A. Ramirez. 2008. "Spatial distribution of water supply in the conterminous United States." *Journal of American Water Resources Association* 44(6): 1474-1487.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Forest Service. 2000. *Water and the Forest Service*. FS-660. U.S. Forest Service. Washington, D.C. (accessed January 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Barrera, L. 2009. "Portraits of climate change: the Rocky Mountains." *World Watch Magazine* 22(4): July/August.

<sup>6</sup> Headwaters Economics. 2012. *West Is Best: Protected Lands Promote Wyoming Jobs and Higher Incomes*. Available at <http://headwaterseconomics.org/land/west-is-best-value-of-public-lands-wy>. (accessed March 22, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Insights Strategic Marketing Research. 2015. *2014 Overnight Visitor Profile. Wyoming – Forever West*. Available at [www.wyomingofficeoftourism.gov/media/110365/2014-Visitor-Profile\\_Darin.pdf](http://www.wyomingofficeoftourism.gov/media/110365/2014-Visitor-Profile_Darin.pdf). (accessed March 23, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2012. *2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, Wyoming*. FHW/11-WY (RV). Available at [www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/fhw11-wy.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/fhw11-wy.pdf). (accessed March 23, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Outdoor Industry Association. 2012. *The Outdoor Recreation Economy, Wyoming*. Available at [http://outdoorindustry.org/images/ore\\_reports/WY-wyoming-outdoor-recreationeconomy-oia.pdf](http://outdoorindustry.org/images/ore_reports/WY-wyoming-outdoor-recreationeconomy-oia.pdf). (accessed March 23, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2012. *2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*.

<sup>12</sup> Outdoor Industry Association. 2012. *The Outdoor Recreation Economy, Wyoming*.



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1130 17th Street, N.W. | Washington, D.C. 20036

[www.defenders.org](http://www.defenders.org)