

JULY 2015 - MONTANA OPEN LAND MONTH

The importance of open land to Montana is hard to overestimate. The Montana experience is invariably an outdoor experience, and what open land represents - our agricultural heritage, vast outdoor recreational opportunities, diverse wildlife habitat, scenic splendor, tremendous economic benefits, a \$4 billion tourism industry, freedom to roam and so much more - is a way of life that we treasure.

So it is indeed appropriate that we formally salute the importance of open land with Montana Open Land Month, a month-long celebration in July 2015 officially recognized by Governor Steve Bullock.



The purpose of Montana Open Land Month is simple: Celebrate the value of open land to our economy and quality of life, and honor the places and experiences we all love. While open land has been a vital and consistent benefit to Montanans for generations, 2015 is the first time Montanans and visitors will cooperatively honor the significant contributions that private and public open land means to our way of life.

An important goal for Montana Open Land Month is to enlist a broad array of organizations, businesses, economic sectors, public agencies, local governments and others to participate in the month-long celebration. We'd like to engage as many partners as possible, work with as many sponsors as possible, and during July 2015 schedule as many events

and activities as possible. Established and ongoing events or programs on public or private land that cherish our outdoor lifestyle are welcome to participate and be part of the Open Land Month calendar.

A complete current list of Montana Open Land Month events, partners and sponsors can be found at openlandmt.org, and we encourage you to visit the website and share your ideas, enthusiasm and recommendations.

In addition to learning more about the partners and sponsors of Montana Open Land Month, the website provides you an opportunity to view a schedule of

Open Land Month events, activities, projects and programs during July 2015. The interactive **Plan an Event** feature allows you to schedule an event so we can add your activity to the Montana Open Land Month schedule. A map also shows the locations of various Montana Open Land Month events, and we've provided information so you can contact event organizers. There is no cost to schedule an event or promote a Montana Open Land Month program or activity on our website. Our goal is to encourage groups, organizations, businesses and more to be creative and active and help showcase Montana's tremendous outdoor possibilities.

We also have an active social media campaign associated with Montana Open Land Month, and we hope you'll have some fun sharing photos, stories and other information about Montana outdoor experiences. Visit our website at openlandmt.org for information about how you can participate on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms to share your Montana outdoor activities and adventures.

Through the website you'll be able to stay current on Montana Open Land Month reports in the press, including guest letters and columns, feature stories, reports from businesses and organizations, and news from other traditional media sources.

A hope is that as we celebrate the importance of open land, we will also recognize the importance of conserving open land. The Travelers for Open Land website at travelersforopenland.org and the Montana Open Land Month website **Get Involved** tab have more information about ways you can participate as a Montana Open Land Month partner.

We hope you'll take a few minutes to learn more about Montana Open Land Month and that you'll look for enjoyable ways to participate.

In recognizing July 2015 as Montana Open Land Month, Governor Bullock wrote: *"These open spaces not only provide for vast scenic viewing and healthy wildlife populations but also contribute overwhelmingly to Montana's tourism, agriculture and outdoor recreation industries."*

The goal of Montana Open Land Month is to tip our hats to the importance of open land, and have some fun in doing so. Please let us know if you'd like more information or would like to participate.

Best wishes,

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