

The Trump Administration’s Expansive Push to Sell Out Public Lands to the Highest Bidder: Methodology and Data Sources

For the September 2025 report “[The Trump Administration’s Expansive Push to Sell Out Public Lands to the Highest Bidder](#),” spatial data were analyzed using the geographic information system (GIS) to determine areas in the United States where conservation protections are being weakened by actions initiated by the Trump administration. This document outlines the sources and methods used to analyze the conservation rollbacks described below.

To generate estimates of total acreage affected by these rollbacks, overlap between categories was eliminated to avoid double-counting.

“Roadless area” protections for national forests

Reported acreage includes all national forest lands protected by the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, known as inventoried roadless areas, but excludes 1) lands in Colorado and Idaho, which are not covered by the ongoing rescission, and 2) those lands with other permanent protections against extractive development, such as a wilderness area—categorized as “GAP 1” or “GAP 2” by the U.S. Geological Survey’s Protected Areas Database.

Western Arctic (National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska)

Reported acreage for the Western Arctic, or National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, includes 1) areas with removed or weakened “special area” protections under the proposed Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska rule and/or 2) areas that would be opened to mineral development under the Trump administration’s pending proposal to revert from the 2022 integrated activity plan to the plan previously adopted for this area in 2020.

“D-1” Bureau of Land Management public lands (Alaska)

Analysis includes the remaining Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands withdrawn under Section 17(d)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act within the Ring of Fire, Bay, Bering Sea-Western Interior, East Alaska, and Kobuk-Seward Peninsula planning areas—which were targeted by the Trump administration rescissions.

Lands protected from mining and drilling (mineral withdrawals)

Boundary Waters/Rainy River watershed mineral withdrawal

Analysis includes lands protected from future mineral claims, exploration, and leasing by the 2023 final withdrawal of the Rainy River watershed in Superior National Forest using data provided by the Save the Boundary Waters campaign.

Greater Chaco region mineral withdrawal

Analysis includes lands protected from future mineral claims, exploration, and leasing by the 2023 final withdrawal of lands in the Greater Chaco region and protected from mineral exploration by withdrawal, using a layer acquired through ArcGIS portal with data from the BLM.

Upper Pecos River mineral withdrawal

Analysis includes lands protected from future mineral claims, exploration, and leasing by interim protections established with the 2024 proposed withdrawal of public lands in the Upper Pecos River area, using data from the BLM provided by New Mexico Wild.

Ruby Mountains mineral withdrawal

Analysis includes lands protected from future mineral claims, exploration, and leasing by interim protections established with the 2024 proposed mineral withdrawal of public lands in the Ruby Mountains area, using data provided by The Wilderness Society.

BLM land use plans in Alaska, Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming

Analysis was conducted to identify lands that are expected to be unprotected by the ongoing rescission and replacement of BLM resource management plans (RMPs), including through the removal of conservation protections for “areas of critical environmental concern” (ACECs) and/or the reopening of areas closed to mineral development.

Central Yukon (Alaska)

Affected lands analyzed for the Central Yukon RMP rescission include areas that would 1) be eliminated as ACECs and/or 2) be opened to mineral development if the 2024 final resource management plan is rescinded and replaced by the “preferred alternative” from the 2020 draft resource management plan. President Donald Trump’s January 20 executive order “Unleashing Alaska’s Extraordinary Resource Potential” directs the U.S. Department of the Interior to “reimplement” the 2020 draft plan.

Miles City (Montana)

Affected lands analyzed for the Miles City RMP rescission include areas that would be reopened for coal leasing if the 2024 RMP is replaced by the RMP finalized for this region in 2021.

Buffalo (Wyoming)

Affected lands analyzed for the Buffalo RMP rescission include areas that would be reopened for coal leasing if the 2024 RMP is replaced by the RMP finalized for this region in 2019.

North Dakota (statewide)

Affected lands analyzed for the North Dakota RMP rescission include areas that would 1) be reopened to mineral development and/or 2) be offered for disposal if the Trump administration adopts the no-action alternative—which is also the least environmentally protective alternative—evaluated for the RMP finalized in 2025. Coal was not included in this analysis because of a lack of data availability.

Rock Springs (Wyoming)

Affected lands analyzed for the Rock Springs RMP rescission include lands that would 1) be eliminated as ACECs and/or 2) opened to mineral development if the Trump administration adopts the least environmentally protective alternative evaluated for the RMP finalized in 2024.

Endangered species habitat

To evaluate the impacts of the proposal to eliminate major habitat protections under the Endangered Species Act, an original data layer was provided by the Center for Conservation Innovation at the Defenders of Wildlife—per the detailed methodology available [here](#). This includes known habitats of actively declining Endangered Species Act-listed wildlife species, for which habitat loss and degradation is a main threat to survival, as a conservative estimate of lands where the proposed weakening of protections could have an impact. Areas identified as a designated protected area (Gap 1 and Gap 2) in the Protected Areas Database for the United States were removed, but other conserved areas not covered by this database, such as state parks, are included.

Data sources

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