



AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE PUBLIC LAND TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR PUBLIC LAND CURRENTLY ADMINISTERED BY THE STATE OF MONTANA OR THE UNITED STATES, EXCEPT FOR CONGRESSIONALLY DESIGNATED WILDERNESS AREAS AND NATIONAL PARKS; REQUIRING A FINAL REPORT; APPROPRIATING FUNDS; PROVIDING EFFECTIVE DATES; AND PROVIDING A TERMINATION DATE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Public land task force -- membership. (1) There is a public land task force.

(2) (a) The senate president, the senate minority leader, the speaker of the house, and the house minority leader shall each appoint one legislative member from their respective parties. Legislative members are entitled to receive compensation and expenses as provided in 5-2-302.

(b) The state forester and the administrator for the trust land management division of the department of natural resources and conservation are nonvoting, ex officio members. These members are entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses as provided in 2-18-501 through 2-18-503.

(c) The senate president shall appoint the presiding officer of the task force, and the house minority leader shall appoint the vice presiding officer.

(3) The legislative services division shall provide staff assistance to the task force.

Section 2. Task force duties. (1) The task force shall study issues pertaining to management for public land currently administered by the state of Montana or the United States, except for congressionally designated wilderness areas and national parks.

(2) The task force shall conduct an economic analysis under the assumption that federal public land would remain in public ownership. The economic analysis must include:

(a) measures that could improve the cost-effectiveness of land management;

(b) options for funding land management activities, including the control of wildland fires;

(c) the estimated asset value of existing resources appurtenant to the land and sustained yield production capacity;

(d) the reporting of current and historic high and low land management costs and revenue under federal control;

(e) the degree to which payments to counties from the federal payment in lieu of taxes program and the federal secure rural schools program could be continued; and

(f) a formula distributing revenue if revenue exceeds operating costs.

(3) The task force shall identify:

(a) safeguards that could protect or enhance public ownership, public access, existing uses, valid existing rights, land-based livelihoods, conservation, and economic production of federal land;

(b) potential options for pilot projects; and

(c) entities best suited to carry out pertinent land management functions.

(4) The task force shall study the management of noxious weeds on public land administered by the state of Montana or the United States except for congressionally designated wilderness areas and national parks.

(5) The task force may contract with other entities as needed to obtain adequate and necessary information and analysis.

(6) All aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, must be concluded prior to September 15, 2016. The final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, and internet links to public comments, noteworthy documents, and meeting records must be included in a report to the 65th legislature.

Section 3. Appropriation. There is appropriated \$35,000 from the general fund to the legislative services division for the biennium beginning July 1, 2015, to support the activities of the public land task force established in [section 1].

Section 4. Effective dates. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2), [this act] is effective on passage and approval.

(2) [Section 3] is effective July 1, 2015.

Section 5. Termination. [This act] terminates December 31, 2016.

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,
HB 0496, originated in the House.

Chief Clerk of the House

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2015.

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2015.

HOUSE BILL NO. 496

INTRODUCED BY K. WHITE, N. BALLANCE, G. BENNETT, S. BERGLEE, A. DOANE, C. FISCUS,
E. GREEF, B. HARRIS, S. HESS, D. LAMM, M. LANG, S. LASZLOFFY, R. LYNCH, F. MANDEVILLE,
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