



**PUBLIC
LANDS / WATER
ACCESS
ASSOCIATION, INC**

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

“DANGEROUS LEGISLATION”

March 6, 2019

Thanks to the Montana Standard Editorial by David McCumber on the serious dangers of H.B. 550, which he exposed. The bill was sponsored by Alan Redfield from Sweetgrass County. Very few people were able to comment on H.B. 550 because it was heard at 8:00 am on a Monday morning, and dangerous road conditions existed. It sailed through the House on a straight party line vote 58 to 42, and the same is expected in the Senate.

The vast majority of the public don't understand that this bill ^{may} ~~will~~ seriously affect public access to public lands and trails. People using non-dedicated roads throughout Montana, will need adjacent landowner permission first, thus making them private roads. There are hundreds of miles of these roads throughout the state. County governments have been collecting gas taxes on these non-county roads for decades because all the public including landowners are using them and they are essential in our everyday lives.

Counties refer to these roads as gas tax routes and receive money annually from the state. This revenue is used for infrastructure and road repair in every county. Passage of this bill by the legislature would do away with these much needed revenues.

This bill was amended to allow local governments to make the decisions - i.e. county commissioners. In many rural Montana counties, large landowners ARE the commissioners or they are related to seated commissioners. This bill encourages the largest public lands “TAKING” since the recent proposed release of Wilderness Study Areas.

Montanans' deserve better than this “Smoke and Mirrors” approach.

Contact the Governor for a Veto.

Tony Schoonen
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