

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13

INTRODUCED BY K. WHITE

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A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF ROADS ON FEDERAL LAND, FEDERAL LAND PARCELS THAT ARE SURROUNDED BY PRIVATE LAND, AND THE EFFECTS OF DIMINISHED ACCESS ON RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

WHEREAS, the federal government has eliminated or reduced access to a number of roads on federal land in Montana, resulting in a significant loss of access; and

WHEREAS, diminished access on federal land has reduced hunting and fishing opportunities for Montanans and has shifted hunting pressure to private land; and

WHEREAS, diminished access on federal land has reduced outdoor recreational opportunities other than hunting and fishing, such as motorized trail riding, snowmobiling, mountain biking, camping, bird watching, and hiking, among others; and

WHEREAS, outdoor recreation is a major source of tourist interest in Montana and significantly contributes to the Montana tourism economy; and

WHEREAS, the trend is toward further reductions in access on federal land; and

WHEREAS, some parcels of federal land in Montana are "landlocked", meaning they are surrounded entirely by private land and accessible by surface transportation only by gaining the permission of a neighboring landowner to cross the landowner's land; and

WHEREAS, it is possible that some landlocked federal land is not accessible by surface transportation because no neighboring landowner will grant permission to cross the landowner's land, which limits the recreational opportunities of the numerous outdoor recreational interests listed above; and

WHEREAS, providing a high level of hunting opportunity is important for Montana's economy, for keeping Montana wildlife populations at healthy, manageable levels, and for preserving Montana's outdoor heritage for future generations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:



1 That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to
2 section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to:

3 (1) conduct an assessment of road access on federal land in Montana over a 15-year period to determine
4 which roads have been closed and which roads have had some limitation placed on access. The assessment
5 should include:

6 (a) the location of each road;

7 (b) the approximate mileage of each road; and

8 (c) identification of the federal agency to which the road belongs.

9 (2) conduct an assessment of landlocked public parcels in Montana including:

10 (a) the size and location of each landlocked parcel;

11 (b) the number of landowners that own property adjacent to each parcel; and

12 (c) whether any of the adjacent landowners permit outdoor recreationists to cross their property to reach
13 each parcel;

14 (3) conduct an assessment of trends in permits and licenses being issued by the Department of Fish,
15 Wildlife, and Parks in each area for elk and deer hunting over a 15-year period, with a specific emphasis on
16 identifying reduced hunter opportunity in areas where roads have been closed on federal land or where there are
17 large landlocked areas.

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
19 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
21 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2016.

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
23 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 65th Legislature.

24 - END -