



Montana is a unique blend of the wild and the domestic, both equally important to the state's culture, identity, and quality of life. PHOTO BY DAVE RUMMANS

## Afterword

**There you have it**—our take on rural Montana.

Of course, this special issue of *Montana Outdoors* is by no means comprehensive, even if it's the biggest one we've ever

published. And it likely contains a few errors, despite our best efforts to double-check facts and run stories past experts.

Yet warts and all, this issue represents a sincere attempt to understand and explain Montana's working lands. It was produced so that more people who live in and visit this state can recognize and respect what many of us cluelessly drive past or

through while heading to our favorite trout stream or hunting area, trailhead or state park.

As for what's in store for this rural landscape you've just learned about—no one can say for certain.

One thing we do know is that for decades, Montana's rural population has been getting grayer and sparser. The Treasure State has the most residents over 65 per capita west of the Mississippi and the nation's ninth-oldest

population. Meanwhile, resident numbers in most rural counties are dwindling, except in the Bakken oil fields and areas close to the state's western cities.

Will those demographic trends continue? It seems likely but, again, no one knows.

Because another trend is that more people are coming to Montana—visitors and new residents—at rates not seen since the home-stead era more than a century ago. Mostly

they've flocked to cities and major towns, but increasingly that influx is also being felt in rural communities and on working lands.

It's too early to tell if this is good news or bad for rural residents and communities. But as I drive through our state, with its unique and wonderful mix of wild and domestic landscapes, I realize that everyone here—apart from Montana's Indigenous residents—is essentially a newcomer. All of us, or our ances-

tors, came to this place to begin a new life. Recent arrivals are likely doing the same.

My welcoming advice to them would be to learn a bit about Montana's working lands. This is a wide and varied place. The more we know about it, the more we can appreciate not only the many facets of Montana, but also the diversity of people who call this place home.

—Tom Dickson, Editor

# A DRIVER'S GUIDE TO MONTANA'S WORKING LANDS

## INDEX

<b>A</b>	livestock .....39	<b>O</b>	Oil .....62-64
Adopt-a-Highway .....56	railways .....56	One-room schools .....50	
Allotments .....27	rural wildlife .....61		
Auction houses .....39	timber harvest .....47	<b>P</b>	Power transmission .....62
<b>B</b>	tribes .....29	Prairie vegetation, original .....76	Pulse crops .....9
Barns .....30	<b>G</b>		
Beehive boxes .....42	Grain bins, silos .....17		
Beetle-killed forests .....49	Grain elevators .....16		
Best management practices .....48	Grasshopper pumps .....65	<b>Q</b>	Quilts, barn .....42
Bicyclists, touring .....31	Gravel pits .....55	Quonset hunts .....51	
Bluebird boxes .....43	<b>H</b>		
Borrow pits .....59	Habitat .....73	<b>R</b>	Railroads .....57-58
<b>C</b>	Hay .....18-25	Reservations, Indian .....24-29	Roadkill .....75
Cattle (cows) .....32-37	bales .....21-22	Roadkill .....75	Rock piles .....51
branding .....37	beaverslides .....22-23	Rodeos and O-Mok-See .....77	Rural sprawl .....66-70
cow-calf operation .....35	sculptures .....23		
dairy .....37	Hex signs .....42	<b>S</b>	Sewage, rural .....69
dogs .....37	Highways .....53-54	Sheep .....38	Snow fence .....59
forage and fodder .....36	High school sports .....51	State trust lands .....49	Straw .....18
moving .....36-37	Historical highway markers .....59		
seedstock .....37	Hogs .....38, 40	<b>T</b>	Transportation .....52-58
Cemeteries .....50	Homestead era .....5-6	Trees .....49	
Coal .....62-63	Horses .....40	<b>U</b>	Unoccupied farmsteads .....39
Combine harvesters .....13	Housing, semi-rural .....66-70	<b>V</b>	Volunteer fire departments .....65
Conservation easements .....70	Hutterites .....41	<b>W</b>	Water rights .....23
County roads .....54	Hydropower .....62	Water towers .....64	Weather stations .....56
Crops .....8-17	<b>I</b>	Wheat .....11-17	White crosses .....50
identification .....17	Idle land .....39	White hillside letters .....76	Wildlife and
<b>D</b>	Indians, American ...4, 5, 8, 24-29, 46, 52		farming .....72-74
Drinking water, rural .....69	Indian tribes .....26	<b>U</b>	highways .....56
Driver's wave .....59	Indian names .....25	Unoccupied farmsteads .....39	logging .....74-75
Drought .....6	Irrigation .....20-21	<b>V</b>	Windbreaks .....69
Dryland farming .....11	<b>K</b>	Volunteer fire departments .....65	Wind power .....62-64
<b>E</b>	Kilowatt-hour .....61	<b>W</b>	Wind pumps, old .....31
Energy .....60-65	<b>L</b>	Water rights .....23	Wooden structures, old .....77
<b>F</b>	Law enforcement .....31	Water towers .....64	
Fallow fields .....12-13	Lewis and Clark Historic Trail .....31	Weather stations .....56	
Farming	License plates .....43	Wheat .....11-17	
fertilizers .....12	Livestock .....32-40	White crosses .....50	
organic .....15	Logging .....44-48, 74-75	White hillside letters .....76	
seasons .....11	sawmills .....47	Wildlife and	
subsidies .....13-14	<b>M</b>	farming .....72-74	
Fencing .....42	Machinery, old .....43	highways .....56	
FFA and 4-H .....76	Mechanization .....6-7, 48	logging .....74-75	
Freeways .....54	MSU Extension .....14	Windbreaks .....69	
FWP and	<b>N</b>	Wind power .....62-64	
energy .....65	Nitrogen fixing .....12	Wind pumps, old .....31	
farmers .....14	Nuclear missile sites .....51	Wooden structures, old .....77	
highways .....56		<b>Z</b>	Zoning .....67-68, 70

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks for insight, expertise, and review to Clay Scott, Karin Ronnow, Andrew McKean, Julie Lue, Ann Seifert, Chase Hibbard (Sieben Livestock Company), Mike O'Hara (O'Hara Land and Cattle), Tim Dusenberry (XX Bar Farm & Ranch), Cindy and Jim Kittredge (Bird Creek Ranch), Zach Hawkins and Mike Jetty (Montana Office of Public Instruction, Indian Education for All), Martha Kohl and Christine Brown (Montana Historical Society), Doris Hruska, staff of Montana State University Extension, Zach Zipfel (Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes), Jon Axline and Dwane Kailey (Montana Department of Transportation), Alyssa Piccolomini (Montana Department of Agriculture), Jeff Blend (Montana Department of Environmental Quality), Gary Burnett and Jim Williams (Heart of the Rockies), Dr. Andrew Larson (University of Montana Department of Forest Management), staff of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and especially Angie Howell, for single-handedly keeping all other aspects of *Montana Outdoors* operating while this issue was being produced.

## RESOURCES

### GENERAL

*Montana: The Lay of the Land*, Ed Kemnick and contributors to *Last Best News* (2019)  
*Montana: A Contemporary Profile*, Michael P. Malone (1996)  
*Fifty-Six Counties: A Montana Journey*, Russell Rowland (2016)  
406mtsports.com

### HISTORY

*Montana: Stories of the Land*, Martha Kohl, editor (Montana Historical Society's 22-chapter middle school textbook covering, among other topics, agriculture, livestock, logging, transportation, and Native Americans)  
*Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, William L. Lang  
*Montana's Historical Highway Markers*, Jon Axline (ed.)  
*Montana High, Wide, and Handsome*, Joseph Kinsey Howard

### AGRICULTURE

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2023  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
USDA Wheat Sector at a Glance  
Montana State University Extension  
Montana University System Water Center

### NATIVE AMERICANS

Montana Office of Public Instruction, Indian Education for All Program  
*Everything You Wanted to Know about Indians but Were Afraid to Ask*, Anton Treuer

### TRANSPORTATION

Montana Department of Transportation 2022 Fact Book

### ENERGY

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*Understanding Energy in Montana*, Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
"How Power Grids Work," Clark Science Center at Smith College  
"Hydropower in Montana," NorthWestern Energy  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

### LOGGING

"Montana Timber Harvest," Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Montana

### OTHER

*Hutterites of Montana*, by Laura Wilson  
*Mountain West Voices*, Montana Public Radio  
Websites: Montana Departments of Agriculture, Livestock, Transportation, and National Resources and Conservation.

JASON SAVAGE

