

EXTREMISM ON PUBLIC LANDS

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THE SITUATION

 U.S. public lands belong to all Americans, regardless of where they live or how much money they have. Unfortunately, **some special interests - particularly in the West - believe that they should be able to dictate how U.S. public lands are used and it appears this movement now includes armed extremists.**

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Despite the fact that the vast majority of Americans - including hunters, anglers, hikers, paddlers, and wildlife watchers - value public lands, **some states and their allies in industry and Congress are pushing to seize land from U.S. taxpayers.** They argue that federally-protected land belongs to the states - an erroneous argument the Supreme Court rejected long ago. Now armed militia men appear to be acting out based on these false claims.

HOW'D WE GET TO THIS POINT?

Backlash against federal land ownership from a small and vocal minority is nothing new. However, **a recent renewed push has seen people like Cliven Bundy and his sons resort to violence on public land** and threats of violence against law enforcement and other government personnel, culminating in the occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon by armed militants earlier this year.

WHY SHOULD AMERICANS CARE?

The **new "Sagebrush Rebellion" endangers the lives of people who conserve and restore public lands**, as well as those who recreate there. This distracts from the important task of land stewardship. Additionally, this campaign to give away or sell off public lands **threatens to limit access to the outdoors for millions of Americans.**

THE FACT

74% of Westerners **reject** efforts to **sell or dispose of federal land** (Colorado College)

WHAT'S CONGRESS DOING?

Nothing. House Republicans refuse to address the issue of extremism on public lands.



Democrats introduced a resolution condemning the armed takeover of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and invited Republicans to cosponsor the measure - none did. House Republicans also ignored a request from Democrats to hold a hearing on the issue. In light of Republicans' refusal to take the issue seriously, Natural Resources Ranking Member Raúl M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-Miss.) held a forum on the dangers of extremism on public lands.



The Republicans' anti-public lands actions and rhetoric have emboldened extremists and implied that open rebellion against federal land managers is acceptable. A bill introduced by House Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) strips the federal government of law enforcement authority on public lands, while a host of other bills aim to simply give away millions of acres of federal land.

HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

Republicans should publicly disavow violent extremism and acknowledge the importance of U.S. public lands to the economies and quality of life in their states. Unfortunately, the GOP continues to stoke the flames of dissension and prolong a volatile and dangerous situation in the West.

democrats-naturalresources.house.gov