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Pendley's Appointment to Lead BLM Great News

The hysterical reaction by the left to the appointment of William Perry Pendley deserves a response

BY CHUCK DENOWH // AUG 16, 2019

The hysterical reaction by the left to the appointment of William Perry Pendley to serve as director of the Bureau of Land Management deserves a response.

The chief accusation against Pendley is that he will sell federal public land to "special interest allies." He can't. The director of BLM has absolutely no authority to unilaterally sell the land under his jurisdiction. The Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 specifically prohibits the BLM from selling land, with very narrow exceptions.

If William Perry Pendley wanted to sell BLM lands, it would literally take an act of Congress to allow him to do so. The Pendley detractors saying our public lands are in jeopardy are either woefully misinformed or outright liars.

Pendley is also being criticized for holding the apparently controversial notion that state-based regulators are better suited to manage federal public lands than regulators based in Washington, D.C. I think that most Montanans would agree with that position. Montanans absolutely should have a greater say in what happens on the federal land in our state rather than having everything dictated from D.C.

Perhaps the most over-the-top attack against Pendley has come from the Montana Conservation Voters' Whitney Tawney who said, "(Pendley) poses a grave threat to Montana's economy." Really? Because he's friendly to agriculture and the energy industry – two of the biggest sectors of Montana's economy? The irony, of course, is that Tawney's group has dedicated itself to killing jobs and undermining Montana's economy. Pot, meet kettle.

As for grave threats to Montana's economy, there's a big one looming that the BLM has a direct role in preventing. The American Prairie Reserve has petitioned for changes in BLM grazing allotments as a first step in their objective of establishing an enormous free-roaming bison herd in Central Montana.

If granted, the APR's livestock change-in-use application to BLM would be a radical departure from BLM grazing practices over the last 85 years. The Taylor Grazing Act established grazing allotments throughout the West for the purpose of conserving public resources and reserving them for agricultural production.

The APR wants to effectively eliminate scientifically-backed grazing practices, which would put the health of the range in jeopardy and decimate several local economies. It would also set a precedent that we would surely see replicated in other areas of the West.

This year the Montana Legislature came out strongly against the APR's requested changes to their BLM allotments. We're now fortunate to have a person like Pendley running BLM who understands the value of these public lands and the importance of agriculture to the economy of Montana.

The truth is that Pendley brings a wealth of expertise on federal land management, and all indications are he will be great benefit to Western states. So when you see wild claims from his detractors – like that he's going to sell off federal lands –question who those critics truly represent, because odds are they're drawing a paycheck from an out-of-state environmental group.



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