

THE MONTANA CHALLENGE: REMAINING THE LAST BEST PLACE FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE IN A CHANGING WEST^{TWS}

Robert O. Brooks and Tom Palmer, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1420 E. 6th Ave., Helena, MT 59620
SuzAnne Miller, Dunrovin Research, P.O. Box 822, Lolo, MT 59847

Montanan's relationship to fish and wildlife, and their ties to the natural landscape, are defining characteristics of the state and its people. From our long-time ranchers in their sturdy pick-up trucks to today's emergency-room nurses riding titanium-framed bicycles, we all seem to know times are changing. To better understand the shifts and changes in Montana's cultural and economic landscape, 30 years of disparate economic, social, demographic, recreational, political, and legal information was compiled. The information shows that a new and important economic engine is operating along side the state's established commodity-based industries. For today's Montanans, who are fueling the state's growth and economic vitality, the West's natural landscapes and fish and wildlife resources are proving to be a key consideration in where to live and how to make a living. The challenge for wildlife managers is to recognize the opportunities this new social and economic sector represents to conservation while maintaining, restoring, and conserving the natural landscapes that create it.