



## **Blueprint for Action: Public Lands and Access**

**The land that belongs to all of us faces an imminent threat from Washington D.C. and wealthy special interests. The Attorney General must stand up for Montana's natural heritage**

*Graybill's strategy includes the creation of a Public Access Advocate, an Assistant Attorney General committed to defending Montana's public lands against federal overreach and wealthy out of state special interests.*

Montana stands apart from other states because of its natural character: jagged river canyons met by low hills in the east, mountains springing to life from the prairie in its central portion, and luscious forests, lakes, and rivers in its western frontier. If public lands are America's "greatest idea," then Montana is its finest showcase.

Public lands make Montana special. They're where we hunt, fish, recreate, connect with our families and seek out solitude. They're part of who we are as Montanans. And they're worth fighting for.

But they are under unprecedented political attacks. The federal government has installed, unlawfully, anti-public lands extremists to manage the areas we wish to conserve for future generations. Wealthy out of state special interests are pouring millions into Montana's elections to undermine access to our natural heritage. And politicians, focused on what divides us more than what unites, have interfered with farm and ranch families' exercising their property rights to conserve land and wildlife habitat.

As Attorney General, Graybill will be an independent watchdog for our public lands, the rights of landowners, and the bold aspiration of our Montana Constitution, ensuring a healthy environment for our children and grandchildren.

When Land Board members tried to stifle private property rights and inject politics into public access to Montana's great outdoors, Graybill [won a landmark case](#) at the Montana Supreme Court that protects Montana's open spaces, public access, as well as private property rights. Now, Graybill wants to bring that same independent leadership to the Attorney General's office, where he'll continue to stand up for Montana families, public access to public lands, and responsible use of our resources.

Lots of politicians talk about public lands, but Graybill is a proven winner for the public interest. He won't back down to special interest lobbies that prefer our public lands be fenced off or divvied up for personal profit. He believes that protecting our Montana heritage requires tireless advocacy that the Attorney General is uniquely-positioned to provide.

Graybill's strategy relies on using the full extent of the Attorney General's powers in the courtroom and on the Montana Land Board, where he'll be an unwavering voice in support of Montana's hunters, anglers, and recreationalists as well as lessees who farm and ranch on state trust lands. He'll also oversee the creation of a novel position, the Public Access Advocate, who will work under the auspices of the Attorney General's office to coordinate fair, efficient resolutions to illegally blocked public access.

As Attorney General, Graybill will:

### **Create a Public Access Advocate to reduce conflict in illegal road closure disputes and facilitate re-opening access**

Graybill will create a new position in the Attorney General's office, the Public Access Advocate, an Assistant Attorney General who will coordinate with County Attorneys, local law enforcement, and other crucial stakeholders to make sure they have the tools and resources to keep public access available for all of us. Access to public lands is at the heart of the Montana way of life, but illegal barriers are closing off access points that have been used for generations. Graybill understands that wealthy out of state special interests shouldn't be able to seal off public lands for private profit. He's proud of Montana's long tradition of public access and will fight to keep it alive. Solving complex access issues requires empowering and partnering with local leaders and authorities. Graybill will use the power of the Attorney General's office to facilitate solutions to access closures that are in the public interest.

### **Hold the federal government accountable to its promises, regardless of political party**

The biggest threat to our public lands comes from extremists in the federal government, who are bent on transferring or selling off the outdoor places that belong to all of us. In the last few years, Montanans have witnessed a sustained attack on public lands from ideologues in the federal government and wealthy special interest groups across the country.

Graybill will stand up to federal officials abandoning their promises, regardless of their political party. He's the only candidate running for Attorney General who has taken the federal government to court and won. Graybill is currently [lead counsel](#) in a case to hold Acting Director of the Bureau of Land Management and longtime anti-public lands advocate William Perry Pendley accountable to the law for his unconstitutional tenure in federal government. As Attorney General, Graybill will be an independent leader who will stand up for Montana and its natural character when the federal government seeks to undermine our public lands.

## **Defend Habitat Montana and stand up for Montana families' right to protect their land from destructive outside interests**

For decades, Montana farmers and ranchers have ensured the legacy of their property with easements that protect working landscapes and valuable habitat from future subdivision and destructive development. This wildly successful program, called Habitat Montana, has been a boon for the families that work the land and want to preserve their traditional livelihood. And Montana's hunters and anglers have gained access to tens of thousands of acres of additional land for recreation and sustainable use.

When the current Land Board undermined the foundations of Habitat Montana, threatening both public access and our private property rights, [Graybill went to court](#) to fight for Habitat Montana and won. The fact of the matter is, Montana families should be able to dictate the future of their own property. Graybill's [victory](#) upheld that guarantee. As Attorney General, he'll continue to fight for the property rights of Montanans who want to protect their land from outside interests.

Graybill will also lead efforts to expand surface owner rights under Montana's Split Estate law, enabling ranchers and farmers to have better outcomes when it comes to development on private land. For too long, the balance of power has been shifted towards wealthy, out-of-state interests when it comes to surface use agreements that disrespect operations of landowners, as well as the stewardship of their lands. It's time to bring Montana's Split-Estate Laws into the 21st century, and to bring fairness to landowners.

## **Fight for expanded public access and forward-thinking, sustainable land use on the Montana Land Board**

One of the most important responsibilities of the Attorney General is to vote on decisions facing the Montana Land Board, a five-person committee who oversees the management of our state lands. Graybill's opponent has a long record of kowtowing to out-of-state developers at the expense of private property rights, opposing new protections for big game habitat, and objecting to easements that would expand access for Montana's hunters and anglers. He's also voted to eliminate FWP's ability to purchase small tracts of land in order to open up thousands of acres of land-locked public land.

As Attorney General, Graybill will be a fierce Land Board advocate for expanded public access, long-term stewardship, and thoughtful management of our public lands, while advocating for

property rights, rather than giving them lip service. Graybill won't stand for families being steamrolled when they want to defend their surface rights or decide to sell small parcels in order to open up large tracts of public lands.

### **Build on Montana's successful public lands programs with continued expansion, focusing in particular on "Hotspots"**

Many parts of our state remain critically underserved by our public lands access programs, especially Eastern Montana. Other places are seeing a change of traditional access on timber lands to closed lands, kicking people out of long-established family elk camps. From the Land Board, Graybill will advocate for continued land acquisitions by the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks as well as the Department of Natural Resources & Conservation, so that all Montanans can hunt, fish, and camp across our state. Restricting access to the prime elk, deer, antelope, upland bird and turkey habitat that exists in Montana not only harms our rural economies, it goes against Montana's historic commitment to robust public access programs that help cultivate a new generation of hunters, anglers, and land stewards. Graybill will continue to push for expanded access, and not let prime habitat become monopolized by private interests.

### **Seek justice from criminal, industrial-scale polluters and direct the funds to desperately needed restoration programs**

The Attorney General oversees Montana's critical Natural Resources Damage Program (NRDP), which has generated hundreds of millions of dollars for community restoration projects throughout our state. The NRDP holds industrial-scale polluters accountable for the damage they do to our air, water, and habitat. It's a crucial tool for making sure out-of-state corporations don't run roughshod over the public lands that are our birthright as Montanans. As Attorney General, Graybill will pursue polluters who threaten the future of our public lands, public waters, and public health, and he'll make sure that recovered funds are directed to urgently needed projects that benefit our communities.

### **Protect the integrity of Montana's stream access laws**

Montana's stream access laws are among the best in the nation, but they require vigilance from ongoing attacks by wealthy special interests. From his position on the Land Board and as the state's top attorney, Graybill will be a proud defender of Montana's stream access laws. He'll be the one standing up in court on behalf of Montanans, ensuring that out-of-state wealthy elites can't use the power of their purses to steal our access with an army of high-priced lawyers. Montana needs an independent watchdog defending our stream access law as our attorney general and Graybill will stand up to anyone who would try and steal our birthright.

### **Uphold Montana's Constitutional guarantee of a "clean and healthful environment"**

The framers of Montana's Constitution declared an "inalienable right" to a healthy environment, both for us and for future generations. It falls to the Attorney General to uphold that promise on

behalf of all Montanans. As a fifth-generation Montanan, Graybill understands that our rolling plains, clear-flowing rivers, and jagged mountain peaks are part of the legacy we leave to our children and grandchildren. They are a treasure worth protecting, and the duty of doing so falls to the Attorney General. Graybill will ensure our environment is protected through the courts and his position on the Land Board.

### **Take on the looming threat posed by climate change to Montana's farming and ranching communities**

Montana's farmers and ranchers know better than anyone that extreme weather events, drought, and heat stress threaten the future of our rural economies. Graybill will work with members of the Land Board to ensure that our state trust lands are managed in the best fashion to ensure soil resiliency. He'll spearhead efforts to hold those accountable in congress and in the courts if they would try to eliminate protections for soil, water and air quality standards. When Congress or any administration fails to stand up for our working family farms and ranches, Graybill will be there to hold the power accountable and ensure that the next generation of family agriculture has the tools necessary to succeed in a changing climate.

### **Expose the dark money pouring into special interest campaigns that threaten Montana's public lands**

Dark money campaigns threaten our democracy in general, but they pose a particular threat to our public lands. Over the past decade, out-of-state dark money has poured into Montana, funding campaigns that seek to overturn our fundamental Montana values. Graybill has already [fought dark money](#) once, defeating the IRS' attempt to allow unfettered anonymous funding into Montana politics. He will continue to aggressively fight for the public's right to know who is spending money to sway our leaders, especially when our public land and conservation values are at stake.

### **SUMMARY: Graybill has won big victories for Montana's public lands before, and as Attorney General he won't back down from difficult fights**

Defending our public lands is one of the main reasons Graybill entered this race. Graybill understands the importance of the Attorney General's dual-role as lawyer for the people and Land Board advocate. In both positions, he will be an independent watchdog for Montana's public lands and will oppose any effort to harm or sell off our public lands for private profit. He knows that stewardship and access are core Montana values, and that those values must be defended every day.

Graybill is a proven independent advocate on these issues. He's stood up for Montana's public lands against the federal government and out of state special interests, and he's notched crucial wins for Montana ranching families. As Montana's next Attorney General, Graybill has the

experience of fighting and winning on behalf of all Montanans and will ensure the legacy of our public lands remains strong for future generations of Montanans.