

August 27, 2026

The Honorable Steve Daines
United States Senate
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Sheehy
United States Senate
G55 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Delivered via email.

Dear Senator Daines and Senator Sheehy,

On behalf of the thousands of supporters of the Montana Conservation Voters Education Fund, I am writing to express our alarm that the Department of the Interior is diverting essential National Park Service funds to finance vanity projects in Washington, D.C. We urge you to immediately investigate which Montana projects are stalled or canceled, demand the full restoration of these funds, and require complete transparency from the administration regarding D.C. spending priorities.

Montana's national parks are not just natural treasures — they are primary drivers of our state's economy. Together, Yellowstone and Glacier national parks support 9,290 jobs and generate \$1.2 billion in total economic output. In 2024 alone, 5.9 million visitors spent an estimated \$893 million in local gateway communities.

Despite this immense economic engine, our parks face severe infrastructure deficits, holding more than \$1.3 billion in combined deferred maintenance for roads, water systems, worker housing, and basic visitor services.

Siphoning park funds directly threatens this critical economic infrastructure:

As The Atlantic reports, "Money once used for crucial national-park repairs is now financing Trump's redecorating projects," including a "...\$1.5 million roof-replacement project at the Yellowstone Center for Resources to halt pest invasions and water leaks."

The Associated Press notes that basic operational needs, such as "bulk purchases of toilet paper and garbage bags at Yellowstone National Park," are going unfunded due to diversions for the Freedom 250 Initiative.

Reporter Scott MacFarlane found that "...show more than \$323 million have been made available for upgrades and projects on the White House grounds this year. That's a dramatic, nearly 5,000 percent increase from the \$7.5 million spent on White House grounds projects in 2024."

This fiscal redirection directly undermines your own stated priorities. Senator Daines, in your August 13, 2026 *Washington Examiner* guest column calling national parks a “gold mine,” you acknowledged:

“The infrastructure that visitors rely on is aging — roads have deteriorated; trails have eroded; campgrounds, marinas, and housing have fallen into disrepair; and water, sewage, and electrical systems need updating. For decades, the combined pressure of hundreds of millions of annual visitors, older infrastructure, and chronic underfunding led to the deterioration of many of the approximately 250,000 assets within the National Park System, Bureau of Land Management lands, national forests, wildlife refuges, and Bureau of Indian Education schools that serve over 43,000 students.”

Compounding this economic risk, Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) actions hit Montana particularly hard, ranking our state among the top ten nationwide for public land agency job losses in 2025 — a trend that overwhelming majorities of Montana voters view as a critical threat to safety, wildfire management, and tourism.

Allowing federal dollars and visitor fees to be diverted to D.C. beautification while Montana’s \$1.2 billion park economy suffers is an abdication of duty to our state. We urge you to hold the administration accountable, protect Montana’s economic interests, and ensure our national park resources remain where they belong.

Sincerely,

Ben Super
Executive Director
Montana Conservation Voters Education Fund

[1] June 26, 2026, [The Atlantic: ‘Rush Project at Request of POTUS’](#)

[2] August 21, 2026, [Associated Press: National park maintenance work sidelined as Trump’s Freedom 250 takes precedence](#)

[3] August 9, 2026, [Scott MacFarlane Reports: Trump Turns National Parks into Piggybank](#)

[4] August 21, 2026, [Associated Press: National park maintenance work sidelined as Trump’s Freedom 250 takes precedence](#)

[5] [2024 National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects Report](#)

[6] Fiscal Year 2025 [National Park Service Infrastructure: Deferred Maintenance & Repairs](#)

[7] August 13, 2026 [Washington Examiner. “National parks are a gold mine. Congress has a chance to save them from crumbling” guest column by Sen. Steve Daines. Marcia Argust](#)

^[8] March 5, 2026, [“Montana DOGE Impacts on Public Lands Workforce.”](#) U.S. Office of Personnel Management data analysis by Prospect Partners, Hawkeye Strategies

^[9] April 22, 2026, [University of Montana Crown of the Continent and Greater Yellowstone Initiative Bipartisan Public Lands Poll](#)