

We Care For The Country



**MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION**



# 2024 IMPACT REPORT



# MONTANA FARM BUREAU

*The Voice of Agriculture®*



**FARM BUREAU IS...**

leading Montana toward a future with a prosperous agriculture economy and thriving rural communities.

**FARM BUREAU IS...**

a grassroots organization dedicated to preserving and improving the agriculture and natural resource industries through member involvement in education, political activities, programs and services.



**FARM BUREAU is...**

the state and nation's largest and most influential farm organization. We are a grassroots organization meaning that our strength, influence and effectiveness are at the county level of our 30 county Farm Bureaus.

**FARM BUREAU is...**

a non-partisan, independent, non-governmental, voluntary organization of farm and ranch families united for the purpose of analyzing their problems and formulating action to achieve educational improvement, economic opportunity and social advancement.



**FARM BUREAU is...**

the trusted grassroots voice, shaping policy to safeguard Montana Agriculture, and cultivating a prosperous network that invigorates rural communities.



# 2024 IMPACT REPORT

# Letter from the President



Whether you live in the mountainous west, the Golden Triangle or the wide-open prairies and river valleys of eastern Montana, everyone I know will describe their part of the state with admiration. When describing what makes their piece of paradise great, you will hear accounts of natural beauty, welcoming communities and a way of life centered around an agricultural economy. It's not

a stretch to say Montana farmers and ranchers' stewardship of private and public land and their contribution to their communities make Montana the Montana we love.

Montana's farmers and ranchers rise each day to meet the challenges that come with being a farmer or rancher, from coping with summer droughts and winter blizzards, fending off grasshoppers, sawflies, and predators all the while trying to make a profit amongst rising input costs and overreaching regulations. Montana Farm Bureau Federation is proud to continue working for these farm and ranch families who work hard to keep Montana the Last Best Place. Together, we are a trusted grassroots voice, shaping policy to safeguard Montana Agriculture and cultivating a prosperous network invigorating rural communities.

In this 2024 Impact Report, you will see some of the highlights that explain how Montana Farm Bureau works to amplify our grassroots voice and safeguard the agriculture economy. You will also read about ways we help members make connections to grow their networks and our work to invigorate rural communities.

I am thankful for Farm Bureau leaders across Montana whose efforts attributed to the accomplishments in this Impact Report. If you're not already involved in Farm Bureau, consider joining us to work for agriculture and rural Montana to sustain our way of life and this great state that we love.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Johnson".

Cynthia Johnson, MFBF President





# Growing Your Network

## MFBF Annual Convention

The MFBF Annual Convention is a highlight for members and industry supporters alike and took place in Billings in 2024. The convention hosts industry experts and leaders to educate and advise MFBF members and guests on topics such as water rights, commodity markets, technology, leadership, financial planning and mental health. The year-long policy development process culminates on the delegate floor where members set MFBF policy for the upcoming year. These policies guide our leadership and staff as they stand up for Montana Agriculture in the legislature. Elected leaders step up and guide the organization through caucus meetings, Young Farmer & Rancher Committee events, Women’s Leadership Committee projects, the delegate session, and many other efforts of the organization. This is the social event of the year with entertainment, live music, great food, and a chance to shake hands with new and old friends.

## MFBF Summer Conference

The MFBF Summer Conference is the beginning of our grassroots policy development process and it also provides an excellent opportunity to build connections and expand your network within the agricultural community. This event brings together farmers, ranchers, industry experts and leaders, fostering an environment ideal for sharing knowledge, discussing challenges, and exploring innovative solutions to policies and issues facing Montana agriculture. By engaging in workshops, breakout sessions, and informal gatherings, attendees develop relationships that support both personal and professional growth. This year, we hosted over 60 Montana agriculture educators for lunch, allowing them to experience the event and socialize with members. Networking at the conference opens doors to potential collaborations, mentorship opportunities, and a stronger sense of community among Montana’s agricultural producers and professionals.

## MFBF YF&R Leadership Conference

The MFBF Young Farmer & Rancher Leadership Conference was held February 9-11 in Billings at the Northern Hotel, bringing together young farmers and ranchers from across the state for a weekend of learning and networking. Attendees participated in a variety of tours, including a low-stress cattle handling workshop with Curt Pate at PAYs Livestock and a visit to Swanky Roots and the Yellowstone Valley Food Hub. These hands-on experiences provided valuable insights into sustainable practices and business management. The conference featured workshops on hot industry topics like carbon credits, herd nutrition, precision ag technology, and rural mental health. Evening events included a fun bingo night and a lively finale with dancing to the Stolen Roan Band. This conference strengthens Montana’s ag leaders, inspiring the next generation to address the challenges facing the industry and ensuring their voices are heard.





## Collegiate Young Farmers & Ranchers

The Montana Farm Bureau has four affiliated Collegiate Young Farmer & Rancher chapters. They are located on the campuses of Montana State University in Bozeman, UM-Western in Dillon, Miles Community College in Miles City and Dawson Community College in Glendive. The purpose of these clubs is to further communication among people with an interest in agricultural issues, educate college students about the work of an agricultural organization, provide college students experience with local, state and national government through active participation in legislative activities, learn about Farm Bureau policies and activities, and promote the profession of agriculturally-related occupations. Do you know someone attending one of these colleges? Encourage them to join their campus CYF&R Club!

## Fall Fest Community Event

District 6 Fall Fest, held on October 12 in Circle, has quickly become a cornerstone event for eastern Montana's rural communities. Since its launch in 2022, the gathering has attracted 80-100 participants each year, fostering a strong sense of fellowship among local farmers and ranchers. This year's event featured a powerful keynote from JR Vezain, a six-time NFR qualifier who is now paralyzed from the waist down, sharing his story of resilience. Attendees enjoyed a delicious catered meal, door prizes, and danced to the music of Stolen Roan, rounding out an evening of celebration and connection. A dedicated nine-member committee plans the event each year, ensuring it meets the needs of the community. By offering education, networking, and entertainment, District 6 Fall Fest strengthens the bonds among agriculturalists and highlights the critical role of farming and ranching in the region. As the event continues to grow, it enhances the resilience of eastern Montana's agricultural landscape, promoting a thriving future for all involved.

## REAL Montana

Since its inception over 10 years ago, MFBF has been a Platinum Sponsor of the REAL Montana program. In addition to our annual program sponsorship, the Montana Farm Bureau Foundation offers current Farm Bureau members selected for each class, a scholarship to cover half the cost of tuition.

Resource Education and Agriculture Leadership (REAL) Montana is a comprehensive two-year leadership program offering in-depth education and training in the agriculture and natural resource industries. REAL Montana is building a network of informed and engaged leaders to advance the natural resource industries in Montana. MFBF is proud to count many REAL Montana alumni as top leaders within our organization.

**REAL**  
**MONTANA**



# Investing in Education Et

## AFBF YF&R Leadership Conference

The American Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers & Ranchers Conference took place March 8-11 in Omaha, NE, with 19 attendees from Montana. The event brought together over 1,100 members from across the country for networking, learning, and growth. Montana's group participated in various tours, including Lauritzen Gardens, Joslyn Castle, the University of Nebraska's Beef Innovation Hub, Baker's Candies, Union Pacific Railroad headquarters, and Kimmel Orchard & Vineyard. A highlight was the 90's Country-themed dance at the Durham Museum. Montana's own Matthew Slivka, an MSU ag student, competed in the CYF&R Discussion Meet and made it to the Final Four. The conference also featured inspiring speakers and breakout sessions covering leadership, advocacy, and consumer outreach. The grand finale event at the Kiewit Luminarium capped off the conference, leaving attendees energized and equipped with new skills, ideas, and lasting connections to help strengthen their farms, local Farm Bureaus, and the agricultural community.



## MFBF in the Classroom

MFBF volunteers are regularly present in school classrooms around the state with ag accurate books in hand and a variety of activities from baking bread to planting seeds and ice cream parties. The MFB Foundation sponsors ag related books for these activities where a member will coordinate with a local classroom to come in a read a book that highlights agriculture and teaches students more about the industry in a creative way. The book is then donated to the classroom and the volunteers lead the students through a hands-on activity supplemental to the book they read. This is a great way for our leaders to connect with the next generation and help emphasize the importance of agriculture education in the classroom.



## Local Issues Forums & Educational Events

Throughout the year, County Farm Bureaus work to educate both youth and the adult populations in their communities. For the hardworking ranchers, Northwest Counties hosted a Fall Nutrition Seminar and a spring Cattle Handling Dead or Alive Workshop, both of which educated locals on a variety of topics from grazing to proper cattle handling to meat cutting. Park County Farm Bureau hosted a Meat Cutting Seminar with Sierra Jepson which showcased how to make the most of your primal cuts and enjoyed steaks from the presentation afterwards. For the young folks throughout the state, county Farm Bureaus like Southwest and Meagher spent a day in local school classrooms reading agriculture books and teaching kids about where each important piece of their food groups come from.



# Leadership Development

## AFBF Annual Convention & Trade Show

MFBF members get to experience Farm Bureau on a national level every year at the American Farm Bureau Annual Convention. Salt Lake City was the host in 2024 and MFBF had 35 members make the trip to take in exciting keynotes, educational workshops, leadership development opportunities and the impressive trade show full of agriculture vendors and displays on award winning Farm Bureau programs. Members went on unique agricultural tours like a mink farm, local breweries, a lavender farm, and extensive vegetable farms. Our members cheered on state winner, Todd Lackman, as he competed in the Young Farmers and Ranchers Discussion Meet. The MFBF President and Vice President sat on the AFBF Delegate Floor to discuss national agriculture policy and represent proposed MFBF policies. One of the greatest opportunities at the AFBF Annual Convention is for members to network with county Farm Bureau leaders from across the country.

## ACE (Advocate. Communicate. Educate.)

MFBF's ACE Leadership Program is designed to empower Farm Bureau members to be confident, effective leaders in their county Farm Bureau and local communities. Each year, MFBF selects 10 Farm Bureau members to take part in this premier leadership program. Class members receive in-depth leadership development training along with practical application strategies. More than that, ACE participants learn to identify the needs of their own communities and the role they, and Farm Bureau, have in serving those needs. Without a vibrant, healthy grassroots foundation we cannot profoundly affect change on the policy issues impacting agriculture. During this year-long program, participants attend six in-person seminars focused on enhancing advocacy skills and leadership development. Class members also participate in a Farm Bureau book club and one-on-one virtual coaching sessions with an expert in personal development. Applications are available online at [mfbf.org](http://mfbf.org) and are due December 2, 2024.



## Campaign Training Seminar

MFBF hosted a Campaign Training seminar in January with 21 participants. Participants were candidates for public office ranging from county commissioners to congress and their support staff. The non-partisan training is an opportunity for those running for office to learn the basics of campaigning and the laws around campaign finance. MFBF is committed to making running for office accessible for anyone, especially our members, who get a tuition discount. The training also serves as a great opportunity for MFBF to get to know future lawmakers and introduce them to our organization.

## Supporting 4-H & FFA

MFBF is dedicated to investing in agricultural education and leadership development, recognizing that these are essential areas for the future of farming, ranching and agriculture industry. Through financial support and volunteer hours for both 4-H and FFA programs, MFBF members and staff help cultivate young leaders who gain practical skills, industry knowledge, and a passion for agriculture. We are proud to report for 2024 that MFBF has invested \$12,500 in FFA members and events, \$1,000 in state-level 4-H events, \$1,650 in the Youth Speech Contest, and \$6,000 in scholarships for student teachers in Agriculture Education. By sponsoring scholarships, providing resources, and hosting events, MFBF ensures that young people in agriculture have opportunities to grow, succeed, and contribute to their communities. This commitment to youth development strengthens the future of agriculture in Montana and builds a knowledgeable, resilient generation of well-informed producers and consumers.

## Scholarships

MFBF and the MFB Foundation offer scholarships for student members pursuing higher education and leadership development. In 2024, the MFBF Women's Leadership Committee awarded \$3,000, and the MFB Foundation awarded \$3,000 for students in their first and second year of college education. MFB Foundation also awarded \$10,000 in scholarships to 11 collegiate students who attended the AFBF Young Farmer & Rancher Leadership Conference in Omaha, NE. Both organizations put an emphasis on supporting young people in agriculture to pursue their goals.





# Amplifying Grassroots Voices

## Washington, D.C. Fly-In

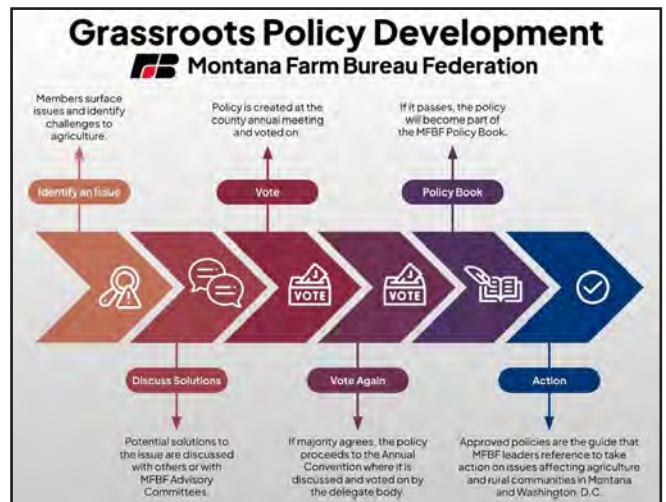
There is tremendous value in bringing farmers and ranchers face to face with elected officials, political and career agency staff, and regulators but the task of traveling, organizing, and executing such a trip can be extremely daunting and expensive for individual members. That's why MFBF started our annual Washington, D.C. Fly-In in 2018. In 2024, five MFBF members participated in an application based, expense paid trip to D.C. where they met and interacted with all of Montana's elected officials, House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee staff, AFBF Public Policy staff, the Canadian Embassy, and networked with fellow Farm Bureau members from other states. They conveyed Montana Farm Bureau's top issue concerns, regulatory challenges, and other hurdles impacting Montana farmers and ranchers in an effective and firsthand fashion, delivering on our mission to amplify grassroots voices.

## Womens Leadership Committee Fly-In

The AFBF Women's Leadership Committee hosts a WLC Fly-In to Washington, D.C. every other year. MFBF WLC had three members take advantage of the opportunity to visit the nation's Capital, visit with elected leaders, receive one-on-one advocacy training and network with other state WLC leaders. This is a very impactful trip for attendees who get to see where history and current leadership coincide and their direct impacts on the agriculture industry.

## Grassroots Policy Development Process

The MFBF process for creating policy is purely grassroots. The process starts with a member, or members, who identify an issue that they see, or foresee, affecting Montana agriculture. Solutions are then discussed with other Farm Bureau members at a County Farm Bureau meeting or during Summer Issue Advisory Committee meetings. From there, a formal policy is created at a county Farm Bureau's Annual Meeting. The policy is voted on by our ag producer voting members and if the majority agrees, the policy recommendation is sent on to the State Office. The policy recommendation is reviewed by the Policy Development Committee for clarity and grammar and is then brought before the voting delegate body at Annual Convention. If then passed by a majority vote by the delegate body, the policy is added into the MFBF policy book and can be used by our lobbyists to support Montana agriculture in the legislature.



## Voter Voice

Voter Voice is our membership's direct connection to advocate for agriculture. With this year being our interim, members were "Called to Action" on a couple of important issues. Twenty-seven total actions were cast to provide comments on the Montana

Grizzly Bear Management Arm and USFWS Proposal to Remove agriculture from Wildlife Refuges. MFBF also saw 12 new advocates share their views during the last year. As we draw towards the Montana Legislative Session, Voter Voice will be used by our members to track current bills and see the stances our lobbyists take as they are hard at work for us in Helena.







## Social Media

Over the past year, our social media presence has grown significantly, reaching new audiences, and increasing engagement across all platforms. Thanks to a focus on impactful content, engaging visuals, and timely updates, we've seen a remarkable rise in 575 new followers, and 12,322 views of our Suicide Awareness and Prevention Campaign. Our audience is eager to share our content and enjoys familiar faces and positive stories about agriculture. We promote sustainability initiatives like the Leopold Conservation Award, Students in Agriculture, Entrepreneurs, Young Farmers and Ranchers groups and leadership development opportunities. Programs like Hoofin' It for Hunger and charitable events impacting local communities help promote our organization across all platforms. Our community continues to expand, and we're excited to keep delivering value, making connections, and building a space where we can connect and share together.

*Follow us!*



## The Spokesman

The Montana Farm Bureau Spokesman is the organization's award-winning flagship publication reaching 20,000 Farm Bureau member families. The publication serves our membership in two ways; sharing information including thoughtful editorials, critical policy updates and crucial safety advice, and providing advice to new residents of our state; and highlighting our members and county Farm Bureaus. Our editorial staff showcases involved members including new faces on our board, posts from committee chairs, book reviews from member authors, photo galleries from our events featuring a collage of faces and extensive county news. Our loyal advertisers support the publication and offer an array of goods and services. With a readership of 60,000, the publication reaches our members and beyond, reflecting our organization and everyone who belongs to it.

## MHSA Sponsorship

MFBF is proud to support the Montana High School Association (MHSA) as an Official Corporate Sponsor. Montana high schools are often the center of a thriving community, and extra-curricular activities are vital to the fabric of those communities. Many Montana high school students, especially in rural areas, come from farming and ranching families. By supporting MHSA, MFBF directly invests in the local communities that form our core membership. This helps build stronger connections and shows a commitment to the youth in rural Montana.

## MSU Bobcat Sponsorship

As our land grant university, Montana State University has deep-rooted connections in rural Montana communities. These connections are shared by Montana Farm Bureau. As a sponsor for MSU Bobcat Football we extend our reach to thousands of Bobcat fans and MSU alumni who follow the Cats every Saturday during the football season. Outreach to our mutually aligned core audience magnifies our impact for rural Montana and builds brand awareness for MFBF.



# Invigorating Rural



## Foundation Mini-Grants

The Montana Farm Bureau Foundation awarded five, \$1,000 “mini-grants” in the last fiscal year to projects that highlighted the Foundation’s mission to support rural economic development and youth in agriculture. This year’s funding went toward projects like bringing in a national family business succession planning speaker, purchasing ag education material for a farm fair with 1,500 4th grade attendees, a local seminar with a keynote addressing trends in agriculture and money to purchase signage for a junior ag mechanics show. This grant program is designed to find opportunities to make several small donations that have a large impact on local efforts.



## Montana Ag Safety Program

The Montana Ag Safety Program’s mission is to provide resources, trainings and support to farmers and ranchers to increase workplace safety in Montana’s agriculture industry. The Program currently serves approximately 200 farms and ranches with Montana State Fund worker’s compensation policies who are members of MFBF, MSGA, MGGA, MCA, MWGA, and MPPC.



Task-specific resources and training materials are available for instant download covering 40+ topics and are available in both English and Spanish. Trainings remain a popular program offering. Trainings have been conducted across the state covering topics that range from emergency preparation and response to equine and ATV safety. The MASP is proud to work with active Farm Bureaus to host county wide events for MFBF members like the Ag Safety Day hosted by Rosebud-Treasure County Farm Bureau each spring as well Phillips County and District 4 Farm Bureaus calving safety seminars with Dr. Katie Rein, Crazy Mountain Veterinary Service. Trainings have also been conducted in partnership with NRCS, Montana State University – Valley County Extension, Dan Scott Ranch Management Program and BART Farm, and Montana Young Ag Couples Conference.



Engaging with members directly on the farm and ranch is a unique element of the MASP. Each year visits are made to approximately one-quarter of the members enrolled in the Montana Ag Safety Program.

## Local Ag Days and Farm Fairs

Many county Farm Bureaus took the opportunity this year to educate their local youth on the importance of agriculture, ATV Safety and the local area’s agricultural practices. Broadwater, Gallatin, Judith Basin, Custer/Fallon and Ravalli Farm Bureaus all hosted an ATV Safety station at their local Farm Fair ensuring that the hundreds of kids they talked to will always use ATV’s correctly and responsibly. Other county Farm Bureaus, like Northwest and Lewis & Clark, hosted a whole Farm Fair to educate local schools on where their food originates. Cascade County Farm Bureau showed a different side of agriculture, teaching the history of brands, giving kids a real-life branding experience and helping children understand the importance of “trusting your neighbor but branding your cattle.” These events ensure thousands of kids from a variety of backgrounds learned the importance of agriculture.



## Local Social Events

County Farm Bureaus held numerous social events to help further bringing their communities together. Locals are knitted together as they network and enjoy each other’s company at dances like “Brandings and Bad Decisions” and “Shipping Fever” that were hosted by Northwest Counties and Ravalli County Farm Bureaus. There was also the District 6 Fall Fest, a pool party in Fergus County, Farm Bureau-hosted Ag Trivia Nights at local breweries across the state, Goofy Golf in Front Range Counties, and a Father’s Day BBQ at a historic community hall in Valley County...just to name a few.

# Communities

## Legal Advocacy Supporting Rural Communities

### State of Montana v BLM and American Prairie Reserve

Montana Farm Bureau Federation and Phillips County Farm Bureau have intervened in three appeals challenging the Bureau of Land Management's decision on changes to the grazing permits that allow the American Prairie Reserve to graze bison in Phillips County, Montana. MFBF argued that BLM's decision regarding APR grazing wild bison is not in compliance with the Taylor Grazing Act or its implementing regulations. The Taylor Grazing Act was implemented to improve and develop public lands and stabilize the livestock industry. Bison are not livestock under the Taylor Grazing Act. We also argued there were fundamental problems with the BLM's socioeconomic impacts of the grazing permit changes. APR's bison herd is not managed as a commercial bison herd thus there is real and impactful harm to the local economy. Discovery has been conducted, but this case has been held up due to a lack of time on the docket for a BLM Administrative Law Judge.

### Held v. Montana

This is a landmark constitutional climate lawsuit brought by 16 Montana youth against Montana. They are asking the court to declare that Montana's fossil fuel energy policies and actions violate young people's state constitutional rights to a clean and healthy environment. In August of 2023 the Lewis and Clark District Court judge sided with the plaintiffs and permanently enjoined the 2023 version of what the court called the limitation to the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), which prohibited the state from considering greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts when considering permits for energy and mining projects. The case has been appealed to the Montana Supreme Court who heard arguments in July. MFBF is a member of Treasure State Resources Association who filed an amicus curiae brief in support of the State of Montana, et al. We supported their efforts with a \$3,000 donation as this is an important case for agriculture.



## Helping Those in Need

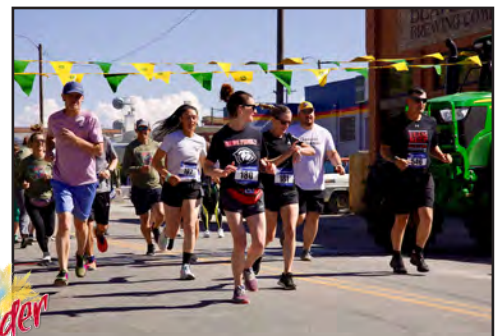
When a community is in need, they can count on Farm Bureau. Northwest Counties Farm Bureau and the counties in MFBF Districts 4 and 10 continue to support the children at the two Ronald McDonald Houses in Montana with homemade quilts, food, and children's activity packages. Several of our county Farm Bureaus also donate regularly to their local food bank organizations throughout the year, another way that farmers and ranchers help to put food on the table in our rural communities.

This year, drought, fire, and inflation called county Farm Bureaus into action across the state. Park County Farm Bureau initiated a hay drive to collect donated hay for livestock ranchers affected by the devastating Remington Fire. The Montana Farm Bureau Foundation Board of Directors acknowledged a statewide need and voted to establish a Disaster Relief Fund to provide critical financial support to Montana producers facing difficult times. You can donate to the fund at <http://mfbf.org/Foundation/Donate-Today> or scan this QR code.



## Hoofin' it for Hunger

The MFBF Young Farmer & Rancher Committee is proud to host the annual Hoofin' it for Hunger Run. The 5K and 10K run was held September 21 in Dillon with all proceeds from the race donated to the Montana Food Bank Network. This event is part of a larger national effort of the YF&R Committee. Whether the contribution is a bushel, a dollar, or an hour, Farm Bureau is working to finish an important job – making sure every American can enjoy the bounty produced on our farms and ranches. The Montana Farm Bureau YF&R Committee is proud to have raised just under \$95,000 dollars for the Montana Food Bank Network.





# Safeguarding the Agriculture Economy

## Farm Bill

While Congress has yet to act on the Farm Bill, it is not for lack of effort on behalf of Farm Bureau. MFBF, other state Farm Bureaus and the American Farm Bureau Federation, have been relentless in our persistence at passing legislation that puts more “Farm back in the Farm Bill,” as House Ag Committee Chairman Thompson likes to say. Despite heavy lobbying on the other side, Farm Bureau was able to work with both Agriculture Committees on crafting legislation that does just that, and aided in passage of the House version out of committee. With the 2024 election behind us, Farm Bureau will continue to push for legislation that strengthens the farm safety net, enhances crop insurance, and prioritizes working lands conservation programs.

## Federal Income Tax

Several important tax provisions, including but not limited to increased estate tax exemption levels and 199A, from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 are set to expire in 2025. Farm Bureau has elevated the importance of renewing these provisions without delay. At our insistence, several “marker” bills have been introduced, leaving Congress poised for quick passage next year.

## Regulatory Action

While Congress did not pass many bills in 2024, regulatory agencies were quite enthusiastic about rulemaking and Farm Bureau intervened at every chance possible to represent the policy positions of our members. Federally, Farm Bureau successfully advocated to stop a rulemaking which would have disallowed agriculture uses from U.S. Wildlife Refuge lands, led the effort to remove Scope 3 emissions reporting from an SEC reporting rule, and pushed back on rules that would make it harder for ranchers to utilize federal grazing leases, just to name a few things.

Despite our advocacy against the BLM’s Conservation Lands rule, which elevates “conservation” to being considered a “use” on par with grazing, mining, recreation and other multiple uses, the Department of Interior went forward with finalizing the rule. That is not the end of our effort to protect grazing and other multiple uses specifically recognized under FLMPA. AFBF took legal action against the rule and will continue efforts to roll back the Department’s illegal action.

The Securities and Exchange Commission’s proposed rule to require Scope 3 emissions reporting triggered our swift and sustained response. The rule would have created onerous burdens for farmers and ranchers to quantify and report emissions from their farms and ranches. Unlike large corporations, farmers and ranchers don’t have teams of attorneys and accountants to ensure they’re compliant with SEC regulations. Continued pressure from Farm Bureau, thousands of comments from members across the country, and activation from key Senators resulted in the SEC’s decision to remove the Scope 3 provision from their final rule, a complete win for farmers and ranchers!





## International Trade

In a state that raises far more high-quality food than our citizens could ever consume, maintaining and enhancing international export markets is of utmost importance to our farmers and ranchers. Likewise, rural communities rely on a healthy agriculture economy. This is why MFBF invested and participated in Governor Gianforte’s Trade Mission to Taiwan. As a well-established trade partner in the grain space and a growing partner in beef imports, Taiwan is the perfect place to enhance and grow trade and diplomatic relationships. Six MFBF members and staff met with grain traders, processors and researchers, as well as beef importers and restaurateurs, and government officials to promote our products, resulting in stronger bonds and more agreements. There were also cultural experiences, networking opportunities, and strengthened relationships created between MFBF, other ag groups, the Administration, and our friends abroad.

## Legal Advocacy Safeguarding Ag Economy

### Flathead-Lolo-Bitterroot Citizen Task Force & WildEarth Guardians vs. State of Montana, et al.

Montana Farm Bureau Federation joined the Montana Stockgrowers Association and the Montana Woolgrowers Association on the side of the State of Montana in this federal lawsuit before U.S. District Court Judge Donald Molloy. The case revolves around the premise that wolf and coyote traps should be limited because they also ensnare grizzly bears, which would amount to a “take” under the ESA.

Our claims include that the scope of the area limiting trapping is overly broad and includes areas of Montana outside of grizzly bear habitat and that the plaintiffs have no credible expert witness establishing the possibility of a “take” caused by coyote trapping and snaring. We issued a motion for summary judgment and a cross motion for summary judgment. In June 2024, Judge Malloy heard arguments but did not grant these motions stating there remains a genuine dispute of material facts and ordered a bench trial scheduled for December 2024.

### Montana Trout Unlimited, et al. v. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and Tintina Montana, Inc.

Montana Farm Bureau Federation joined other organizations representing senior water right holders in filing an amicus brief on the side of Montana DNRC and Tintina Montana. This case is significant in that DNRC determined that the mine dewatering that Tintina proposes does not need a water right. Conservation groups assert that any water diversion must be considered a beneficial use requiring a water right or a waste which is illegal under Montana law. If the Supreme Court agrees with TU’s argument, many farmers and ranchers could be required to get a water right for their drain ditches, rip-wrap, or tailwater – even when there is no “use” of the water. Montana Supreme Court heard oral arguments on March 29, 2024.





# The Voice of Agriculture®

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## Wildlife Predators

On the wildlife front, the Gray Wolf Management Plan was updated for the first time in 20 years. MFBF submitted comments supporting portions of the plan that recognized, and address livestock loss. The plan kept in place important measures to help producers address conflict.

Grizzly Bear State Management rules were also adopted. This is an important step in the delisting process. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was slated to make delisting decisions in February of 2024 but pushed off the decision on delisting until January of 2025. They vowed to decide on the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) and Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) at that time. Regardless of the decision MFBF will be there to ensure that farmers and ranchers are represented in the process.

## Conservation Programs

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks has also created the Prairie Habitat Conservation Lease Program as an alternative to perpetual conservation leases. The focus of the program is on key prairie species, such as Sage Grouse, habitat protection through 30 and 40 year leases. MFBF supported this alternative as it gives producers the opportunity to benefit from conservation projects without permanently restricting their land.

## MFBF PAC

MFBF's Political Action Committee (PAC) is a non-partisan, voluntarily funded group that seeks to promote the interest of Montana agricultural in state government. Our grassroots PAC board endorsed 32 candidates for the Montana primaries and 38 candidates for the Montana general election. With an 80% success rate, our PAC helps pro-agriculture candidates, with rural values, get elected. Along with endorsements, the MFBF PAC co-sponsored a positive mailer for Representative Josh Kassmeir throughout his district supporting his primary campaign. Our PAC also hosted a successful Supreme Court Forum, with the help of Yellowstone Farm Bureau, in Billings. Three of the four Supreme Court Candidates attending answered agricultural based questions. The forum was broadcast across 12 rural radio stations, the Montana Farm Bureau YouTube page and the Northern Ag Network Podcast. With the generous donations from our membership, our PAC is able to ensure that there will always be boots under the desks in Helena.

## Property Taxes

MFBF President Johnson served on the Governor's Property Tax Taskforce, as well as the Property Tax Classification Working Group. Both committees worked to craft solutions to address property taxes in Montana. Property taxes in Montana are still operating from the 1970s version of our economy when the current property tax structure was created. As industries like oil and gas and timber have decreased, the property tax burden has increasingly shifted to residential property owners. Montana Farm Bureau was at the table to ensure that agriculture did not take on additional burden and that those that are not genuinely involved in the industry do not enjoy the benefits of an agricultural tax classification. The groups produced several pieces of legislation and recommendations for the Legislature to consider.

## Carbon Tax

Several environmental activist groups directed the Public Service Commission to consider the social cost of greenhouse gases into rates for electric and natural gas services effectively creating a carbon tax. MFBF opposed these actions as this would increase input cost and make energy less reliable for Montana farmers and ranchers. Due to strong advocacy from Farm Bureau and other industry groups, the PSC ultimately rejected that proposal and voted to strike down the rule. MFBF is proud to be able to put a voice to solutions Montana farmers and ranchers craft during our grassroots policy process.





## Water Looking Ahead

DNRC and the Governor reconvened the Water Stakeholder Working group to continue the Comprehensive Water Review they began in 2021. The three areas of focus for this year were: 1) Future of the Water Court, 2) Exempt Wells, and 3) Water Measurement. MFBF's Senior Director of Governmental Affairs is representing stock water and irrigation interests on behalf of MFBF and has been assigned to the Exempt Wells sub-group. She has dedicated over 250 hours to ensuring that senior water rights and the prior appropriation doctrine are protected. While agriculture holds the majority of the water rights in the state, only 25% of the group was from the ag sector, making it critical for MFBF to be at the table representing a wide variety of producers on a statewide scope.



## Protecting Your Rights

MFBF has a long history of advocating for and protecting their members' property rights including water rights. MFBF helped craft and support HB 286 during the 2019 Legislative Session. When questions were raised this spring about the implementation of the now law, MFBF was there again. The issue arose when about two dozen water rights that were subject to HB 286 had erroneously been missed during the implementation process. At the request of MFBF, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) removed the state's name from the affected rights and added additional documentation to all rights subject to HB286 to ensure that water right holders will have documentation of the removal of the state. MFBF strongly encourages all water right holders to check their water rights and ensure that there are not errors.



## Protecting Quality

Montana has been working to implement Narrative Nutrient Water standards. The idea is to create standards that are based on markers of health for water systems rather than specific numeric nutrient standards that may not translate to actual health of water bodies. The Narrative Nutrient Working Group has been tasked with implementation. This has been an extensive process for the last three years. MFBF's State Governmental Affairs Coordinator serves on the group representing farming-based agriculture. She is dedicated to ensuring that the new process is indeed beneficial to water quality and does not inadvertently add burdensome regulations to agriculture or rural communities and economies.



## Funding Your Policy

MFBF worked with State Agencies to bring nearly \$50 million to Montana through the EPA Climate Smart Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG). MFBF submitted 19 suggestions based on our policy for ways to reduce greenhouse gases and address challenges in agriculture, forestry and rural communities. These suggestions were articulated in the grant application submitted to the EPA. Through a very competitive grant process, Montana won out. The funds awarded will be used to address infrastructure needs for ranchers to implement intensive grazing systems; feedlot infrastructure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase market access; incentives and education for producers on best nitrogen practices; address algae blooms in Montana waters; and identify and address coal steam fires that devastate Eastern Montana. Montana Farm Bureau is proud to take your policy ideas and put them into action. Be on the lookout this year for more on CPRG.





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