

HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY LANDSCAPES

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We are in an era of extremely rapid social and environmental change, much of which is driven by the impacts of climate change on the people and places we love. Made of air and water, our physical and mental health depends on the health of our environment. What we breathe, eat, and drink, and what makes its way into us uninvited all come through our landscapes. By taking action now to care for our landscapes and the air and water they provide, we can protect our health.



What is a landscape?

A landscape is a large area of land, typically thousands of square miles, and all of its features both natural and man-made. These features include people, lakes, rivers, farms, rangelands, cities, mountains, culture, wildlife, air, fire, insects, fish, birds, bacteria, local economies, soil, weeds, water cycles, buildings, nutrient cycles, cars, fences, roads, and much more. As all features interact with one another, landscapes are ever-changing and reshaping in new ways. A landscape protection approach is a way of working in a rapidly changing world by thinking and acting at multiple scales to conserve life in its many forms. It helps us to see the bigger picture so we can set priorities in a very complex world, now and into the future. For example, the 18-million-acre Crown of the Continent is a landscape that stretches from western Montana through the Northern Rocky Mountains into Canada, and includes Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness. It is cooperatively managed by more than 21 federal, Tribal, First Nations, state, and provincial agencies and is home to almost 200,000 people.

Climate change impacts our health: air and water

Air: Climate change may increase our exposure to wildfire smoke, dust, pollen, and mold, which could increase a variety of health risks including asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, allergies, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Water: Climate change threatens both water quantity and quality in Montana, particularly as temperatures increase and precipitation patterns change. Increased exposure to drought, water-borne diseases, and harmful algal blooms could impact livelihoods, mental health, and increase exposure to neurotoxins and pathogens.

Protect landscapes to protect human health by:

- Improving forest health;
- Sustainably managing agricultural lands;
- Greening urban areas
- Restoring and preserving wetlands; and
- Collaborating to protect landscape integrity.



Things your community can do to take action

Slow climate change (mitigation):

- Make buildings more efficient (and save money).
- Protect the forests you manage.
- Promote diets rich in fruits, vegetables, and legumes.
- Encourage alternative forms of transportation.
- Make sharing, re-using, and recycling simple and fun.
- Encourage engagement with life over possessions.
- Support climate friendly policies.

Prepare for climate change (adaptation):

- Connect with family, friends, and neighbors
- Provide and protect access to nature
- Create an inviting space to talk about health-related impacts of climate change
- Look out for people who are most vulnerable
- Plant trees
- Practice proactive building maintenance
- Prepare for emergencies

Tips for talking about climate change

- Build mutual understanding
- Select a trusted messenger
- Convey consensus
- Frame messages carefully
- Avoid triggering defensiveness
- Provide opportunities for action
- Signal success



Climate change is a collective challenge in which all of our actions matter. When we work alongside our family, friends, and even strangers, we can change the world.

*This handout is a brief outline of *Healthy Landscapes, Healthy People: A Guidebook for Montana Communities Preparing for a Changing Climate*. For a thorough discussion of these topics, we encourage you to read the guidebook at largelandscapes.org/media/publications/Climate_Landscapes__Health_Guidebook_10.9.18.pdf.*