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May 19, 2009

United Property Owners of Montana Releases 2009 Legislative Report and Scorecard

(Helena) – State and local government, and certain special interest groups, are having an unprecedented impact on our rights to possess, protect, and use private property in Montana, but a coalition of landowners, sportsmen, and small businesses are fighting back to protect property rights for future generations.

“We’re most concerned about the effect the erosion of our property rights is having on the unique cultural identity that makes Montana such a special place,” said Chuck Denowh, the policy director for United Property Owners of Montana (UPOM). “We’re losing the ability for our kids to make a living from the land due to the ever-increasing encroachments on what we can do with our property.”

UPOM worked with legislators and other interest groups on several bills designed to strengthen the rights of all property owners, from homeowners to large ranchers. “We started the session focused on putting up some sideboards on the state fish and game, which has been getting steadily worse in their treatment of landowners, but all in all we covered a lot of territory on property rights,” Denowh explained.

A great deal of their time at the legislature was also spent fending off legislation that would have further eroded the rights of Montanans. UPOM reports that the most offensive legislation was either killed outright, or amended to make it a positive bill. Case in point was this session’s stream access legislation, which was amended in the Senate to include strong protections for landowners with property adjacent to streams.

UPOM has released a full legislative report at www.upom.org, including scores on how every legislator voted. Denowh noted that it’s important for constituents to check up on how their legislators vote. “Every legislator I know says they’re for property rights, but a smaller number actually hold the same view as the mainstream majority of Montanans about what limits should be placed on government in their control over our property,” Denowh said. “Our scorecard is where reality can debunk the rhetoric.”

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