



*Pacific NorthWest
Economic Region*

2024



Key accomplishments for Montana

The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) has been actively **building partnerships to tackle challenges facing Montana** while ensuring the state's voice—and that of the broader Pacific Northwest region—is effectively represented in Washington, D.C., and Ottawa.

In 2024, PNWER continued working to **enhance economic development** for member jurisdictions, open pathways for communication and coordination across borders, and develop a better understanding of the interdependent economy across the region. Some of the **recent successes** for Montana include:

Energy

Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Study: PNWER is conducting a **first-of-its-kind study** exploring cross-border opportunities and linkages for building out the regional hydrogen economy.

Legislative Energy Horizon Institute: PNWER's Legislative Energy Horizon Institute (LEHI) **continues to educate state and provincial legislators, governors advisors and policymakers** on North American energy infrastructure and delivery systems. Montana has graduated 30 LEHI alumni. Visit www.lehi.institute for more information.

Border

In 2023, **Montana exported roughly \$1 billion worth of products to Canada**, making Canada Montana's largest trading partner. Montana and Canada share 13 active border crossings in British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. PNWER works closely with CBP, CBSA, DHS and Public Safety Canada on **advancing smart U.S.-Canada border management**, and implementing innovative, clear and consistent policies that facilitate travel and trade.

Cross Border Livestock Health Exercise

Montana's State Veterinarian, **Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, led a critical initiative** during PNWER's 2024 Annual Summit in Whistler, B.C., where she spearheaded efforts to strengthen regional preparedness and collaboration for transboundary animal health threats. As part of her leadership role, Dr. Szymanski facilitated a two-day tabletop exercise with animal health leaders, focusing on communication strategies and incident coordination in response to an emerging foot-and-mouth disease outbreak along the U.S.-Canada border. Dr. Szymanski's leadership will continue into 2025, with follow-on activities and discussions planned for the PNWER Summit in Bellevue, WA.

Aquatic Invasive Species

For over 20 years, collaborative efforts in the Pacific Northwest have successfully prevented invasive Quagga and Zebra (QZ) mussels from entering Montana's water systems. The **PNWER Executive Board unanimously passed an action item** enabling the PNWER Secretariat to seek funding from federal and non-federal sources for enhanced regional Northwest transboundary zebra and quagga mussel prevention and response readiness. **More than 25 legislators signed a joint letter to the governors of Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington, urging action on this imminent threat.** PNWER continues to provide support to secure over \$20 million in federal match funding for the region for quagga and zebra mussel prevention.

Columbia River Treaty

The Columbia River basin drains into western Montana providing many benefits to the region's economy, including hydropower, irrigation, navigation, and flood control. **PNWER hosted U.S. State Department lead negotiator Jill Smail** virtually at the 2024 Annual Summit to brief on the agreement in principal between the U.S. and Canada on the future of the Treaty. Sen. Mike Cuffe moderated the Session.

Regional Tourism

PNWER established a Regional Tourism Council (RTC) with the goal of **convening regional tourism leaders to provide expertise** and stability which will be invaluable to the success of our region as a leader of responsible, sustainable, and resilient tourism. The Regional Tourism Council is composed of an elected official and a tourism industry representative from each of our ten PNWER jurisdictions. Montana's representatives on the Regional Tourism Council include Representative Denise Baum and Jennifer Pelej with the Montana Department of Commerce.

Regional Infrastructure Accelerator

Briefed Montana Joint Transportation Committee in Montana on Economic Corridors, and the Accelerator. Projects will engage with Rail service and development and the PNW Hydrogen Hub initiatives and collaboration. Worked with Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority to communicate how increased passenger rail service fosters economic growth and community connectivity in Montana and across the region.