

Badger-Two Medicine

The Blackfeet’s Last Refuge

The Badger-Two Medicine is a stronghold of Blackfeet culture and intact habitat for native fish and wildlife. The story of the Badger is situated in a legacy of exploitation of Blackfeet land and resources by the US government and settler colonialism. After a history of broken treaties and violence, the current designation of the Blackfeet reservation excludes the eastern portion of Glacier National Park and the Badger-Two Medicine, both significant sacred landscapes for the Blackfeet. The Badger-Two Medicine remains a primarily roadless expanse of intact habitat that is home to native species such as grizzly, wolverine, elk, and both cutthroat and bull trout.

Oil and Gas Leases in the Badger-Two Medicine

The unique geology of Northwestern Montana and the Rocky Mountain Front creates a clash between conservation, culture, and development. The sedimentary geological formations, specifically multiple layers of shale, makes the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountain Front a potential location for oil and gas exploration via fracking. While Glacier Park is protected by a park status from oil and gas development, its southern neighbor, the Badger-Two Medicine held promise as a location for fracking wells to access the deep layers of shale. Fracking in the Badger would cause irreparable damage to intact habitat, drinking water, and the Blackfeet’s use of the land for cultural, historical, and religious purposes.

By the early 1980s, the U.S. government was recommending and issuing leases for fracking on this land. The timeline to the right tells the nearly 40-year history of oil and gas leases in the Badger Two-Medicine and the political and environmental fight by tribal leaders to protect this sacred land.

Geologic History of the Badger-Two Medicine

Sedimentation

1.6 billion - 800 million years ago

The ancient inland Belt Sea deposited layers of sediment with different compositions. Over time, organic material deposited between layers of sediment were compressed creating oil and gas deposits within layers of shale.

Mountain Building

60-70 million years ago

As part of larger mountain building event along western North America, the Lewis Overthrust Fault uplifted a plate which slid east about 50 miles over younger rock and creating the eastern Rocky Mountain Front.

Glaciation

2 million years ago

During the Pleistocene Ice Age, massive ice sheets advanced and then retreated through the temperate latitudes of North America. Glaciers carved U-shaped valleys and the left glacial lakes that typify Glacier National Park. Glacial mountain formations and gravel deposits characterize the topography of the region.

Starting in 1981, the US government began to lease the Badger-Two Medicine for oil and gas development. Oil leases were sold for \$1 per acre throughout the Badger. This leasing was done illegally, without proper consultation with the Blackfeet Nation and without an acceptable environmental review process. In the 30 years following the leasing of the Badger, the Blackfeet, partnered with outside environmental and conservation groups, have spearheaded the fight to protect the Badger and oppose oil and gas development on sacred land.

1981
U.S. Forest Service (USFS) recommends oil and gas leases be issued at the Badger-Two Medicine, leading to the issuing of leases by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) without required consultation with the Blackfeet.

1985
USFS and BLM approve the first application to drill

1987
Montana Senator John Melcher introduces a bill requiring the USFS to prepare a “joint management plan” for the area in consultation with Blackfeet.

1993
Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt suspends oil and gas lease activity in the Badger-Two Medicine

1997
USFS places a moratorium on new oil and gas development along the Rocky Mountain Front, including the Badger-Two Medicine

2006
Congress passes legislation that prohibits further oil and gas leasing of federally controlled leases within the Badger-Two Medicine

2007
President Bush signs a bill making the 1997 moratorium permanent, stating that any leases sold or let go would never be re-issued.

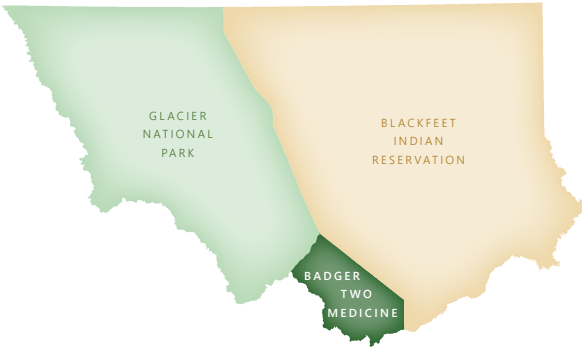
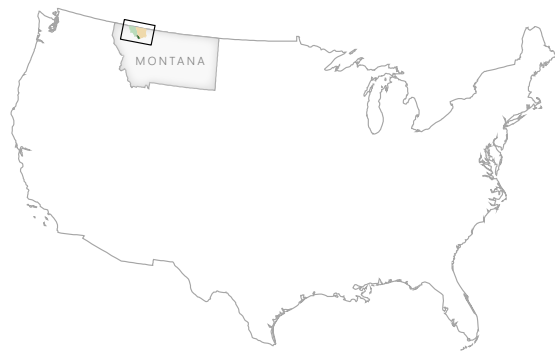
2010
Five leaseholders relinquish leases encompassing 28,730 acres.

2013
Sidney Longwell of Solenex, LLC, files a lawsuit with the district court to begin drilling at the Hall Creek lease site.

2014
Tribal leaders issue a joint proclamation calling on the U.S. Department of the Interior to cancel oil and gas leases in the Badger-Two Medicine.

2016
March: Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell cancels the Solenex lease and two other illegally issued leases.
November: Devon Energy voluntarily relinquishes 15 leases.

2017
The final two leases, Moncrief and Kluthe, are canceled. Sidney Longwell and W.A. Moncrief Jr. continue litigation to drill.



\$1

Amount spent per acre in 1982 by Sidney Longwell to buy the 6,200-acre Hall Creek lease

920

Number of oil and gas leases on Blackfeet land in 1982

643

Number of producing oil wells on Blackfeet land in 1982

42,000

Number of acres still leased following the 2006 Act of Congress

“We must act to preserve ourselves by conserving our culture and our lands for future generations. As long as we have our reservation it is up to us to be wise stewards of these sacred lands.”

Chief Earl Old Person
Blackfeet Tribal Business Council, former Chairman

