Motion Name: AERC Resolution To Oppose The Transfer Or Sale Of Federal Public Lands Managed By The United States Departments of Interior And Agriculture

Proposing Committee: Trails and Land Management Committee

Date of Motion (Date to be presented to BOD) August 15, 2015

Classification of Motion Request (new, change, add, delete, by-law, rule, policy) New

Proposed Motion (use exact wording)
AERC Resolution To Oppose The Transfer Or Sale Of Federal Public Lands Managed By The United States Departments Of Interior And Agriculture

Whereas, a mission of the American Endurance Ride Conference (herein known as AERC) is to develop, use, preserve trails, and to work to ensure public lands remain open to recreational equestrian saddle use and
Whereas, the public lands of this nation managed by the United States Department of the Interior and Agriculture are a part of our national treasure and heritage and,
Whereas, these public lands are held in perpetuity to benefit future generations of Americans because of the renewable resources and recreational value, and
Whereas, we support the sustainable management of resources on federal lands in cooperation with other stakeholders, and
Whereas, the transfer or sale of these lands will remove large acreages from the national federal public lands system, fragmenting existing land areas, compromise public access, and set a precedent for privatization of all public land and,
Whereas, specifically the disposal of these federal lands will decrease the opportunity for all recreational use of these lands,
Whereas, no federal lands should be removed or transferred except for lands considered under the Federal Land Transaction Reconciliation Act (FLTRA, PL 106-248),
Therefore, be it resolved by the AERC to go on record in opposition to any plan, action or legislation for the disposal, sale, or transfer of public lands managed by the United States Department of the Interior and Agriculture (except under FLTRA) and
Be it further resolved that this resolution be made to the President of the United States of America, congressional delegations and elected officials from each state, and agency officials of the Department of the Interior and Agriculture.

Background, analysis and benefit (describe the problem this motion is solving) It has come to the AERC Trails Committee’s attention that the United States Congress has become serious about selling federal lands to the western states. The Trails Committee feels the sale of public lands is detrimental in many ways.
Some of the ways this is detrimental is the states could sell the land to private ownership foreign or domestic, the states or counties do not have $3 billion used on annual fire fighting, trail maintenance would fall even farther behind. This resolution will add AERC’s voice to the groups of organizations against the sale of public lands. See more information under Supporting Materials.

Budget effect/impact (Attach spreadsheet if appropriate) None

Benefit and/or Impact to Membership and/or the AERC Organization If federal lands are sold to the states the lands our members condition their horses or compete on could disappear.
Impact on AERC Office (Work load, budget) Minimal. The office or marketing committee will need to publicize AERC passing the motion.

Committees consulted and/or affected None

Implementation plan (Schedule, resources, financial) Write up a press release as soon as passed and send out to appropriate publications and media outlets.

Supporting materials (List of any other documents and/or spreadsheets)
Documentation provided to AERC by BCHA (Back Country Horsemen of America)

Public Access Ensured by Keeping Public Lands in Public Hands
Summary: The desire of some states and local governments to own or control federal public lands carries significant repercussions for backcountry pack and saddle stock users. State-managed lands, for example, typically do not embrace the multiple-use mandate that guides federal land management agencies and includes promoting diverse opportunities for public outdoor recreation. There remains great uncertainty as to whether the type of access currently enjoyed by BCHA members to federal public lands would continue under either state or local control or management.

BCHA Mission includes to Perpetuate Heritage and Recreational Access
BCHA's mission statement has not wavered in 41 years. It includes the following objectives and purposes:
1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and Wilderness areas.
2. To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use (emphasis added).

These represent key tenets by which BCHA's Executive Committee analyzes the pros and cons of proposals that could affect use and enjoyment of public lands. BCHA's mission also includes promoting the sustained use of the back country "by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage." The concept of heritage includes recognition of a unique national "birthright" enjoyed by all Americans—where every citizen enjoys partial ownership of an unparalleled system of national public lands, irrespective of an individual's wealth or socioeconomic status.

Federal Lands Never Controlled by States
As a condition of joining the Union, most former territories in the West renounced their claims to federal public lands in compacts with the federal government. Relevant sections of each western state's constitution, or enabling act, are shown in the sidebar on the following page. Leaders of these f to disavow all future claims to the public domain as a fundamental condition of statehood.

American Public Strongly Supports Continued Federal Ownership of Public Lands
According to a recent poll by The Colorado College, more than two-thirds of Western voters (68%) view public lands as American places that belong to the country as a whole; only 24% say these lands belong more to the people of their respective state. The poll documented that a majority of voters in every state, including those that are
relatively conservative, believe that federal public lands belong to the country as a whole.

A related study\(^2\) demonstrates that a majority of Western voters oppose transfer of America’s forests and public lands to state ownership. The majority polled assume full control of costs related to managing formerly federal landscapes.

**Threat Associated with Transfer of Federal Lands Has Never Been Greater**

Over the past century, many attempts have been made to shift control of the federal estate in order to benefit local governments and private corporations. The most recent and significant manifestation was the Sagebrush Rebellion of the 1970s and 1980s. In early 2015, congressional leaders in both the Senate and House of Representatives publicly renewed the effort to facilitate the transfer of federal lands to the states by taking the following actions:


"disclaimer clause" in their former territories agreed believe that transfer of public lands would result in higher taxes, reduced access for recreation, increased resource extraction and a high risk that treasured public lands would be auctioned off to private individuals or corporations were states to

**Non-Binding Senate Budget Resolution**

The U.S. Senate approved on March 26, 2015, a budget resolution that would establish a procedure for selling, exchanging or transferring to the states federal lands that are not national parks, monuments or reserves. The amendment was sponsored by Sen. Lisa Murkowski, Chairman of the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee.

**Budget Request in the House of Representatives**

Also in March 2015, the Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Rep. Rob Bishop, requested $50 million for the Fiscal Year 2016 federal budget in order to facilitate immediate transfer of public lands to states control.

**Additional Downsides of Federal Land Transfer**

There are numerous "downsides" to large-scale transfer to, or control of, federal public lands by the states. For example, states and local governments typically do not have the multiple use mandates by which federal agencies must abide (e.g., protection of watersheds, wildlife, fisheries, historic resources, promotion of recreation, commodity development, etc.). In contrast, states and counties typically take a myopic view of the benefits provided by public lands and are forced to maximize revenue, often to the detriment of other uses, including recreation. Were local governments to choose to maximize revenue through the enhancement of recreational opportunities, the result invariably would be higher fees for recreational access and amenities. There also are issues associated with the lack of wildland fire-fighting resources/capability by the states and the potential for states/counties to sell off formerly public lands to the highest bidder, including billionaires and global corporations. These are some of potential downsides of the transfer of federal lands—the least of which would be great uncertainty over the public's ability to continue to access public lands in a manner that American citizens have been accustomed for over 150 years.

**Conclusion**
BCHA views the potential for large-scale transfer of federal lands to the states with great skepticism and concern. While our members continue to take issue, sometimes significantly, with indiscriminate restrictions to recreational stock use, we would much rather contend with federal multiple-use management agencies than grapple with 50 different state bureaucracies in order to ensure our continued use and enjoyment of public lands.

**Supporting approvals** (proposing committee, participating committees)  The AERC Trails and Land Management Committee unanimously approved the resolution.