



KEEP IT PUBLIC, WYOMING

keepitpublicwyo.com

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April 13, 2021

Re: Opposition to studying federal lands transfer during the interim session

Dear Speaker Barlow, President Dockstader, and members of Management Council:

On behalf of our thousands of members throughout the state of Wyoming, our organizations write to ask you to deny approval of the Joint Agriculture State and Public Lands & Water Resources Committee's proposed interim topic to study the transfer of federal lands to the state. After several years of failed legislation, and previous technical and legal studies of the topic in Wyoming and throughout the Western U.S.,[1] our members do not believe any further review by the Legislature is necessary or prudent.

In 2015, the Legislature appropriated \$75,000 on a study that thoroughly reviewed all of the issues and concluded that state management of federal lands would cost much more than their added value.[2] The 345-page study found that the state would inherit costly wildfire and litigation issues if it were to take over management. The report also noted that if ownership of public lands was transferred to states, local governments could lose significant federal PILT funding and local tax revenues.

Public access to federal lands is a critical component of Wyoming's way of life. Our members hunt, fish, hike, ride horses, ski, and recreate in a myriad of other ways on federal lands in the state. As you know, people from around the country and the world come to Wyoming to visit our federal public lands, contributing the bulk of tourism's share of our state economy. Even talk about taking over, transferring, or selling these federal lands puts our state at an economic and legal disadvantage.

While we are opposed to any interim study on transfer of federal lands to the state, if such a topic is created, we ask that the study give due consideration to the benefits of federal lands in Wyoming. Our organizations stand ready to participate in such a study and we offer our assistance in preparing presentation and background materials for the committee.

Thank you for your time and review, and for your service to the people of Wyoming.

Sincerely,

Members of the Keep It Public Coalition

Contact: kristen@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org

[1] See, e.g. https://wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/WOC_public_land_report.pdf; <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/3117841/CWAG-Public-Lands-Subcommittee-Report-PDF.pdf>; https://dc.law.utah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=stegner_pubs;

[2] http://y2consultants.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/study_on_management_of_public_land_in_wyoming.pdf

Members of the Keep It Public,
Wyoming coalition, including:

Audubon Rockies

Wyoming Wildlife Federation

Muley Fanatic Foundation

Trout Unlimited

Western Bear Foundation

Powder River Basin
Resource Council

Wyoming Pathways

Council for the Bighorn Range

Equality State Policy Center

Wyoming Hunters and
Anglers Alliance

Wyoming Back Country
Horsemen of America

Wind River Native
Advocacy Center

Greater Yellowstone Coalition

Jackson Hole
Conservation Alliance

Wyoming Outdoor Council

Wyoming Wilderness Association

The Wilderness Society

Wyoming Federation of
Union Sportsmen

Bowhunters of Wyoming

Wyoming Chapter, Backcountry
Hunters and Anglers

Wyoming Sportsmen
for Federal Lands

Sierra Club, Wyoming Chapter

Theodore Roosevelt
Conservation Partnership

Wyoming Interfaith Network

Winter Wildlands Alliance

National Outdoor
Leadership School