

# *Dr. William S. Platts*

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TO: IDAHO LEGISLATURE FEDERAL LANDS INTERM COMMITTEE  
DATE: December 4, 2013  
SUBJECT: Written Testimony against the Transfer of any Federal Public Lands to the State of Idaho  
FROM: William S. Platts

## **DECISION**

I am against the transfer of federal lands to the state of Idaho because it would take away our freedoms to access and the ability to enjoy and cherish these lands as we have for many decades. The Idaho proposal will lead to a wholesale selloff and shut down the public lands forever.

## **QUALIFICATIONS TO GIVE TESTIMONY**

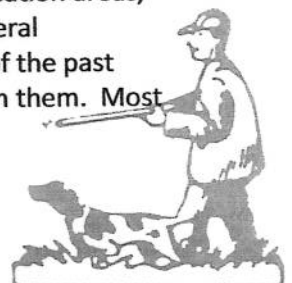
Because I spent my first years on a sheep ranch in the Raft River Valley, I have used and enjoyed the federal public lands in Idaho for over 85 years. The greatness of these public lands and all they had to offer convinced me to go to college and obtain the necessary degrees to qualify to work for these lands. I spent 50 years researching and studying these lands and their valuable land uses. I have published over 200 Scientific Articles, most of them in peer reviewed journals, on federal public land uses. These studies helped to better manage these lands for all citizens to benefit. My research findings well demonstrated that those Legislators and government officials who continue to spread the myth that the state can manage these lands better than the federal government have not done their homework. One only needs to go to state lands and observed condition differences between these lands and the federal public lands that surround them to come up with an intelligent decision.

## **THESE LANDS SHOULD NOT BE LOCKED UP**

State Legislators working to pass legislation to transfer control of the citizen's federal public lands in Idaho to the state have not done their homework. The hidden agenda is to acquire these lands so they can be transferred into private lands owned and managed by special interest groups. To lock these lands up into private ownership makes no sense at all. Our federal public land is one of the main reasons that Idaho is such a great place to live. The Idaho Legislature should be very careful of what they ask for as they may get it and then all generations to follow would suffer the consequents.

## **JUSTIFICATION FOR DECISION**

97% of Idahoans agree that our public lands including forests, national monuments, recreation areas, and wildlife living areas are an essential part of Idaho quality of life. 73% believe our federal government does a good job of protecting our national heritage. As was the case, in all of the past "Sagebrush Rebellions," grass root Idahoans just do not want their lands taken away from them. Most



Idahoans value their right to fish and hunt on their own federal lands, and they worry about watershed protection.

It is well known in the scientific community that federal public lands are managed better than state lands. Streams on state land are in worse condition than streams on federal public lands because the federal land managers have much better riverine-riparian standards that land users must abide by. The federal government does a better environmental job logging their lands because they work under a multiple use policy that manages these lands in the best interest of all citizens. The state manages their lands for the benefit of maximum dollar profit and does not consider all land users in the analysis. Federal public lands are our lands while the state lands go to whoever can pay the top dollar. All the cabin lots on state land that tie up and block access to the shores of Priest and Payette Lake are prime examples.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (1997) call for the retention and management of federal public lands for all citizens of the United States. Compare this with the direction the state gives the Idaho land managers whose mandate is only to maximize the dollars these lands can produce. The U. S. Forest Service mission is to sustain the healthy diversity and productivity of the Nations forest and grasslands to meet the needs of all future generations. Compare this with the States Mandate. The federal agencies long term commitment and contribution to the value of recreation, wildlife management, timber production, and maintaining pure and abundant water is admiral. Just the opposite of the goals of those Legislators who are pushing for the takeover of our public lands.

Under the state's endowment policy, the state would manage these lands primarily for dollar generation. The Idaho Constitution requires the state to maximize revenue from its endowment lands. This policy cannot be stated enough times because of its potential to damage the lands that the state is trying to get for nothing.

The state is not financially capable of managing their lands let alone the cost of managing the federal lands which are managed for the multiple uses it can produce. Idaho does not have the resources or qualified specialists to manage these lands. One large forest fire would bankrupt the state budget. The federal agencies spent \$392,000,000 to manage the 32 million acres of federal public land in Idaho in 2012. Managing these lands would cause a nightmare on Idaho's budget demands.

Not only would our forests and canyon deserts be severely degraded by the for-profit-only state charge, but, change does not emphasize the needs of wildlife, water and solitude. These lands, once they go private, will be off-limits for hiking, picnicking, bird watching, fishing, and hunting. There is no lock up more permanent than a NO TRESSPASSING sign on private property.

### **SUMMARY**

The Idaho Legislature made a great mistake when this body supported a resolution that demands the federal government transfer ownership of the citizen's land for state and private management. The panel is charged with studying all aspects, costs, and potential pitfalls of a future handover of federal lands to the state. The panel should make a very careful study of the pitfalls as there are many and countless. We must keep our federal public lands for all citizens of Idaho. The State should not take our lands and transfer them to the wealthy as has happened in most other states within the Union.