

BLAINE COUNTY RESOLUTION 2016- 16

A RESOLUTION OF BLAINE COUNTY RECOGNIZING THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF FEDERALLY-ADMINISTERED PUBLIC LANDS IN IDAHO AND IN BLAINE COUNTY, WITH RESPECT TO THE COUNTY'S ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT, QUALITY OF LIFE AND LEGACY AND OPPOSING WHOLESALE TRANSFER OF THESE LANDS TO THE STATE OF IDAHO, OR THEIR PRIVATIZATION

WHEREAS, a majority of the most stunning and beautiful natural landscapes in Blaine County – sagebrush hillsides, mountains, rivers, wilderness lakes, streams, and lava flows – are found on federally-administered public lands that all United States residents own; and,

WHEREAS, Blaine County is Idaho's seventh largest county and ranks fifth among Idaho counties in public land acres managed by the federal government within its boundaries; and,

WHEREAS, public lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service constitute over 78 percent of the land area in Blaine County; and,

WHEREAS, the variety, characteristics, quality and quantity of federally-administered public lands and of the natural resources found on and within them is unique among each of Idaho's 44 counties; and,

WHEREAS, these lands are managed and maintained for multiple uses, some of which do generate direct revenue and some of which are not expected to generate direct revenue; and,

WHEREAS, in Blaine County, these lands contain large amounts of important or critical winter, transition and summer habitat for game animals, such as elk and deer, and non-game species, as well as for rare, threatened and endangered wildlife and plants; and,

WHEREAS, these lands are significant watersheds that give rise to the Big Wood River and other famous fisheries and are sources of irrigation water and clean drinking water for many communities; and,

WHEREAS, these public lands contain historically or archaeologically significant sites and resources, including portions of the Goodale Cutoff of the Oregon Trail and those of value to the region's Native Americans; and,

WHEREAS, certain Native American Tribes hold a perpetual trust interest in these federally-administered public lands as established by treaty between the Tribes and the United States; and,

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WHEREAS, the long history of trappers, miners, ranchers, skiers, anglers, hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts coming to Blaine County is rooted in open spaces and access to public lands; and,

WHEREAS, it is the diversity of the environment, recreational opportunity and quality of life that, in recent decades, has attracted many people to Blaine County to live on a full-time basis, or to visit; and,

WHEREAS, present-day Blaine County residents and many thousands of visitors annually use these public lands to recreate – hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, skiing, backpacking, wildlife watching, horse packing – and to pursue other outdoor activities; and,

WHEREAS, the numerous natural, historic, archaeological, scenic and recreation values of public lands in Blaine County are an important part of the area's economy and environment; and,

WHEREAS, these public lands create employment and business opportunities directly or indirectly to thousands of county residents, whose wages are spent locally and who contribute in many positive ways to our communities; and,

WHEREAS, federal Payment in Lieu of Taxes is a significant revenue source to Blaine County that would not foreseeably be equalled or exceeded by fee revenue or operating income associated with State-permitted expanded natural resource extraction or other commercial activities on these lands; and,

WHEREAS, the human, financial and material resources needed to manage and maintain these federally-administered public lands, their various facilities, including roads, trails, rest areas, etc., or to administer responsibly the grazing, mineral- or timber-related activities occurring on them, greatly exceeds the capacity of the State of Idaho; and,

WHEREAS, Blaine County has significant recent experience with large wildfires at the urban interface; is familiar with the total effort and cost of fighting these fires; recognizes that the fires are most likely to be intensified by climatic conditions rather than poor resource management; and, has seen that the State does not have the sum of resources necessary to address such incidents successfully; and,

WHEREAS, a takeover of these federally-administered public lands by the State of Idaho would lead to unprecedented growth, complexity and cost of state government as it grappled with protecting the public's interests in these lands and waters, use and management of these resources, environmental protection and general administrative accountability and transparency, all in need of adequate funding, thereby potentially forcing the State to consider sale of these vast treasured public assets; and,

WHEREAS, the Federal Lands Interim Committee of the Idaho Legislature, after convening in 2013 and 2014 to study issues associated with the State acquiring title to and control of federally-administered public lands in Idaho, recommended against litigation to pursue State claims to ownership of federal lands; found that the public does not support

privatization of public lands; found that the public does support the multiple-use benefits of public lands; and, supports--to varying degrees and in different ways--increased collaboration and cooperation between local, state and federal governments to achieve the goals of improved public lands management; and,

WHEREAS, various groups and individuals continue directing their political, legal, outreach and fundraising efforts in Idaho and other western states to cause the transfer of federally-administered public lands to states; and,

WHEREAS, Blaine County, the federal land management agencies, various user interest groups and other stakeholders have recognized mutually the value of open, cooperative, communicative and responsive relationships and being accessible to the public with respect to all the public lands management issues that arise; and,

WHEREAS, Blaine County believes it is in the best interests of its citizens and the American people that such relationships be fostered and improved continually--as this is essential to achieving good outcomes--that public lands remain in public hands, that the federal land management agencies continue to have primary management responsibility for these public lands and natural resources and that the United States Congress provide for funding, through appropriations or other means, to allow them to fulfill this responsibility today and in the future.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Blaine County Board of Commissioners that Blaine County shall support the legacy of our public lands for the generations of Americans to come and shall oppose any efforts by the State of Idaho to claim, take over, litigate for, or purchase federally-administered public lands except under provisions of applicable federal laws, incorporating rigorous scientific examination of the ecological, cultural and economic impacts and allowing meaningful public participation in decision-making concerning such transfer.

APPROVED this 23rd day of May, 2016.


County Commissioner

ABSENT
County Commissioner


County Commissioner


Attested: County Clerk

