

September 4, 2009

PUMPKIN CREEK LAND EXCHANGE

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

The Pumpkin Creek Ranch land exchange will consolidate federal land in an area 15 miles south of Miles City that has a checkerboard land-ownership pattern. When completed, the exchange will create a 20,578-acre contiguous block of federal land for the public to enjoy, as well as facilitate a variety of resource programs which are less effective on small, isolated land sections.

ISSUE:

This facilitated, two-phase assembled exchange between BLM and The Conservation Fund is now in process.

Phase I, which has been completed, included 43 isolated parcels of federal land comprising 14,325.83 acres, and 22 parcels of non-federal land comprising 12,229.15 acres. Seven timely protest letters, one late protest, and ten letters of support were received on the Phase 1 portion. The state director signed seven decisions dismissing the seven protests; no timely appeals were filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals. Phase 1 was officially completed Feb. 20, 2008.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

The BLM plans to acquire the remaining 1,809.17 acres of private land within the Pumpkin Creek Ranch in Phase 2 of the exchange using an estimated 1,200 acres of federal lands in Carter County. The value imbalance in Phase 1 of \$21,578 owed to the United States is being tracked through a ledger account, and values will be equalized in Phase 2. The Miles City Field Office received approval to sign the decision for Phase 2 on Sept. 2, 2009, and the decision was signed on Sept. 4. The Notice of Decision (NOD) was published in the *Miles City Star* and *Ekalaka Eagle* Sept. 11, 2009, initiating the 45-day comment on the NOD. Phase 2 should be complete by the end of 2009.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Issues relating to access to public lands, recreation trends, agricultural needs, and commercial activities such as outfitting have placed emphasis on providing increased opportunities for the long-term public benefit. Management of the area for multiple-use objectives will benefit surrounding communities and visiting recreationists well into the future.

CONTACT:

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