

PART 1

LAND RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

The total area of the 50 United States is 2.3 billion acres. The first public domain was created in 1781 when New York agreed to surrender to the Federal Government its claim to unsettled territory that extended westward to the Mississippi River. Other colonies followed New York's example, and, by 1802, all of the land west of the colonies between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River belonged to the Federal Government. In the course of national expansion from 1781 to 1867, the public domain rapidly grew beyond the bounds of the Appalachian West, with the Federal Government acquiring more than 1.8 billion acres of public domain lands.

Accurate surveys were needed before the new public lands could be identified for sale or other disposition. In 1785 the Continental Congress adopted an ordinance setting up a survey system for the public domain lands. The General Land Office, predecessor to the present-day Bureau of Land Management (BLM), was established to oversee the surveying and disposal of the public lands. Various public land laws were enacted by Congress to accomplish these disposals. The land disposals built the country's economic foundation, opened the West to settlement, and united the vast expanses of land into one Nation. To raise money to repay Revolutionary War debts and encourage settlement of new territories, the Federal Government sold or granted vast tracts of public lands to settlers, homesteaders, veterans, towns, new States entering the Union, railroads, agricultural and mechanical colleges and universities, and private companies. To date, almost 1.3 billion acres of public lands have been transferred out of Federal Government ownership.

Congress recognized the need to protect the Nation's natural, historical, and cultural resources while providing opportunities for recreation. Special acts withdrew millions of acres of public lands from settlement for National Parks, National Forests, National Monuments, National Wildlife Refuges, National Trails, and National Wild and Scenic Rivers. Some of the best-known congressional withdrawals include Yellowstone National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, and Death Valley National Monument.

The Nation's expanding population and mobile society created a demand for a variety of public land uses. Changes in public attitudes and a concern for environmental values and open space began to compete with the need for development and increased production. Congress, recognizing the value of the remaining public domain lands, enacted the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. This act declares that, with the exception of individual tracts that may be disposed of in the national interest, it is the policy of the United States to retain its public lands in Federal ownership. FLPMA mandates that the BLM administer the public lands under the concept of multiple use, while protecting the long-term health of the land. Today, the BLM administers about 247.9 million surface acres of public land and approximately 700 million acres of Federal subsurface mineral estate in the United States. The BLM is responsible for managing these lands and their various resources so that they are used in a manner that will best meet the present and future needs of the Nation.

Table 1-1, Acquisition of the Public Domain, 1781–1867, contains summary data on territories acquired by the Federal Government during the course of national expansion. Thirty States, commonly called the “public land States,” were created as a result of these acquisitions (Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming).

Table 1-2, Disposition of the Public Domain, 1781–2010, includes summary data and cumulative acreage totals for public lands disposed of by the Federal Government. Among the earliest disposal actions were grants of land to veterans of the Revolutionary War. Later, grants were made to new States entering the Union, as well as for the creation of agricultural and mechanical colleges and universities. The Homestead Act permitted settlers to obtain land for agricultural purposes. Grants were also made for the construction of railroads. With the exception of the Desert Land Act of 1877 (which was amended), all of the land grant and disposal acts have been repealed or superseded by other acts. Therefore, the data contained in Table 1-2, except with respect to the State of Alaska, are subject to little or no change.

Table 1-3, Mineral and Surface Acres Administered by the Bureau of Land Management, contains summary data of mineral estate administration by the BLM and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This table replaced the U.S. General Services Administration table entitled “*Comparison of Federally Owned Land with Total Acreage by State*” in 2001.

Table 1-4, Public Lands Under Exclusive Jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, contains summary data of public lands in each State that are currently under the administrative jurisdiction of the BLM. By law, the States of Maryland, Texas, and Virginia are not public land States. By virtue of the Articles of Confederation and, later, the Constitution, the State of Maryland and the Commonwealth of Virginia retained control of their public lands when they entered the Union. When the State of Texas entered the Union by a joint resolution of Congress, it was allowed to retain control of its public lands. The BLM acquired the 548 acres of lands in Maryland and 805 acres of land in Virginia in separate acquisitions under Sec. 205 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1715, as amended. The BLM also acquired 11,833 acres of land in the State of Texas by Secretarial Order 3198, dated March 12, 1996.

Table 1-5, Area of Oregon and California (O&C) Revested Lands, depicts data on revested (Oregon & California Railroad) lands and reconveyed (Coos Bay Wagon Road Company) lands. These lands are administered under the Oregon and California Revested Lands Sustained Yield Management Act of August 28, 1937 (50 Stat. 874), as amended by the Act of June 24, 1954 (68 Stat. 271).

Table 1-6, Withdrawals, Revocations, Modifications, and Extensions, presents a compilation of withdrawals, revocations, modifications, and extensions administratively made by the Secretary of the Interior. These withdrawals are for a specific duration that can vary from less than 1 year to as many as 50 years, with a provision for extension if the withdrawal is still needed.

Table 1-7, Cadastral Survey Actions Completed, contains a summary of cadastral surveys completed on public lands managed by the BLM during the past year. To manage the public lands effectively, the BLM must identify areas both by graphic representation and by monumentation on the ground. This is accomplished by cadastral surveys, an exclusive and significant responsibility of the BLM. Cadastral surveys create and establish on-the-ground boundaries of public land subdivisions in units suitable for management and for identification in official field notes and plats. This table also summarizes cadastral surveys that the BLM has completed on lands managed by other Federal agencies.

Table 1-8, Obligations of Appropriations Received, contains a summary of obligations of appropriations made to the BLM during Fiscal Year 2010, as well as a summary of obligations of appropriations transferred from other bureaus and agencies to the BLM. This table summarizes all funds that were obligated to manage the BLM’s lands and assist other agencies.