

**Statement of
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Department of the Interior
Before The
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests
S. 2015, Powell Shooting Range Land Conveyance Act
March 22, 2012**

Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 2015, the Powell Shooting Range Land Conveyance Act, which conveys an isolated 322-acre tract of public land to the Powell Recreation District (District) in northwestern Wyoming. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) supports S. 2015.

Background

Powell, Wyoming, is a town of approximately 5,000 people in northwestern Wyoming. This region of Wyoming is generally irrigated farmland with scattered BLM-managed public land parcels.

In 1980, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) granted the District a Special Use Permit (SUP) for a 25-year period to construct and operate a shooting range on this isolated tract of public land southeast of the town of Powell. The District constructed the facilities and infrastructure for the shooting range over 30 years ago, and has operated the range ever since. The District is a local entity created under state statute for the purpose of providing public recreation programs. It is funded from local property taxes and has authority to acquire land and facilities appropriate to carry out its recreational purposes.

The SUP for the shooting range expired in 2005. That year, the District filed an application for a Recreation and Public Purposes Act conveyance of this land to continue the shooting range operations. The BOR extended the SUP pending transfer of the land to the District. In 2010, the BLM discovered that, as a result of a 1950 land exchange with the state of Wyoming, the parcel is actually under the BLM's jurisdiction and not the BOR's jurisdiction as was previously understood. The BLM has used the authority of a Special Recreation Permit to temporarily authorize the use of the existing shooting complex until long-term resolution of the land use issues could be achieved. BLM authorities for conveyance of land under the Recreation and Public Purpose Act do not permit the transfer of this land administratively to the District under its current use as a shooting range.

S. 2015

S. 2015 requires the BLM to convey an isolated 322-acre tract of public land southeast of Powell, Wyoming, to the Powell Recreation District. The bill requires that the parcel of land be transferred subject to valid existing rights, and be used only as a shooting range or for any other public purpose consistent with the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.

If the land conveyed to the District ceases to be used for its intended purpose then the land shall, at the discretion of the Secretary, revert to the United States.

S. 2015 requires the Powell Recreation District to pay administrative costs to prepare the patent and transfer title as well as costs necessary to complete environmental, wildlife, cultural, historical studies, and NEPA review prior to the transfer. The bill also releases and indemnifies the United States from any claims or liabilities that may arise from uses carried out on the land on or before the date the Act is signed.

The BLM supports the bill as it represents an opportunity to resolve land use issues on an isolated tract of public land that has been used as a shooting range for over 30 years and is identified for disposal in current land use plans. The legislation facilitates a reasonable and practicable conveyance of lands to the Powell Recreation District.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of S. 2015.