

Casper RMP/EIS Comments

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Category: Lands and Realty

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Comment:

Disposal of Public Lands - The Sierra Club has major concerns regarding the land disposal actions called for in the plan. The BLM is proposing to dispose of all public lands in Platte and Goshen Counties as well as most public lands in Converse County. All three of these counties have little public lands compared to other areas of the state. We believe that the Bureau of Land Management has completely ignored its own land disposal criteria listed below:

Criteria for disposal; excepted lands

A tract of the public lands (except land in units of the National Wilderness Preservation System, National Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems, and National System of Trails) may be sold under this Act where, as a result of land use planning required under section 1712 of this title, the Secretary determines that the sale of such tract meets the following disposal criteria: (1) such tract because of its location or other characteristics is difficult and uneconomic to manage as part of the public lands, and is not suitable for management by another Federal department or agency; or (2) such tract was acquired for a specific purpose and the tract is no longer required for that or any other Federal purpose; or (3) disposal of such tract will serve important public objectives, including but not limited to, expansion of communities and economic development, which cannot be achieved prudently or feasibly on land other than public land and which outweigh other public objectives and values, including, but not limited to, recreation and scenic values, which would be served by maintaining such tract in Federal ownership.

The only criterion the BLM could possibly use to propose disposal of so many tracts is the difficult or uneconomical to manage, but we saw no evidence present how these lands are uneconomical or difficult to manage. Since Goshen, Platte and Converse Counties have little public land, we would urge the BLM to consider a more judicious method of determining tracts for disposal. It is particularly disturbing to see over 100,000 acres slated for disposal including large tracts of publicly accessible land in these counties. Most of these tracts do not need extensive management, and those that need some additional oversight could easily be managed using cooperative agreements with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Wyoming Division of State Parks and Historic Sites, or Ayers Natural Bridge County Park. The Plan should examine all of these other avenues for management before slating land for disposal.

One of the key criteria the BLM should be using for tract disposal is public accessibility. Many of the tracts in Platte, Goshen, and Converse Counties are accessible for public recreation, and are some of the only places the public has to recreate. Examples include prairie tracts at the base of the Laramie range in Platte County, Table Mountain in Goshen County, and the Pine Ridge country in northwestern Converse County. Tracts adjacent to Glendo State Park are integral to management of the state park. Tracts are also adjacent to Ayers Natural Bridge County Park in Converse County.

Some other tracts the Sierra Club is most concerned about include tracts attached to the LaBonte and Downs roadless areas on the Medicine Bow National Forest and Thunder Basin National Grasslands. BLM tracts in both of

these areas add to the wild nature and roadless character of these places. Both LaBonte Canyon and Downs are being managed by the Forest Service for backcountry, non-motorized recreation, but the BLM failed to examine how its adjacent tracts could be managed in coordination and conjunction with the Forest Service's management.

The Sierra Club urges the BLM to completely rewrite the land disposal section of the plan and consider a more thorough list of criteria for considering lands for disposal.