



For America's Heritage

Public Lands Foundation

P.O. Box 7226 Arlington, Virginia 22207

June 20, 2014

The Honorable Mary Landrieu
Chairwoman, Committee on
Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member, Committee on
Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Landrieu and Ranking Member Murkowski:

Recent incidents in the West have raised, once again, the dispute over the legal status and ownership of lands managed by the Federal government, particularly those lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within the Department of the Interior.

The BLM is responsible for managing approximately 245 million acres of federal lands. Most of these lands are located in the 12 western States, including Alaska. These federal lands are what remain out of an original federally-owned public domain, which in the mid-1800s totaled more than 1.8 billion acres. Over the past 200 years, the Congress passed numerous laws that authorized the use and disposal of most of the original public domain lands to help settle and develop the West.

The debate over the ownership and management of the remaining 245 million acres is not a new one. It has been addressed by Congress, litigated in the Courts and dealt with administratively through published regulations. These 245 million acres, now known as the "National System of Public Lands" are owned by the citizens of the United States, and administered by their federal Bureau of Land Management.

The U. S. citizens have a unique heritage and treasure in their federal public lands, but few people actually know much about the background of public land ownership in the United States. We are sending you a copy of a paper entitled "**The Nation's "Public Lands" – From where did the public lands come? – What happened to most of the original public lands? - What should we do with the public lands remaining in public ownership?"**

The value of the public lands is indisputable as a legacy for future generations and as a contributor to present day economies and quality of life. The revenues generated by activities on the public lands fuel local economies. As an example of their value, the public lands managed by the BLM contributed more than \$130 billion to the U.S. economy while supporting more than 600,000 American jobs in FY 2011.

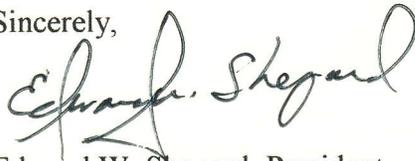
This paper has been prepared by the Public Lands Foundation to help the public to understand the history of their "public lands," and why it is vital to keep these federal

public lands in public ownership to meet the current needs of the public and to help meet the as yet unknown, and unknowable, needs of future generations. These lands are “posterity’s property,” and must be managed as such.

The Public Lands Foundation (PLF) is a national non-profit membership organization that advocates and works for the retention of America’s National System of Public Lands in public hands, professionally and sustainably managed for responsible use and enjoyment by American citizens. PLF endorses and embraces the multiple use mission of the BLM. Members are predominantly retired employees of the BLM from across the United States and as such have spent their careers dedicated to the sound management of these valuable lands and resources. Many of our members spent their careers managing the public lands located throughout the West. They have personal knowledge of these lands and unparalleled expertise in their management.

The PLF is providing this information in hopes that it will assist you and your staffs in responding to constituent questions and concerns regarding federal land ownership and management.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward W. Shepard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "E".

Edward W. Shepard, President

Identical letters to:

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman, Committee on
Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member, Committee on
Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
2134 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515