



For America's Heritage

Public Lands Foundation

P.O. Box 7226 Arlington, Virginia 22207

July 14, 2015

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
2406 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowery
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
2365 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Representative Lowery:

The Public Lands Foundation (PLF) is opposed to Congressman Poe's proposed amendments to the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2016, which purport to sell "unused" federal land to raise revenues. We offer that these amendments would not achieve the purported outcome of increased revenues, and there is already federal law that provides for the public interest-based sale of public lands.

First of all, when the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) passed in 1976, retention of the public lands became the law of the land. And, these lands are to be managed for the long-term sustainable benefit of the citizens of the United States. Section 204 of FLPMA provided for careful planning and administrative steps so that public land meeting specific criteria could be sold at fair market value if found to be in the public interest. This mechanism has worked well for 40 years and does not need changing.

Secondly, we have observed over the last 60 years that whenever programs calling for the sale of public lands to raise federal revenues are attempted, the costs of administering these proposed sales exceeds the revenues generated from any actual land sales. In the 1960's, a proposal to sell federal land was put in front of the public to determine which public lands should be disposed and which should be retained and managed in the public interest. During this open public process in the Classification and Multiple Use Act of 1960 (C&MU Act), it was found that the concept of "unused" public land is inaccurate. These lands are not unused. The many values of public land that are now provided through the FLPMA including open space, recreation benefits, minerals lands, livestock grazing, timber, wildlife habitat, among others remain valid uses today.

When programs to sell public lands as "revenue assets" have been proposed, the costs to administer the studies and sales have exceeded any revenue generated from actual sales. When the American public is given the opportunity to provide input on potential sales, they make it clear that they cherish their western public lands, and want them retained in the public interest of all America's citizens.

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 already owned by the citizens of the United States, and administered by their federal Bureau of Land Management.

The Public Lands Foundation (PLF) is a national nonprofit 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 Poe amendments are not in the best interest of the American public and we ask that they not be included in the FY 2016 Appropriations Act for Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, or any other legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward W. Shepard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Edward" being the most prominent part.

Edward W. Shepard, President

Identical letters sent to:

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chair, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
& Related Agencies
2205 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment & Related Agencies
2256 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515