

PROTECT OUR PUBLIC LANDS
- KEEP PUBLIC LANDS IN PUBLIC HANDS -

The public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are a national asset, part of our natural and cultural heritage, and should remain in national public ownership so that current and future generations can share in their beauty and bounty. Congress has long recognized the national interest in preserving and conserving the public lands for present and future generations of Americans. In 1976, Congress passed the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) that declared that “the public lands be retained in Federal ownership unless, as a result of the land use planning procedures provided for in the Act, it is determined that disposal of a particular tract will serve the national interest.” These lands must be kept in public ownership to meet the current needs of the American people and to help meet the as yet unknown needs of future generations. These lands are posterity’s property and must be managed as such. Over the years, there have been numerous proposals to transfer the BLM administered public lands to the states but none of these proposals have been successful. The serious consequences associated with such proposals are a bad deal for the American public.



However, the future of our public lands is under threat! On August 20, 2024, the State of Utah filed a petition with the Supreme Court of the United States asserting that the Federal retention of

“unappropriated” public land in Utah was unconstitutional. Although the Court on January 13, 2025 denied the state’s petition by issuing a decision that “the motion for leave to file a bill of complaint is denied”, the State of Utah was seeking a judgement from the Supreme Court that would order the United States to begin the process of complying with the asserted obligation to dispose of these lands. Several other States had also filed briefs urging the Court not only to hear the case but to ultimately side with the State of Utah. In the views of the PLF, any departure from the legal precedents and history regarding ownership of public lands would have a significant impact on the future management of some 245 million acres of public lands managed by the BLM for all Americans. It should also be noted that State and local governments receive Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) payments from the Federal government each year for those Federal lands that are retained in Federal ownership for all Americans. Those PILT payments totaled \$621.2 million to all States in 2024. The States also receive half of the royalty revenues from Federal onshore oil and gas leases in each State. Those payments totaled \$8.6 billion to all States in FY 2023. The PLF has prepared a Position Statement disputing the assertions of the State of Utah regarding the ownership of “unappropriated” public lands. ([UTAH PUBLIC LANDS STATE OF UTAH PETITION TO SUPREME COURT](#))