

July 26, 2004

MONTANA BLM LAND EXCHANGE PROGRAM

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

The Montana/Dakotas BLM has been pursuing land exchanges within several of its field offices since the early 1980s. Our past exchanges have resulted in a net decline of more than 87,000 acres of public land. The land leaving BLM administration generally goes into private ownership. In addition, BLM land was used as the trading stock to implement the Crow Boundary Settlement Act.

ISSUES:

Past Efforts:

We have acquired about 165,000 acres of nonfederal land in exchange for about 252,000 acres of public land. In recent years many of these were multi-phased exchange proposals developed with facilitators through which numerous public land parcels were conveyed to a number of different landowners (usually adjoining landowners who desired to own the public land parcel) in exchange for a single private land parcel. The larger assembled, facilitated land exchanges, such as the recently completed Axolotl Lakes and the Ward Ranch exchanges, involved a ratio of 3 to 10 acres of public land in exchange for one acre of private land.

Ward Ranch Land Exchange - This facilitated, assembled, multi-phased proposal provided benefit for recreation and wildlife management along Hauser Lake near Helena. Phase I, completed in June 2002, involved exchanging 1,783 acres of public land for 535 acres of the ranch. The final phase (Phase II) was completed in February 2004, with 6,487 acres of public land exchanged for 969 acres of the ranch.

Current Efforts:

North Chinook Land Exchange -- This is a facilitated, assembled, multi-phased proposal that will consolidate into public ownership land surrounding the North Chinook Reservoir in Blaine County to enhance public access, recreation opportunities, and resource management on the land. Phase I, scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2004, involves 1,542 acres of public land and 1,920 acres of private land.

Buckner Land Exchange-- Through this exchange, 363 acres of federal land would be traded for 383 acres of private land and a road easement to ensure for public access and continued use of an existing road into an area comprising BLM, USFS and state lands totaling 12,240 acres in Jefferson County, Montana. This single transaction exchange of lands could be completed by the spring of 2005.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

Land exchanges help us to accomplish three major goals: 1) bring lands with high public resource values into public ownership; 2) consolidate land ownership patterns to facilitate more effective and efficient management of resources and bureau programs; and 3) dispose of public land parcels identified through our land use plans.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Public interest varies from one exchange to another and is generally stronger in the actual vicinity of exchange parcels.

CONTACT:

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