

**Groundswell —
The Public's Power to Protect Public Lands**

copyright Chris Winter

presented to Boulder County Nature Association Ecosystem Symposium
Public Lands in Public Hands for the Public Good

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Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural
Resources, Energy, and the Environment

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO LAW SCHOOL

Groundswell – The Public’s Power to Protect Public Lands

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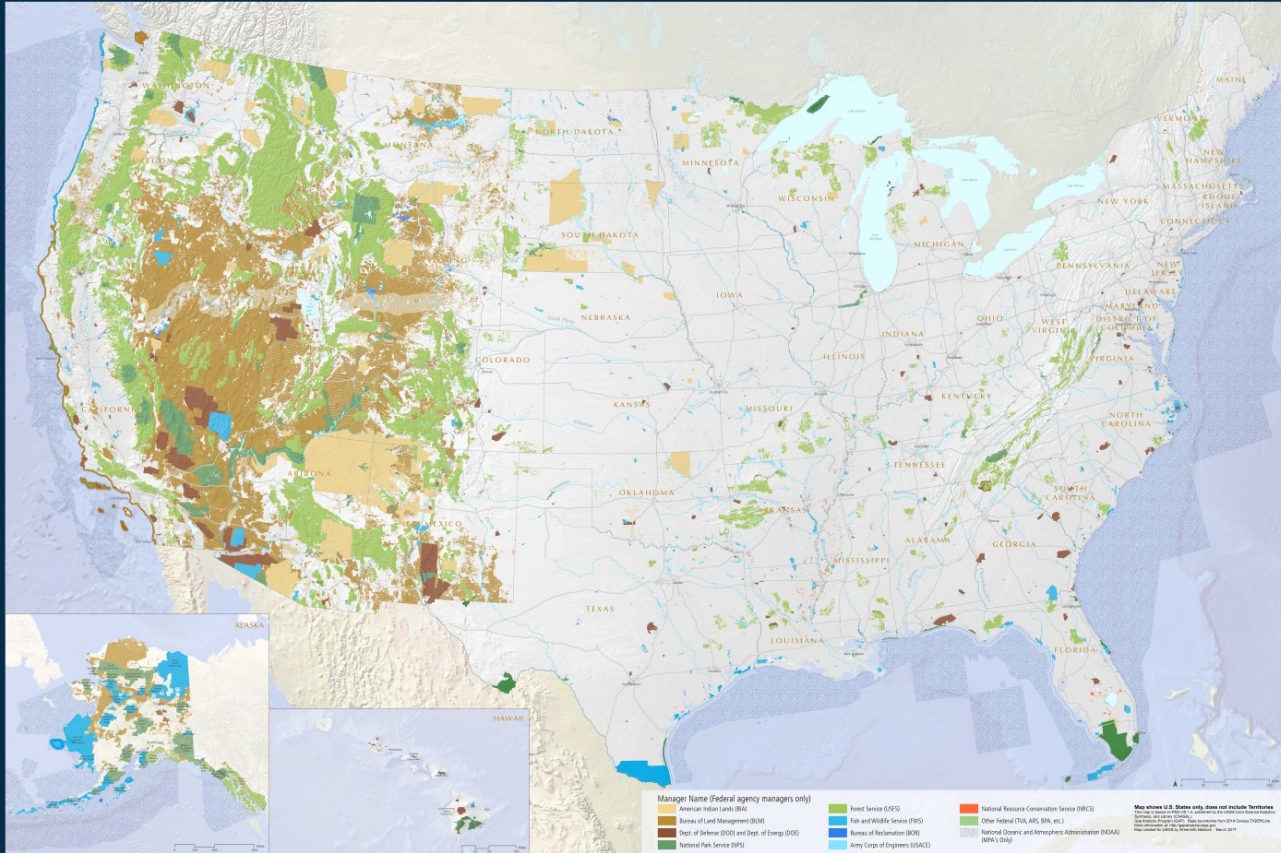


Colorado Law

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Protected Areas Database of the U.S. (PAD-US) - Federally Managed Lands



640 million acres of federal public land in the United States

24.08 million acres in Colorado (36.23%)

Over 137,000 acres in Boulder County















The background of the slide features a photograph of the United States Capitol building's dome, illuminated by the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise. The dome is the central focus, with its intricate architectural details and the Statue of Liberty on top clearly visible. The sky is a deep, dark blue, providing a stark contrast to the bright, glowing dome.

THE PROPERTY CLAUSE

“The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to Prejudice any Claims of the United States, or of any particular State.

— U.S. Const. art. IV, § 3, cl. 2

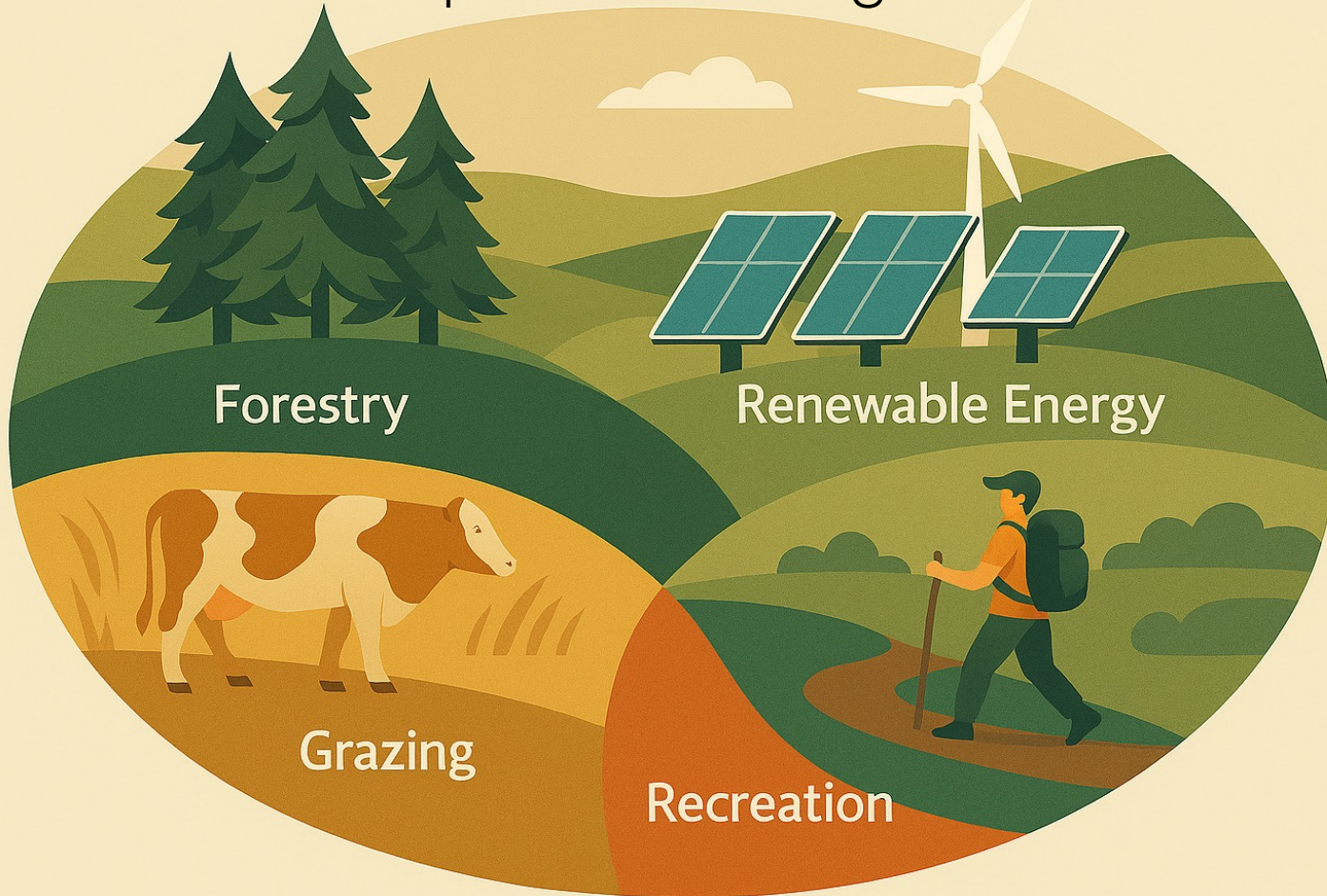
The background of the slide features a photograph of the United States Capitol dome in Washington, D.C. The dome is illuminated from the side, likely by the setting or rising sun, creating a warm, golden glow. The sky is a deep, dark blue, suggesting twilight. The dome's architecture, including its columns and the Statue of Freedom on top, is clearly visible.

THE FEDERAL LAND POLICY AND MANAGEMENT ACT

(a) The Congress declares that it is the policy of the United States that—(1) the public lands be retained in Federal ownership, unless as a result of the land use planning procedure provided for in this Act, it is determined that disposal of a particular parcel will serve the national interest;

—42 U.S. C. § 1701 et seq.

"Multiple Use" Management



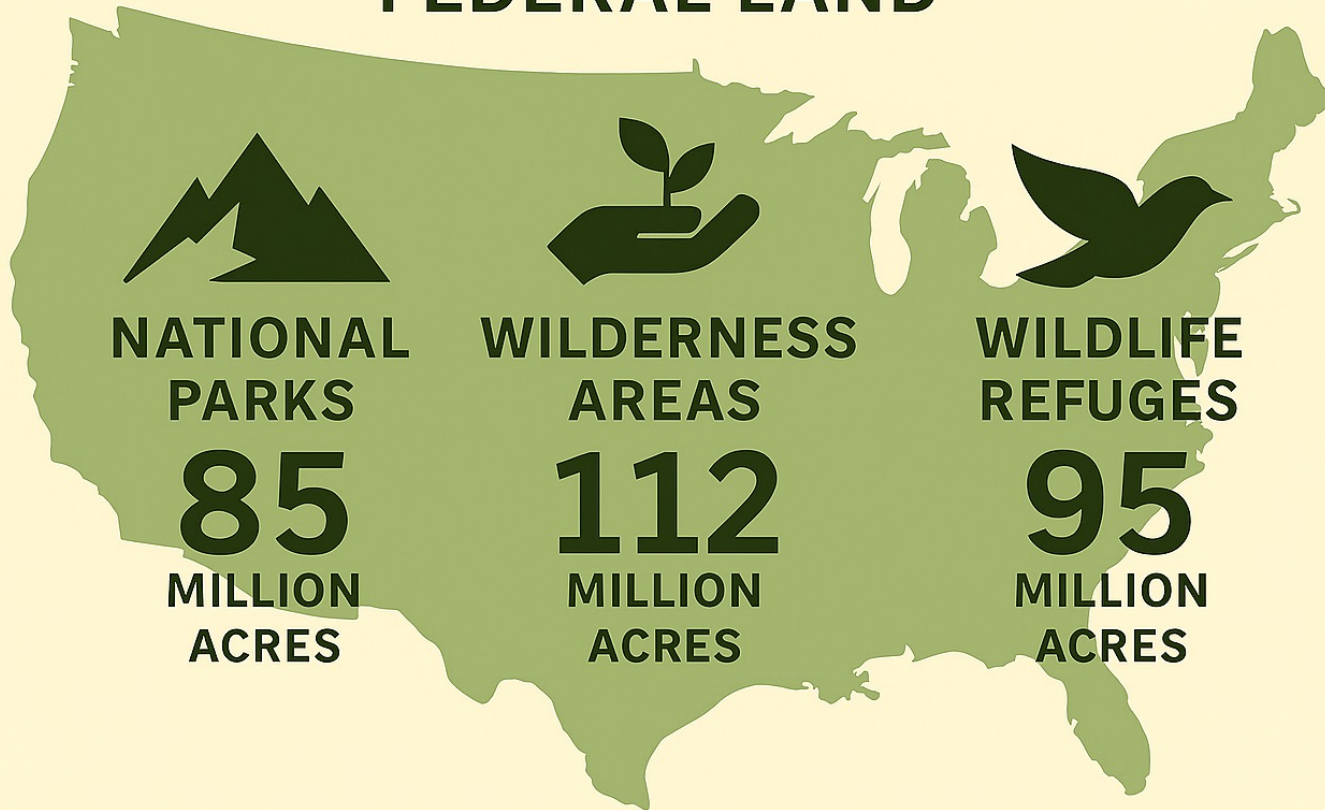
Forestry

Renewable Energy

Grazing

Recreation

CONGRESSIONALLY PROTECTED FEDERAL LAND

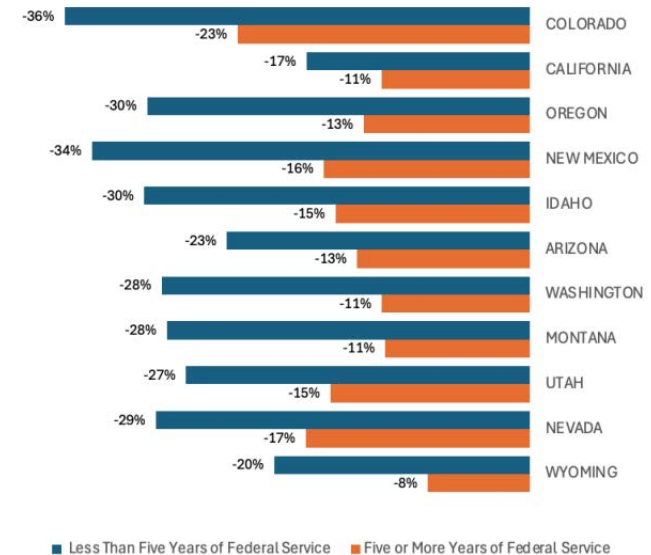


Emerging Threats to Public Land

- Gutting of the land management agencies
- Limiting public participation – National Environmental Policy Act
- Policies favoring industrialization – Oil/gas, logging, mining, grazing
- Attacking renewables
- Declaring emergencies



FIGURE 2: PERCENT CHANGE IN FEDERAL PUBLIC LAND AGENCY WORKFORCE IN WESTERN STATES IN 2025



DATA DIVE: STAFFING CUTS AT FEDERAL LAND AGENCIES IN 2025

PROSPECT PARTNERS, LLC & HAWK EYE STRATEGIES, LLC

FEBRUARY 2026

ENVIRONMENT

Ancient Indigenous Lands in New Mexico Could Be Lost to Mining and Drilling. The Public has 7 Days to Weigh In.



by Elyse Wild April 2, 2026



Forest Service Sheds Research Capacity in Move to Utah

USDA Abandons Science, Closing 57 Forest Service Research Stations

Washington, DC — As part of a wide-ranging reorganization and headquarters move from DC to Utah, the U.S. Forest Service is shuttering more than 57 research stations and eliminating a significant but unknown number of forestry scientists. Rather than streamlining the agency, these moves may render it less capable of addressing growing threats to forest health from wildfires, diseases, and the effects of climate change, according to Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER).

Trump administration

US Forest Service to move headquarters from Washington DC to Salt Lake City

Announcement part of controversial shakeup described by critics as administration attack on 'science and scientists'

'God squad' waives animal protections to expand oil drilling in Gulf of Mexico

3 days ago

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Esme Stallard

Climate and science reporter

The 'God Squad' Waives Environmental Rules for Offshore Drilling

The panel voted to override Endangered Species Act restrictions on oil and gas activities in the Gulf of Mexico, home to critically endangered whales and other imperiled wildlife.

NEWS: ENVIRONMENT

It's been the worst year for Colorado's snowpack in recorded history. A striking new map shows why.

State climatologist's report shows spiking heat, only 22% of historic norm for available water at traditional April 1 mark

The Proposed Sell Off of Public Land

The Salt Lake Tribune

From ski resorts to popular trails, see the public land Mike Lee proposes selling across the West

More than 18 million acres in Utah could be eligible for sale under the senator's renewed push to sell off public lands.

CPR News

POLITICS MONEY ARTS JUSTICE ENVIRONMENT NEWSLETTER WAYS TO SU

A GOP senator wants to see public lands sold for housing. Will the proposal work for Colorado's communities?

By Caitlyn Kim · Jun. 20, 2025, 4:00 am

Opinion

Sen. Mike Lee wants to sell 2 million acres of public land to benefit the wealthy

The Utah senator claims his "disposal" plan will help America's housing crisis in 11 Western states. The more likely outcome is another boost for the rich.

EnDAILY

Mike Lee seeks to reinstate public lands sales in megabill

By Garrett Downs | 06/03/2025 06:08 AM EDT

Senate committees are set to begin releasing their version of the Republican party-line package this week.



Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chair Mike Lee (R-Utah) on Capitol Hill this year. Francis Chung/POLITICO

EnDAILY

Groups express alarm about Mike Lee lands amendment

By ANDRES PICON | 12/19/2025 06:39 AM EST

The Senate may vote on an amendment to spending legislation that critics say could lead to public lands sales.



Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chair Mike Lee (R-Utah) has been a supporter of reducing the federal government's land holdings. Francis Chung/POLITICO

The Proposed Sell Off of Public Land

8 (b) REQUIREMENT.—Subject to valid existing rights
9 and the requirements of this section, as soon as prac-
10 ticable after the date of enactment of this Act—

11 (1) the Secretary shall select for disposal not
12 less than 0.50 percent and not more than 0.75 per-
13 cent of Bureau of Land Management land, and shall
14 dispose of all right, title, and interest of the United
15 States in and to those tracts selected for disposal
16 under this section; and

17 (2) the Secretary of Agriculture (acting through
18 the Chief of the Forest Service) shall select for dis-
19 posal not less than 0.50 percent and not more than
20 0.75 percent of National Forest System land, and
21 shall dispose of all right, title, and interest of the
22 United States in and to those tracts selected for dis-
23 posal under this section.

10 (i) DEADLINE.—Not later than 5 years after the date
11 of enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned shall
12 complete all conveyances of tracts of covered Federal land
13 required under this section.

14 (g) DISPOSITION OF PROCEEDS.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraphs (2)
16 and (3) and any provision of an applicable State en-
17 abling Act, any proceeds from the disposal of cov-
18 ered Federal land under this section shall be depos-
19 ited in the general fund of the Treasury.

The Proposed Sell Off of Public Land

- Would have mandated the sale of up to 3 million acres of federal public land – a nondiscretionary duty. Up to 258 million acres of land would be vulnerable.
- Strict timeline of 5 years from the passage of the bill.
- Funds would have been committed to U.S. Treasury to offset tax breaks for the wealthy with minor revenue sharing with states and localities.
- No guarantee that land would be used for affordable housing.
- Very limited public process and environmental review.

The Proposed Sell Off of Public Land

Opposition to public land sale proposal flooded politicians' inboxes

KUNC | By Rachel Cohen

Published July 16, 2025 at 6:00 AM MDT



GOVERNMENT

Daines and Sheehy 'Aligned' in Opposition to Public Lands Sale in Senate Budget Bill

Senate is expected to vote on President Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" on Friday

BY MARIAH THOMAS
JUNE 25, 2025

Newsletters

Outside

Adventure > Environment

What Was Learned From the Latest Fight Over Public Lands?

The attempt to sell millions of acres of Forest Service land united Republicans and Democrats. Advocates took valuable lessons from the battle.

Idaho Statesman

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STATE POLITICS

Idaho Sens. Risch and Crapo come out against sale of public lands

By Rose Evans

Updated June 23, 2025 3:02 PM | Gift Article

We have the
power to
protect public
lands





Your voice
is your
power



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Q&A