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## Idaho Department of Lands to consider acquisition of Fish and Game lands in Benewah County

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Oct. 18, 2016

(ST. MARIES) - The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) will consider acquiring ownership of 1,402 acres in Benewah County that are currently owned by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG).

The State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) today unanimously authorized IDL to hire an advisor to perform due diligence analysis and provide a recommendation on the acquisition of the parcels located six miles south of St. Maries.

The Fish and Game lands are adjacent to endowment lands IDL already manages under a constitutional mandate to maximize long-term financial returns to public schools and other State of Idaho institutions through uses such as sustainable timber harvests and replanting. Creating a larger contiguous block of endowment ownership increases their value to IDL.

The Fish and Game Commission identified the property as surplus to its needs, consistent with previous sales and exchanges of similar parcels in the same vicinity. While providing some wildlife habitat and public access, the St. Maries surplus property provides few unique or critical wildlife-related values requiring IDFG ownership and management.

"Keeping the lands in State ownership not only would generate more money for Idaho public schools through sustainable timber management, but also would allow for continued access for sportsmen and other recreationists," IDL Director Tom Schultz said.

"The Fish and Game Commission views the potential purchase as a win-win for Idaho citizens," IDFG Director Virgil Moore said. "The property would continue to provide wildlife habitat and public access under IDL ownership and management, and the Fish and Game Commission would use the funding derived from its sale to protect priority habitats and public access they have identified."

The Land Board approved the disposition of the property under the Surplus Property Act in September at the request of IDFG. The IDFG notified State of Idaho agencies to determine whether interest existed in purchasing the property, and IDL is the only agency to respond to date.

To purchase the property, IDL would use money in the "Land Bank," the fund where proceeds from the sale of other endowment lands such as cottage sites and commercial properties are deposited.

The memo to the Land Board from today's meeting - including maps of the lands to be disposed by IDFG - are available [here](#).

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NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:  
Emily Callihan, Public Information Officer  
208-334-0236 or [ecallihan@idl.idaho.gov](mailto:ecallihan@idl.idaho.gov)

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