



Owyhee Land Exchange

Background on the Owyhee Initiative

From information available on the Web site of U.S. Senator Mike Crapo

This was an entirely independent process from the Owyhee Land Exchange.

The Owyhee Initiative was started by the Owyhee County Commissioners in 2001 to address and resolve decades-old land management issues in Owyhee County.

On March 25, 2009, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation containing the Owyhee Initiative language, completing the cycle started when the U.S. Senate passed the same legislation a few days earlier on March 19, 2009. On March 30, 2009, President Obama signed the legislation into law.

The Owyhee Initiative designates 517,000 acres of public land as the Owyhee-Bruneau Wilderness, in six units, releases 199,000 acres of wilderness study areas to non-wilderness multiple use management, and designates 316 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Reasons for the Land Exchange Between the State of Idaho and Federal Landowners

As a result of the Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness designation, both the State of Idaho (IDL) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) now have lands that do not match their agency's purposes.

To reduce management risk to the Endowments by disposing of lands within sage grouse and bighorn sheep habitat and within the new wilderness area.

To secure legal access for State Endowment Trust land management blocks

To reduce management costs by reducing scattered ownership

Both IDL and BLM acquire lands better suited to their missions and objectives:

The Endowment Trust would acquire more productive, crested wheatgrass planted parcels

The BLM would acquire more native rangeland parcels

To consolidate endowment and federal ownerships



Photo of Owyhee County, Courtesy Idaho Tourism

IDL Contacts on the Land Exchange

Kurt Houston, South Operations Chief
Phone (208) 334-0252 | E-mail khouston@idl.idaho.gov

Dean Johnson, Lands Resource Supervisor
Phone (208) 334-3488 | E-mail djohnson@idl.idaho.gov

See reverse for additional information on the exchange

PRIMARY ISSUES

The BLM issues 10-year grazing permits for federal lands. The amount of time left on the grazing permit will be honored by the State of Idaho when those lands are transferred from federal to state ownership. Leases would become subject to a potential competitive process **only** at the end of the honored grazing permit time frame **and if** others are interested in leasing the same tract.

How will IDL address the concerns of permittees, who are worried about the potential economic impact losing a state lease or federal permit could have on their overall ranching operation?

In order to address this concern, the IDL is pursuing the possibility of conducting a “phased-in exchange” that would consider transfer of federal lands to the state over time to coincide with BLM permit renewal.

Why are lands not within the wilderness areas being identified for exchange?

IDL included parcels outside the wilderness areas that were within core sage grouse habitat, which endangers future management of these lands for the endowments to secure the long-term financial return.

How will Sage Grouse habitat designations affect access to IDL allotments?

IDL does not have management control of many scattered endowment parcels within BLM ownership. If the BLM implements management constraints on these allotments such as no spring grazing, the endowment lands would be subject to the same restrictions since trailing may not be allowed across the BLM ownership.

QUICK FACTS

- ⇒ Final exchange package will be based on equal value not equal acres.
- ⇒ IDL could see advantage of a future land exchange to divest of scattered endowment lands within Owyhee County for lands outside of Owyhee County.

The list of exchange acres:

IDL – 28,279
BLM – 34,181

Approximate Number of Grazing Instruments Affected:

IDL – 22
BLM – 20

2014 BLM AUM rate is \$1.35	2014 IDL AUM rate is \$6.89
2015 BLM AUM rate is \$1.69	2015 IDL AUM rate is \$6.77
2016 BLM AUM rate is tbd	2016 IDL AUM rate is \$8.09

- ⇒ The IDL conducted a meeting in 2008 to discuss the exchange with lessees. Some concerns were expressed, primarily based on the lease provisions they would have under the change in ownership.
- ⇒ It was confirmed in June 2012 that IDL would honor the remaining term of any acquired grazing permits from the BLM but would charge the IDL AUM rate for remaining years.

TIMELINE

October 2001

Owyhee Initiative Work Group formed with the goal to “develop and implement a landscape-scale program in Owyhee County that preserves the natural processes that create and maintain a functioning, unfragmented landscape supporting and sustaining a flourishing community of human, plant and animal life, that provides for economic stability by preserving livestock grazing as an economically viable use, and that provides for protection of cultural resources.”

August 2006

Idaho State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) pass resolution in support of “the prompt passage of the Owyhee Initiative Implementation Act of 2006.”

July 2008

IDL and BLM begin preliminary discussions on the merits of a land exchange due to the likely success of the Owyhee Initiative and a newly designated Wilderness Area

July-September 2008

Proposed lists of exchange parcels developed and discussed

October 3, 2008

First draft of Feasibility Study completed for review and discussion

November 2008

BLM State Office finishes review and provides comments and questions back to District Office

November 2008

IDL holds open house for affected lessees in Bruneau. A second meeting in Marsing is cancelled due to lack of attendance. IDL makes phone contact with as many IDL lessees affected by the proposed exchange as possible.

December 2008

Land Board enables IDL to enter into an Agreement to Initiate with the BLM for the land exchange

December 2008

IDL and BLM representatives sign the Agreement to Initiate

April 2009

Feasibility Analysis with Washington Office of the BLM comments returned to local BLM office

July 2009

Land Board approves IDL grazing rules

July 20, 2009

IDL and BLM meet to finalize answers to BLM Washington Office comments

Summer 2010

All questions about the exchange resolved

2011-2012

Minerals field work and report being completed by BLM

April 2012

Agreement reached. The IDL share of the cost of the exchange not to exceed \$150,000

July 17, 2012

Owyhee Initiative Task Force requested both IDL and BLM to attend a meeting with Owyhee County Commissioners and ranchers that would be affected by the exchange in response to publishing the Notice of Exchange Proposal by the BLM

July 28, 2012

Owyhee Cattlemen’s Association meeting in Silver City attended by IDL staff, with the BLM as the lead on the agenda

September 29, 2014

IDL staff provided update on the exchange process to Owyhee County Commissioners at a public meeting

