

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:
December 12, 2000

Working Group Recommends Innovative Approaches to Break Gridlock on Federal Lands in Idaho

**Land Board Briefed on Five Pilot Projects to Move from
Confrontation to Cooperation**

(Boise) – A four year effort to create an experimental, innovative, and cooperative land management approach to some public land in Idaho has resulted in a recommendation that the state’s Land Board push to establish five “pilot” projects. The projects hold promise for breaking years of legal and regulatory gridlock that have paralyzed resource decision-making.

Implementation of the pilot projects will require adoption of federal legislation and will in no way affect ownership of federal land in Idaho.

A Federal Lands Task Force Working Group that has been developing the specific proposals for the last year presented the recommendations today to the Idaho Land Board. The Land Board originally appointed its Federal Lands Task Force in 1996 and asked for an examination of federal land management issues in Idaho and an analysis of alternative management approaches.

“For too long gridlock has been the word that best describes environmental management in Idaho,” said Working Group chairman Bill Myers, a Boise attorney. “The conflict has been bad for both real property and real people. It has lead to job losses, community destabilization, increased wildland fire, worsening water quality and declines in wildlife populations. We need to try something new and better.”

Myers said the Working Group recommendations are based on several core principles, including:

- **Extensive local public involvement**
- **A balanced, workable, ecosystem-based approach to environmental management that follows every environmental statute**
- **And genuine partnership with federal agencies like the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management**
- **And, no state, local or private ownership takeover of federal lands**

The Working Group recommends five projects encompassing just under 11 million acres of federal land in Idaho, most of which is managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The projects are:

- **Central Idaho Ecosystem Trust: This project includes all of the Boise National Forest and parts of the Payette, Sawtooth and Salmon-Challis Forests. Using a “trust law” management framework, the goal of this project is to restore vegetation to desired ecological conditions, while meeting social needs.**
- **Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaboration: Covers parts of the Clearwater and Nez Perce Forests and has as its goal using a “collaborative group” of stakeholders to accomplish the restoration of elk habitat and other indicator species consistent with social objectives and historical conditions.**
- **Priest Lake Basin Cooperative: Includes all of the Priest Lake District of the Panhandle National Forest and has as its goal, under a memorandum of agreement involving the Forest Service and the Idaho Departments of Lands and Park and Recreation, to restore and enhance ecological conditions and improve resource management for wildlife, recreation and balanced economic uses.**
- **St. Joe Ecosystem Stewardship Project: Involves the St. Joe District of the Panhandle National Forest and proposes to use the “stewardship” contract approach to restore and enhance ecological conditions. The projects would be similar to those authorized by Congress in 1999.**
- **Twin Falls/Cassia Resource Enhancement Trust: Forest Service lands in the Sawtooth National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands in the Burley and Twin Falls management areas would be involved in a “trust management” approach aimed at sustainable economic activity and enhanced ecological conditions.**

The Working Group has also recommended to the Idaho Land Board a 30-day public comment period on its recommendations. The entire report – Federal Land Pilot Projects in Idaho – will be available at the Idaho Department of Lands website – www2.state.id.us/lands.

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