

**Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs
2015 Summer Annual Resolutions
Sunday, August 30, 2015
Manucha Conference Center
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
Trails Club of Oregon
Corbett, OR**



Resolution 1: Revised Version of Resolution on Privatization

Resolution 2: Supporting the Antiquities Act

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Resolution 1: Revised Version of Resolution on Privatization

Submitted by Michael McCloskey

Background:

1. Powerful forces have been trying to force outright disposal of public lands in the U.S. for a number of decades now. The Reagan administration sought to dispose of 35 million acres of federal lands. And in 2006, the Bush Administration sought to dispose of 300,000 acres in 41 national forests. And ultra-conservative groups are calling for selling millions of acres of supposedly “unnecessary federal land.” Utah’s governor claims that “privatization” is the way to “reduce the deficit.” They charge that taxes are too high because government is too big, and that it needs to be shrunk, especially its estate in public lands.
2. All over America these forces are trying to take over municipal water supply and sewer systems. When private firms take over systems, typically rates go up sharply, and often water quality declines. The efforts to privatize government functions is touching more and more of America.
3. But often parks and public lands are being attacked in much more subtle ways. Using marketization notions from extreme free-market theory, they attack parks and public land agencies as inefficient, unproductive, unresponsive, and lacking in innovation. They assert that governing laws and regulations hinder flexibility.
4. Instead, their friends in legislative bodies first repeatedly cut funding for these agencies, and then as their managers become desperate to find ways to carry on, they push a series of steps to become more “business-like.”
5. They begin with urging the agencies to embrace the vocabulary of business firms. Citizen-users are viewed as “customers.” Agencies are told to “adopt business plans” and to do “marketing.”
6. Then as the noose tightens, they are told they must shed the loads of their services, levy fees for services, lay off their staffs and contract with private firms to do their work, and ultimately even lease or shift their land base to outside firms. Often, “friends” groups are formed to undertake these tasks.
7. Not enough managers understand where these steps are leading them: which is to the destruction of their programs. Over time, small steps add up to big changes.

8. But as marketization takes over, the intrinsic values of parks and public lands are lost:
 - markets do not take care of values such as bio-diversity and other widely-shared values;
 - their management no longer pursues aims with longer time horizons and with more of a scientific basis;
 - people of all income levels are not able to use them;
 - the public is cut-off from getting information about the way they work;
 - and the public is not able to play a role in charting their course.

9. Completely different models for managing parks and public lands are urged: outsourcing operations, managing them like utilities, and turning them over to non-governmental entities. These all sap the social importance of parks and public lands and make them vulnerable to the fluctuations of the market. They ignore the value of the outdoor experience in contributing to our health and national identity.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs opposes overt and subtle efforts to privatize parks and public lands, undermining the role they play in realizing our aims of safeguarding natural values.

Parks and public operations should be supported primarily through taxes and appropriate use of bonds.

The more subtle steps should be carefully examined for their long-term implications. They may lead to steps that can fatally undermine public lands and parks.

Resolution 2: Supporting the Antiquities Act

Submitted by: Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Background:

The Antiquities Act was introduced in the House of Representatives on January 9, 1906 by Rep. John F. Lacey (Republican from Iowa), passed by Congress, and signed into law on June 8, 1906 by President Theodore Roosevelt. The Act gives the President of the United States authority to create national monuments from public lands to protect significant natural, cultural, or scientific features.

It has been used over 130 times by sixteen Presidents of both political parties. Many of the monuments that have designated, such as the Grand Canyon and Death Valley, have been enlarged and become National Parks through Congressional action.

Two amendments have been added to the Antiquities Act. The first, passed in 1950, states that any new national monument established in Wyoming, must have Congressional approval. The second, in 1980, states that any national monument in Alaska over 5000 acres, must have Congressional approval. The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the Antiquities Act several times.

There is now a political effort in Congress to do away with the Antiquities Act, led by lobbyists for coal and oil interests who claim that President Obama is using the Act to thwart economic development. He has at times declared 18 new National Monuments, including the new 700,000 acre Basin and Range National Monument in Nevada, which contains cultural values dating back 4000 years and outstanding scenic values. Conservationists and recreational interests in Nevada and in the West have enthusiastically applauded this designation.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs continues¹ to strongly support the Antiquities Act and opposes any attempt to weaken or destroy this important law that has been used to preserve so much of our country's extraordinary scenic and cultural resources.

¹ see Res. 9, 2001 on the same subject.

Resolution 3: A Call to Action to Minimize Climate Change Impacts

Submitted by: Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Background:

“Warming of the climate systems is unequivocal, and since the 1950s many of the observed changes are unprecedented from decades to millennia...” (5th International Panel on Climate Change report, 2013).

Temperatures are warmer, snowpack is decreasing, springtime arrives soon, and the growing season is longer. Drought is ubiquitous throughout the West.

Climate change affects all life on Earth and puts at risk many of the values for which wilderness areas are designated. At the same time, unbroken habitat and wildlife corridors provided by wilderness give plant and animal species a fighting chance to adapt to changing conditions. Wild lands also sequester carbon in high biomass forests, grasslands, oceans, and other ecosystems.

Benefits provided by wilderness, such as water supply, flood mitigation, and biodiversity conservation will become increasingly essential in the future.

1. Keeping fossil fuels in the ground is our only chance to keep global temperatures and the Earth’s vital signs from reaching a tipping point. Fossil fuel corporations must not be allowed to shift costs of climate disruption to society while reaping profits from public lands.
2. Commercial timber harvests and development should take place on public forests only when an analysis demonstrates that carbon benefits exceed carbon costs over a two to four decade period. National Forest planning rules should require conservation of forested areas with a higher than average carbon biomass.
3. Public land management plans must consider and minimize the climate impacts of livestock grazing, roads and vehicular routes, recreation, and other activities. Wild public lands should be prioritized for maximizing carbon storage, biodiversity, and ecological function.
4. Natural water cycles on public lands must be rigorously protected to maintain quality, quantity, and ecosystem function. The federal government must protect and maintain water resources in trust for all citizens and for the benefit of ecosystem health and stability.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs supports a bipartisan call to action to minimize climate change impacts, in particular by reducing fossil fuel extraction and transportation on public lands and prioritizing management of public lands to maximize carbon storage, biodiversity, and ecosystem function.

We encourage public land management agencies to develop and implement plans to minimize the climate change impacts of land-use activities, such as logging, livestock grazing, roads and vehicular routes and recreation.

The Federation also encourages a reduction in fossil fuel consumption, and the development of renewable energy systems—provided they do not adversely affect ecosystem function.

Resolution 4: The Kalmiopsis Rivers - Preventing Industrial Nickel Mining in the Headwaters of Southwest Oregon's Wild Rivers

Submitted by: Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center

Background:

World-class wild rivers in southwest Oregon and northwest California are in great need of protection: the Smith, Illinois, and Pistol Rivers.

Three proposals for nickel strip mines are proposed on public lands in these river basins. This region features the densest network of wild rivers in the continental United States, and includes the headwaters of the Smith River (which is the only major undammed river flowing through California).

Legislation to protect these public lands and rivers has been introduced in Congress, which is entitled: "The Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act." Until this legislation can pass, the Obama administration should be asked to protect this area in southwest Oregon (the deadline on making this request is September 28).

This area encompasses public lands and pristine watersheds of nationally outstanding waters, including the North Fork of the Smith River (a national Wild and Scenic River), Rough and Ready Creek, and Baldface Creek—all of which are tributaries to National Wild and Scenic Rivers. These rivers are home to the greatest botanical diversity in Oregon, and provide opportunities for outstanding recreational activities. Local residents and tourists, alike, enjoy these wild rivers through rafting and kayaking, fishing, botanizing, birding, hiking, and photography.

Nickel strip mining would devastate this region. These rivers are home to healthy salmon runs and provide communities with clean water, while sustaining local recreation economies. When these sites for nickel mines turn into toxic waste sites, the American taxpayer will be responsible for cleaning up pollution for years to come.

Now is the time to prevent strip mining for nickel on an industrial scale in the Kalmiopsis and Wild Rivers coast region of southwest Oregon.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs supports protection for the south Kalmiopsis and Wild Rivers coast region from nickel strip mining on industrial scale. It also calls for legislation that

would withdraw the area from mining as proposed under the Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act.

Resolution 5: Golf Course Reconfiguration Project on the Upper Truckee River

Submitted by the California Alpine Club and the California State Park Rangers Association

Background:

1. Since the 1920s, land that, later became the Washoe Meadows State Park and Lake Tahoe Valley State Recreation Area, has undergone logging, gravel mining, river channeling, and golf-course development.

Channelization of the river eliminated a portion of its natural meander and lowered the water table. The lowered water table led to loss of meadows. Without the natural filtering action of extensive meadows, an increased sediment-load now empties into Lake Tahoe. Increased sedimentation has decreased the clarity of Lake Tahoe.

2. A study was completed that explored different alternatives for restoring a 1.5 mile reach of the Upper Truckee River near Myers, California. The property is now owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. The U.S. Bureau Reclamation, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, and the California State Parks have done environmental reviews and analyzed alternatives for a restoration project along this stretch of river.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs supports the restoration alternative known as “modified Alternative 2.” This alternative relocates golf-course holes now on the Upper Truckee River stream-banks. The links will be moved to higher elevation land previously logged and later mined for gravel before State Parks acquired the property in the 1980s.

This alternative also removes all five narrow-span bridges whose footprints constrict and intensify river flow. A single bridge that spans the entire flood plain will replace the five. The natural river meander will be restored, thus protecting the restored riparian area.

A public access trail to Washoe Meadows State Park will be constructed from a new Highway 50 trailhead, with ties into other public trails outside the parks.

Resolution 6: Making Lands Eligible for Wilderness Designation in National Parks and Forests Off Limits to Bike Trails and Bike Use

Submitted by: Wilderness Watch, and Kern-Kaweah chapter of the Sierra Club²

Background:

Mountain bikers are pushing to open more public lands, especially national parks, to mountain biking. At one time during the Bush administration, their association, IMBA, concluded an arrangement with the National Park Service to open more of their lands to such use. It is not clear whether that agreement has been renewed. And it is not clear whether that agreement would open areas recommended for wilderness designation to such use.

More than 5.5 million acres in national parks have been recommended for wilderness designation, and are awaiting Congressional action. Under the Wilderness Act, forms of mechanical transport are prohibited, as well as motor vehicles.

Administering agencies are supposed to maintain the wilderness qualities of areas recommended for designation until Congress acts. At various times, the guidelines of the National Park Service have specified that areas recommended for wilderness designation are not open to bicycle use. But it is not clear whether such guidance is still in force.

The same questions arise with respect to the national forests. Some national forests have been explicit about disallowing bikes in recommended areas, but others have not been.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs urges that all lands in the national parks and national forests that are proposed, recommended, or eligible for wilderness designation be off limits to bike trails or bike use.

No agreement should ever have been made with IMBA, and the Federation urges the National Park Service to end it so that the integrity of eligible areas is maintained against mechanical and vehicular use.

² Resolution combines various versions, submitted on behalf of the Resolutions Committee, Michael McCloskey, Aug. 8, 2015

Resolution 7: Opposition to a Measure Which Would Increase Logging in National Forests and Curtail Environmental Laws

Submitted by: Michael McCloskey for the Resolutions Committee

Background:

In 2015, Senator John Barrasso of Wyoming introduced a bill (S. 1691) which would harm our national forests, rather than help them. It would increase levels of logging by establishing levels of minimum acreages of mechanical treatments (five times more than now).

It would also undermine various environmental laws:

- analyses of alternatives in EISs under NEPA would be limited to the proposed action and “no action,” and not other reasonable alternatives;
- establish new categorical exclusions of EISs, permitting the Forest Service to avoid consulting with the Fish and Wildlife Service—thereby weakening the Endangered Species Act;
- reduce opportunities for judicial review of logging proposals, establishing in their place a constrained process of binding arbitration; and
- require those who do bring lawsuits to post a bond of intimidating size.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs opposes S. 1691 which would increase the amount of logging in national forests, curtail the application of important environmental laws, and limit judicial review.

Resolution 8: Ending Federal Leasing of Rights to Develop Fossil Fuels

Submitted by: Resolutions Committee, Aug. 2015

Background:

As part of its efforts to combat climate change, the Federation has been urging a transition away from the combustion of fossil fuels toward renewables and greater efficiency. But the Obama administration has continued to pursue an aggressive program of leasing rights to mine coal and explore for oil on federal lands and waters. And despite oil spills of record size offshore in deep waters and in areas with ever higher risks, such as in the Arctic Ocean, it is continuing to encourage drilling.

The administration has authority under the Mineral Leasing Act and other parts of the code to end such leasing. The growing size of the climate change problem should cause the federal government to reduce actions which encourage continued combustion of fossil fuels, which are a principal source of greenhouse gasses. As many as 450 billion tons of potential greenhouse gasses could be avoided by ending this leasing program.

Leaders in the campaign to deal with climate change are pursuing this objective. The Federation should join them.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs urges an end to leasing rights to mine and drill for fossil fuels on federal lands and waters.

Resolution 9: Protecting the Owyhee Canyonlands in Oregon, as well as Idaho

Submitted by: The Mazamas

Background:

The Federation has a history of calling for protection of the Owyhee Canyonlands. In 1995 (Res. #5), it opposed establishing an additional bombing range in the Canyonlands in Idaho. It sought complete protection of the area.

In 1998 (Res. 10), it called upon President Clinton to declare the Owyhee Canyonlands a National Monument.

In 2009, it called for the designation of 517,000 acres of public lands in Owyhee County in southwestern Idaho as wilderness and protection of 325 miles of waterways in the area as wild and scenic rivers.

The wilderness that was designated stops at the Idaho/Oregon border.

A map of the region shows wilderness study areas in Oregon, as well as proposed ones. The Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) has worked diligently to achieve protection for the Owyhee Canyonlands in Oregon. Its southern portion affords some of the most important sage grouse habitat in the state. While there is some motorized access to the river, the majority of the canyons are steep enough to prevent it.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs supports campaigns to permanently protect the Owyhee Canyonlands in Oregon as well as in Idaho, along with designation of the Owyhee River as a wild and scenic river.

Resolution 10: Environmental Protection of the Borderlands

Submitted by: Shirley Cameron (modified by the Resolutions Committee)

Background:

1. The land on the border between Mexico and the U.S. is remarkably abundant in wildlife and plants. Animals like the Jaguar have roamed freely there, as did people, particularly native people like the Tohono O' Odham Nation. All that has changed since the U.S. government has built a very imposing wall on the border. Twenty years of border militarization has threatened the fragile desert environment.
2. The Bush administration waived 37 federal laws affording protection to the desert environment, and recently Sen. John McCain and Senator Flake of Arizona have sponsored a bill (S. 750) to exempt the Border Patrol from having to comply with these laws in a zone within 100 miles of the border. The Border Patrol actually opposed this bill, and it did not pass the Senate. However, Senator McCain has now incorporated it into an amendment (#1633) he filed to the National Defense Authorization Act. This Defense measure has passed the House, and it will soon move to a conference committee, which will be chaired by Sen. McCain.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs opposes attempts to negate or limit the application of environmental laws in the border regions of our country.

Resolution 11: Opposing the Transfer of Federal Public Lands³

Submitted by: Raelene Gold

Background:

In 2012, the Utah legislature passed H.B. 148 (the Transfer of Public Lands Act and Related Study), in an effort to develop a new model for public-land management and use. The bill provides a framework for accepting transfer of federal-public lands into state ownership. The bill excludes national parks, designated wilderness, tribal lands, and lands of the Department of Defense. The study examines the economic feasibility of the proposed transfer of these lands.

The bill had its origin in the American Legislative Exchange and has been promoted by it. Since then, the legislatures of a number of Western states have passed similar bills, or such legislating is pending in them.

These bill are advertised as a means for states to increase revenues from natural resources to benefit the school funds of the states or poor counties. However, questions have been raised about whether states, which are struggling economically, might not sell-off these lands to private interests. In state hands, these lands would also lose protection provided by the environmental provisions of some federal laws that would no longer apply to these lands. The transferred lands might also provide less public access.

Resolution Proposed and Adopted:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs opposes these proposed transfers of federal public lands to the states.

³ This resolution was not available in advance to be edited by the Resolutions Committee; it was edited after the conference.