

Western Lands Update

Western Lands Project
Seattle, Washington

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Research, Outreach, and Advocacy to Keep Public Lands Public

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A public icon faces a privatization threat

Subscribers to our e-news alerts will have recently seen an edition describing a proposal to partially privatize the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, or Gateway Arch, in St. Louis (“Your Voice is Needed to Protect a Public Icon,” link provided at end of this article). The Danforth Foundation, whose trustees include retired Senator Jack Danforth, has been formulating plans to revitalize the riverfront in St. Louis and has targeted the Memorial as an obstacle. The Memorial, completed in 1965, marks the old St. Louis town site, from which many pioneers (including Lewis & Clark) headed west. The site acquired National Historic Landmark status in 1987.

The Memorial’s dominant feature is the 630-foot-high, stainless steel Gateway Arch, designed by Eero Saarinen. Saarinen and landscape architect Dan Kiley eliminated several structures originally planned in order that the Arch would rise from an “urban forest.” In line with the vision of its creators, the Museum of Westward Expansion was built underground, beneath the Arch. Disregarding this original design, Danforth believes the site should be developed to accommodate an above-ground museum, as well as possible restaurants or other “amenities.” The Foundation has gotten a bill introduced in the House that would give its hand-picked group of trustees jurisdiction over the management of “one or more parcels” —i.e., some or all—of the Memorial grounds. To make way for development, the legislation also downgrades the landmark status of the grounds.

The Danforth Foundation recently announced that losses in the stock market may cause it to withdraw the \$50 million it had pledged toward development of the site, but a few influential St. Louis booster

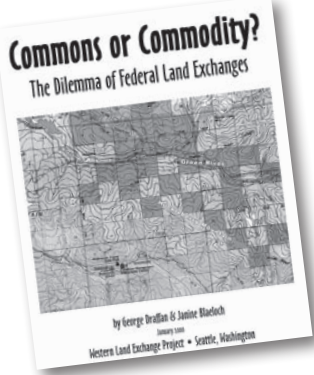
types still favor the legislation and revitalization scheme. Western Lands has joined the National Parks Conservation Association and the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees in opposing privatization of the site.

Meanwhile, the Park Service is updating its General Management Plan for the site to attempt to improve the connection between downtown St. Louis and the Memorial—something that is needed, at minimum, for pedestrian safety. To ensure that the integrity of the Memorial is maintained in these plans, the Park Service needs to hear from people outside of St. Louis that this is our public land, too, and that we do not want to see the site privatized, commercialized, or intensively developed. Even a brief comment can help! Submit comments here: <http://tinyurl.com/5mqsmg>. You can review our recent alert, which has informative and useful links, at <http://tinyurl.com/5ugbn2>

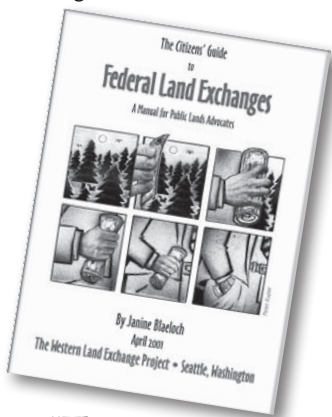
Gateway Arch, St. Louis *Credit: Western Lands Project*



We now offer our two publications for free in downloadable PDF files. Contact us at info@westernlands.org to request one or both.



“Commons or Commodity? The Dilemma of Federal Land Exchanges”
by George Draffan & Janine Blaeloch



“The Citizens' Guide to Federal Land Exchanges: A Manual for Public Lands Advocates”
by Janine Blaeloch

Recent projects

We review, comment on, and challenge land sales and exchanges across public lands throughout the West. We are currently monitoring over 90 projects—ranging from a proposal by the U.S. Marines to take over 72,000 acres of public land for military training, to a Forest Service proposal to sell 0.9 acres. Other projects currently being monitored include:

Arvada Land Sale, Utah: This project would sell 118 acres of public land and would relocate threatened desert tortoises to a Bureau of Land Management Area of Critical Environmental Concern. We are challenging the planned continuation of grazing in the ACEC after tortoises are placed there.

Coy Flat Land Exchange, California: A summer home association in the Giant Sequoia National Monument proposes to trade 97 acres in three parcels to the Forest Service in exchange for 65 acres.

Campbell Land Exchange, Oregon: A Portland veterinarian, Dr. Scott Campbell, has purchased a 1,000-acre private inholding on Steens Mountain in southeast Oregon with the intention of trading it to the BLM for some 11,000 acres in the Silvies Valley, north of Burns. Western Lands obtained the project file under the Freedom of Information Act, and documents show that the public land Campbell covets comprises critical wildlife habitat—including wetland and riparian areas that were consolidated in public ownership through past land trades. The proposal is so bad that the BLM refuses to advance it. Campbell is seeking a congressional sponsor for his exchange.

Santa Teresa Land Exchange, New Mexico: This project would trade approximately 7300 acres of BLM-managed land for more than 12,800 acres of New Mexico State Trust lands. BLM is seeking this exchange to acquire lesser prairie-chicken and sand dune lizard habitat in southern New Mexico, while the New Mexico State Land Office intends to sell the lands it would

acquire – much of it near the outskirts of communities. We are analyzing the environmental assessment prepared for this proposed trade.

Grizzly Land Exchange, South Dakota: Approximately 450 acres of Black Hills National Forest land would be exchanged for 227 acres owned by Homestake Mining Company. Homestake claims the land it would acquire would be used as a buffer for mining reclamation work.

Land Deal Scandals— not Greek to us!

It turns out America doesn't have a monopoly on shady land deals after all. This fall, a scandal erupted in Greece involving over 260 suspicious land deals conducted since 1999. With all the elements of a made-for-TV drama— high stakes, a wealthy and secretive monastery, and corrupt public officials— this land deal scandal makes those of the U.S. downright boring.

At the center of this controversy is the Abbot of the Vatopedi monastery, a 1,000 year old, all-male monastery associated with the Greek Orthodox Church. The Abbot is accused of swindling the Greek people out of an estimated \$136 million by trading cheap waterfront property owned by the monastery in exchange for valuable public lands. Allegedly, he had the help of complicit government officials.

Although the latest land deals were canceled once suspicions were raised, the investigation is ongoing. So far, the government has admitted that these deals were not in the public interest, and two national ministers have resigned amidst the scandal.

To read more about this Greek scandal, check out the *New York Times* article: <http://tinyurl.com/5jtatr>

Alaska community wants to keep forest in public hands

A few weeks ago we received a call from Paul Haag, a schoolteacher—actually, THE schoolteacher, principal, and school janitor—in Edna Bay, Alaska. Edna Bay is a community of about 30 families, and one of only two towns on Kosciusko Island in southeast Alaska.

Paul was calling on behalf of the community to get some advice on how to deal with a piece of legislation, S. 3651, that could significantly impact their daily life. The Sealaska Corporation, one of the native corporations created under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), has a bill in Congress that would allow the corporation to take over about 30,000 acres of the Tongass National Forest on the island. ANCSA was passed in 1971 with the purpose of resolving aboriginal land claims in Alaska. The Edna Bay community does not dispute the legitimacy of Sealaska's rights under ANCSA or its wish to final-

ize its status—but the lands on Kosciusko Island are not within the selection area approved under ANCSA (hence the special legislation). The community is extremely isolated and dependent upon subsistence uses of the Tongass National Forest, so loss of access to the forest could be devastating. The configuration of Sealaska's claim would block almost all access by Edna Bay residents to the remaining public lands on the island.

Native claims are not within our usual issue area, but we did try to shorten the community's learning curve for getting its concerns to Congress by way of the appropriate committees and potentially helpful Members.

You can see a beautiful photo of Edna Bay on the town's homepage at <http://edna-bayalaska.net/>. There is also a map that shows the huge footprint of Sealaska's proposed claim on Kosciusko Island.

The preponderance of land trades and sales occurs in the western states & Alaska, where vast public holdings remain.

Federal land in the West & Alaska

State	% Government Owned
Alaska	66.7%
Arizona	50.2%
California	46.9%
Colorado	34.9%
Idaho	66.4%
Montana	31.3%
Nevada	91.9%
New Mexico	34.1%
Oregon	49.7%
Utah	66.5%
Washington	31.0%
Wyoming	50.6%

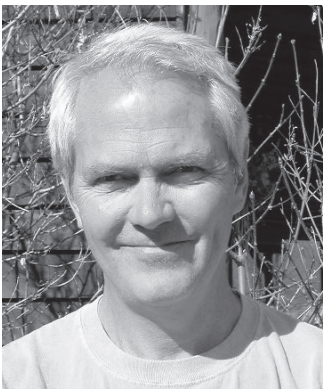
Source: Federal Real Property Profile 2003, GSA



The beach outside Edna Bay's school. Credit: Paul Haag

Our Board is Growing . . . Welcome, Steve & David!

In addition to new staff, we also have two new Board members. Please join us in welcoming **Steve Gilbert** and **David Gladstone** to the Western Lands Project Board of Directors. As truly dedicated conservationists, it is clear that both Steve and David will serve Western Lands well. We have known David since the late 1990s, when we launched the Project around the Huckleberry Land Exchange. We have been working with Steve against dubious public land projects in Montana.



Credit: Steve Gilbert

Steve Gilbert joined our board in October. As a longtime Montana resident, Steve's expertise is firmly rooted in the ecology and wildlife of the American West. As a biological consultant and the co-owner of an environmental consulting company, Steve has taken part in wildlife studies that range from Yellowstone to Baffin Island. He has served on the boards of Northern Plains Resource Council and the Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC), where he was honored to be named the MEIC Community Activist of the Year in 2003. Steve has worked and/or played in all 56 Montana counties and every mountain range, wilderness area and national park in the state. He is the state non-motorized trails specialist for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, where he helps administer the federally-funded Recreational Trails.

Since April, we have been honored to have **David Gladstone** on our Board of Directors. With a J.D. from the University of Puget Sound, David ran a small actuarial pension consulting firm in Seattle for 22 years before retiring. Currently living in Snohomish, Washington, David now dedicates his time to supporting conservation efforts around the Northwest. With his wife, Melinda, David manages a small private foundation dedicated to the purchase, rehabilitation, and preservation of land in Washington State. Since its inception, the foundation has planted more than 25,000 trees on these properties. David also serves on the Board of Pilchuck Audubon Society.

We would also like to send a big, heartfelt "thank you" to former Board President, **Rebecca Rundquist** for all of her hard work over the years. Although no longer President, Rebecca will continue to be a part of the Western Lands Project Board. In October, the torch was passed to **Erica Rosenberg**, longtime Board member and friend of the Project. Welcome to your new position, President Erica! **Marianne Dugan** continues as our diligent Treasurer-Secretary and **Sandy Lonsdale** remains a devoted Board member. We appreciate all of the time and effort put forth by the Board.



There are many reasons to give this season. With holidays just around the corner, an honorific gift to Western Lands in the name of a loved one is the perfect way to celebrate. The recipient will receive a hand-made notice of your gift, as well as the knowledge that a good cause was supported. Contact Emily for more information at 206.325.3503.

Change is in the air . . . Meet Emily Crandall, Development Manager

This summer, Western Lands bid farewell to Sharon Angle, who has since taken a Development position with a nonprofit arts organization. We thank her for her hard work and wish her well in the future.

In August 2008, I was thrilled to join the Western Lands team as the new Development Manager. Like most other Seattle residents, I am a Midwest transplant. In 2004, I moved to Seattle from northern Michigan. Although I love the upper Great Lakes, the mountain ranges and open spaces pulled me West. In addition to being a hiker, skier and beach comber, I am also an avid xenophile. After spending six months backpacking in Central and South America with my husband just prior to joining Western Lands, I am enjoying being back stateside and plan to travel by armchair for awhile. There's just no place in the world like the Pacific Northwest!

I came to Western Lands with prior experience in nonprofit administration after having worked in organizations large and small. In 2007, I received an M.A. in Policy Studies from the University of Washington-Bothell where I studied environmental policy. Although my graduate research focused on climate change and international development, I find it interesting that the problems threatening global environmental policy agreements are the very same that have taken U.S. environmental policy so far off track: among them, the clout of corporate interests, compromised conservation principles, and a disregard for science.

Fundraising full-time is an exciting new challenge for me. So far, I have been very encouraged by the loyalty of the Western Lands members, who in spite of the economic downturn, continue to include us in their giving priorities. Year after year, our donors come through for our mission. As I settle into my new position, I have come to realize why Western Lands' donors are so steadfast in their support. It's because our work connects to your personal values

and passions. Whether you were drawn to us as a hiker, hunter, historian, conservationist, whistleblower, land owner, wildlife advocate, taxpayer, or grassroots activist, Western Lands works to keep your public lands public.

Our work truly reflects the variety of America's vast public lands and the diversity of those who love them. We defend the fragile ecosystems that don't exist anywhere else. We guard the public interest by scrutinizing the use of federal land owned by American taxpayers. We protect habitat for endangered species of plants and wildlife that thrive on our public lands. We safeguard the historical significance of our shared national heritage. We facilitate democracy by helping citizens get involved and make their voices heard. We fight the corruption of special interests and shady politics. No matter what element of our work speaks directly to your interests, we are honored and gratified to have your support. You allow us to keep fighting the good fight!

Thank you to all of the Western Lands members and donors who clearly recognize the value of protecting America's public land legacy. If you haven't already done so, please consider giving a tax-deductible donation to Western Lands this year. When you do, please quickly tell us why. What part of our work do you most connect with? Send your thoughts to me at crandall@westernlands.org.

Thanks again & best wishes for 2009!

Emily



Credit: Drew Crandall

Big forest land exchange proposed in Northern Idaho

The Forest Service has proposed to trade land with Tim Blixseth's Western Pacific Timber, LLC, in north central Idaho.

Western Pacific Timber is offering more than 39,000 acres of checkerboard land it acquired from Plum Creek Timber Co. near Lolo Pass in the upper Lochsa River drainage. In exchange, the timber company is seeking more than 28,000 acres of land located on the Clearwater, Nez Perce, and Idaho Panhandle National Forests.

Public ownership of the Lochsa headwaters parcels would provide clear benefit. Elimination of the checkerboard ownership pattern would allow for better management, which should in turn improve spawning habitat for endangered salmon and steelhead (the Lochsa eventually flows into the Snake River).

On the other hand, the impacts of relinquishing the public parcels are also plain. Although many are scattered and relatively small, three parcels are contiguous tracts of 3,000 to 7,000 acres. Two are contiguous to other National Forest lands on three sides, so the trade would essentially enlarge or create private inholdings. This is at odds with the Forest Service's oft-stated motivation for land exchanges: to improve federal land ownership patterns. And there is little doubt that Western Pacific Timber intends to intensively log these lands once they're acquired.

The large discrepancy in total acreages (almost 40 percent more private land) highlights a problem that is typical of large

forestland trades: the market value of the land is largely based on timber values, indicating that a substantial portion of the Western Pacific land has been logged relatively recently. In essence, we are being asked to trade land that provides good habitat today for land that may provide important habitat in the future.

Blixseth has been involved in numerous land deals and is currently embroiled in a dispute over ownership of the Yellowstone Club, an exclusive luxury development he built on land acquired in the Gallatin Land Exchange in 1998.

The Forest Service will consider at least four alternatives in the environmental impact statement for this proposal: the proposed action; no action; a purchase alternative in which the Forest Service would buy the Western Pacific Timber lands rather than acquire them by exchange; and an alternative that places deed restrictions on some or all of the federal lands being traded in order to comply with federal laws or meet Forest Plan management goals. The last two alternatives are more environmentally-friendly options that Western Lands Project has long advocated.

Western Lands is working closely with Friends of the Clearwater on review of the project. More information about this proposal, as well as a link for submitting scoping comments, can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/5erqno>.

The comment deadline is January 5, 2009.

About 4 to 6 times a year, Western Lands sends out e-news alerts on issues or developments of interest to people who care about America's public lands.

Contact us at info@westernlands.org to sign up.

You can view our archived alerts at <http://tinyurl.com/5ugbn2>



Many thanks to our generous & loyal 2008 supporters*

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** This list includes donations received from January 1, 2008 to December 4, 2008. If you sent your 2008 contribution after publication and are not on the list, you will be acknowledged in our next newsletter. Thanks for your support!*

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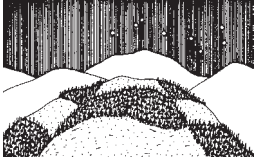
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