

Senate Republicans Fast Tracking Largest Public Land Sale in History

***Almost half of public lands in Washington state could be sold,
Senate vote expected next week***

Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA): *"This Republican budget bill is all about taking from average Americans to give to the ultra-wealthy and now that includes allowing the highest bidder to buy millions of acres of public lands that belong to all of us. This alarming proposal would put No Trespassing signs at beloved trailheads and fishing spots across the West, threatening the \$1.2 trillion outdoor recreation economy and the five million jobs that rely on protecting these irreplaceable public lands. We need voices from across the nation, and on both sides of the aisle, to stand up for keeping our natural heritage accessible to all Americans today and into the future."*

Proposed Sale of 250 Million Acres of Public Lands

Since day one, the Trump Administration has sought to reverse public land protections that undergird an outdoor recreation economy that contributes over \$22 billion and supports over 200,000 jobs in the State of Washington alone.

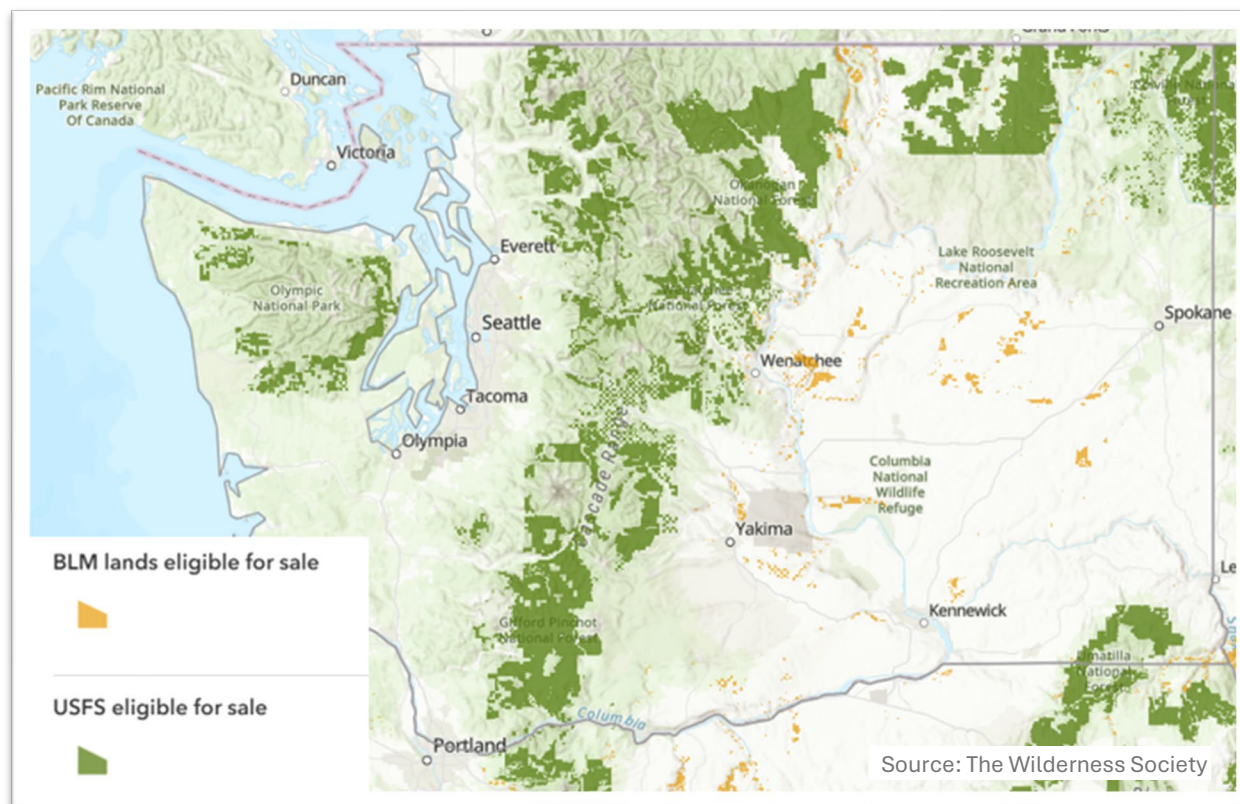
The administration has cut staffing at the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) by 3,400 and at the Department of the Interior by over 7,500 employees, including over 1,000 at the National Park Service (NPS). They are also pushing for substantial funding cuts to all agencies that operate and maintain our public lands, including a 36 percent cut to the NPS.

Now, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Chairman Mike Lee (R-UT) has pushed forward legislation that would mandate the sale of at least two to three million acres of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land in 11 western states over the next five years. However, the land sale criteria in the legislation allows the Administration to sell up to 250 million acres of public land across the West. According to the Congressional Budget Office, these land sales would raise \$10.3 billion in revenue, a pittance compared to the nearly \$5 trillion cost of Senate Republican budget proposal which overwhelmingly provides tax relief for the wealthiest Americans.

On the Market: Beloved Public Lands in Washington

In the State of Washington, 5.35 million acres of public land would be eligible for sale, including 5 million acres of USFS land and 350,000 acres of BLM land. As the map below indicates, many of our state's most beloved outdoor recreation spots could be privatized.

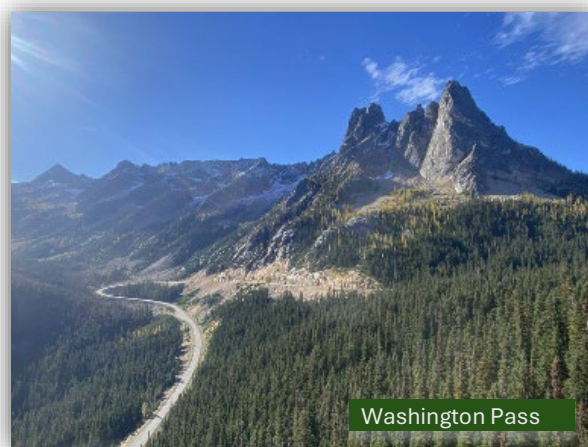
Washington's many ski areas and surrounding land are eligible for sale under the bill's proposal. Almost all the land around Baker Lake, just south of Mt. Baker, is on the chopping block. Nearly the entire Methow Valley could be for sale. Thousands of acres along the south shore of Lake Chelan are also at risk of being sold.



Methow Valley: One of Washington's most popular and diverse regions for outdoor recreation, the Methow attracts more than one million visitors annually. Tourist spending contributes \$150 million to Okanogan County's economy every year. Nearly 90 percent of Methow Valley is public land, making it particularly vulnerable to land sale proposals, which could devastate the economy and erase the culture of the region.

Washington Pass: This a coveted backcountry skiing and high alpine hiking and climbing destination along Highway 20 near North Cascades National Park, which includes portions of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, could be taken from the public.

Gateway to North Cascades National Park: While National Park lands are not eligible, thousands of acres directly adjacent to the park and wilderness areas are, including Bald Mountain, Lookout Mountain, and lands along the Cascade River.



Gateway to Mt. Rainier National Park: Irreplaceable lands along Highway 410 and State Route 706, the two main points of access to Mount Rainier could be sold. In 2024, nearly 2.5 million people visited Mt. Rainier National Park and the surrounding areas.

The Middle Fork Snoqualmie: Thought to be permanently protected by bipartisan legislation just a decade ago, is an extremely popular recreation area along Snoqualmie Pass. Located less than an hour from downtown Seattle, this special area quick and easy access to nature to millions of Washingtonians.

The Green River Valley. Known for its diverse landscapes and adjacent to Mt. St. Helens National Monument, corporate interests have long sought to use these lands for copper mining.

Dark Divide Roadless Area: The centuries old forest in Gifford Pinchot National Forest between Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Adams that contains popular recreation areas, hosts annual trail running, mountain biking, and motorbike events, and provides important habitat connectivity.



Olympic National Forest Lands: along Lake Cushman and adjacent to Staircase Campground in Olympic National Park and along the Hamma Hamma, Big Quilcene, Dosewallips, and Duckabush Rivers could be taken from the public. At Olympic National Park alone, visitor spending accounts for nearly \$280 million annually. Park visitation continues to rise annually, and in 2024, over 3.7 million people visited Olympic National Park.

White Chuck Mountain: Near Darrington at the heart of the Mountain Loop Highway is a popular summer hiking and camping area for recreationalists that could be privatized.

Impacts on Tribes in Washington

Significant portions of the eligible land for sale border or are adjacent to tribal lands, including the reservations for the Quinault Indian Nation, Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Skokomish Tribe, the Spokane Tribe, the Kalispel Tribe, and the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe.

Much of the eligible land has deep cultural and economic significance to tribes throughout the state. Whether that be because they are ancestral grounds, part of their usual and accustomed hunting, fishing, and gathering areas, or contain spiritual other cultural values known to the Olympics, Mt. Rainier, Mt. Baker, or other iconic landmarks.

Tribes were not consulted which lands were deemed eligible in this bill and it would be up to the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to ensure proper government-to-government consultation prior to any sales.

Selling Public Lands Will Not Help Housing Crisis

The primary argument for this public land fire sale is that selling public lands will provide the real estate needed to build affordable housing units.

However, there are very few to no opportunities for building new housing on any of these eligible federal lands, including in the state of Washington. In addition, the bill text does not include requirements on population density or affordability which opens the door to developers to build exclusive resorts and vacation homes that do not increase the supply or access to housing.

According to an analysis by Headwaters Economics that examined how much federal land can be used for housing, and whether it would improve affordability, fewer than 700,000 new homes could be built on select federal lands in the West that can be safely developed and that are close to towns and cities with unmet housing needs. This analysis was not limited to the current Senate proposal of Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management land, and it does not account for local factors, such as whether there is enough water to support new development, appetite to build affordable housing and workforce availability, so the actual number of new affordable home that would ever be built is likely significantly lower.