

Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009—Summary

This document summarizes the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, which was signed into law by President Obama on March 30, 2009, after passing overwhelmingly in both the Senate and the House.¹

The largest land protection package passed in 25 years, this act protects more than two million acres of land as Wilderness in nine states; designates over 1,000 miles of Wild & Scenic Rivers; and establishes three new National Parks, three national conservation areas, four national trails, ten national heritage areas and a new national monument. It also creates several water conservation, habitat restoration and land management programs, and gives formal recognition to the 26 million-acre National Landscape Conservation System established in 2000 to encompass BLM's National Monuments, Conservation Areas, Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas, Wild & Scenic Rivers, and Scenic & Historic Trails. This Act advances conservation in nearly every state, including the following notable examples from outside the Northwest:

- In Arkansas, Michigan and New Jersey, three new National Parks.
- In California, more than 700,000 acres of wilderness, nine water recycling projects and a historic settlement for the restoration of the San Joaquin River.
- In Utah, over 250,000 acres of Wilderness in and near Zion National Park.
- In Wyoming, 1.2 million acres of the Wyoming Range protected from future oil and gas leasing.
- In Colorado, nearly 250,000 acres of new Wilderness around Rocky Mountain National Park.
- In the Appalachians, nearly 80,000 acres of new Wilderness.

The following section summarizes wins for the Northwest. Subsequent sections highlight selected national and multi-state provisions of the Act, including additions to the national trails system, interesting management strategies, and ocean and maritime programs.

Northwest Protected Lands & Rivers:

This act adds **795,305 acres of Wilderness** and **400 miles of Wild & Scenic Rivers** in the Northwest, as follows:

ALASKA

- Adds 54,587 (net acres) to the **Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness**.²
- Establishes the **Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area**.

¹ Senate passed by a vote of 77 to 20 (79% yeas), with 21 Republicans and all the Democrats in support of the bill. In the House, 38 Republicans joined with all but four Democrats to pass HR 146 by a vote of 285 to 140 (67% yeas).

² This addition is the result of a land exchange whereby 1,806 acres of federal land within the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness will be exchanged for 56,393 acres of state and corporate lands to enable a single-lane gravel road to be constructed between the communities of King Cove and Cold Bay, Alaska to be used primarily for health and safety purposes (including access to and from the Cold Bay Airport)—and only by noncommercial users.

IDAHO

Owyhee Canyonlands:

- Protects as Wilderness 517,025 acres of steep-walled river canyons, wide-open sagebrush and juniper-forested highlands.
- Designates 316 miles of Wild & Scenic Rivers, including the Bruneau, Jarbridge and Owyhee river systems.
- Authorizes the retirement of grazing allotments from willing sellers.
- Releases 199,000 acres of wilderness study areas to non-wilderness multiple use management (soft release).
- Creates the **Owyhee Science Review and Conservation Center** in Owyhee County, Idaho, to conduct research projects that address natural resource management issues affecting public and private rangeland in the county.

OREGON

Mount Hood:

- Preserves 126,110 acres around Mount Hood as the **Lewis and Clark Mount Hood Wilderness Areas** (including 1,870 acres contingent on land exchange).
- Adds 81 miles on nine free-flowing stretches of rivers to the National Wild & Scenic River System.
- Amends the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act to permanently protect the Hood River.
- Establishes the 34,550-acre **Mount Hood National Recreation Area** within Mount Hood National Forest.
- Designates 900 acres as the **Roaring River Potential Wilderness Area**.

Copper Salmon Wilderness:

- Protects as Wilderness 13,700 acres of pristine, old-growth forest along the Elk River within the Siskiyou National Forest, adjacent to the existing Grassy Knob Wilderness.
- Designates 11.2 miles of Wild and Scenic River at the headwaters of the Elk River.

Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument:

- Establishes the **Soda Mountain Wilderness**, a 24,100-acre area in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument's southern backcountry.
- Allows for permanent, voluntary retirement of grazing permits on 106,700 acres in and around the monument; 59,598 acres subsequently bought by Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
- 94 percent of the monument acreage and 12,253 acres outside of the monument are now legally cow-free.

Oregon Badlands Wilderness:

- Designates 29,301 acres of desert Wilderness in the Badlands, 15 miles east of Bend.
- Releases remaining wilderness study areas to non-wilderness multiple use management.³

³ A 25-foot wide corridor of BLM land (which zigzags across the area's eastern and southern edges) will retain its Potential Wilderness designation to allow Rachael Scdoris, a legally blind sled dog racer from the area, to continue training in the

Spring Basin Wilderness:

- Designates as Wilderness 6,382 acres of BLM land overlooking the John Day Wild and Scenic River. Once land exchanges are complete, this Wilderness will include more than ten acres of high desert.

National Trails System:

This omnibus lands act also adds two major Northwest trails to the National Trails System:

- The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, a 1,200-mile trail extending from the Continental Divide in Glacier National Park, Montana, through Idaho to the Pacific Ocean coast in Washington.
- The Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail, which runs from Missoula, Montana through Idaho, Oregon and Washington to the Pacific Ocean (and appropriates \$12 million to develop the trail).

This act also provides for a feasibility study on the expansion of the **Oregon National Historic Trail**.

Interesting Management Strategies:

- Creates the **Crystal Springs Watershed Special Resources Management Unit** within the Mount Hood National Forest.
- Establishes a 5-year **Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Project** to provide matching grants to States and Indian tribes (1) to assist livestock producers in undertaking proactive, non-lethal activities to reduce the risk of livestock loss due to predation by wolves; and (2) to compensate livestock producers for livestock losses due to such predation. (\$1 million for FY 2009 and each FY thereafter.)
- Creates a **Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and Fund** to select and fund science-based ecological restoration of priority forest landscapes.
- Establishes a **climate change adaptation program** aimed at addressing potential water shortages, conflicts and other effects of global warming.
- Creates an **intragovernmental panel on climate change and water**, comprised of members of federal agencies and departments, to review current scientific understanding of the impacts of climate change on freshwater resources and to develop strategies to improve this understanding.
- Establishes a new **Cooperative Watershed Management Program** to help stakeholders form or enlarge watershed groups or to conduct related water management projects, including projects to increase ecological resiliency and reduce the potential for water conflicts.
- Authorizes a grant program to provide matching funds for planning, design and construction of **water-related infrastructure improvements** that would prevent the

corridor. This exception was supported by the Oregon Natural Desert Association in recognition of Scdoris' special circumstances and long history of training in the Badlands, with the understanding that the corridor will be designated as Wilderness upon voluntarily relinquishment of training use by Scdoris.

decline of species proposed for listing under the ESA or accelerate the recovery of threatened species, endangered species and designated critical habitats, among other uses (\$200 million total; individual grantee maximum award of \$5 million).

Ocean and Maritime Provisions:

- Establishes an **ocean acidification program** to monitor, research and predict the impacts of ocean acidification on marine ecosystems and species, and assess related socioeconomic impacts (\$81 million total from FY2009 to FY2012).
- Authorizes the **National Ocean Exploration Program**, **National Undersea Research Program**, and the **Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping Program** to increase scientific knowledge essential for the informed management, use and preservation of oceanic, marine and coastal areas and the Great Lakes.
- Provides for a **coastal and estuarine land conservation program** to protect areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion to other uses. Program to include matching fund grants for property acquisition (\$60 million annually from FY2009 to FY2013).
- Establishes a **National Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation system** to address regional and national needs for timely and sustained ocean information and to improve the nation's capability to measure, track, explain and predict the direct and indirect impacts of weather and climate change.