

Frequently Asked Questions-Upper Lochsa Land Exchange

1. What are the public the benefits of The Forest Service acquiring the Upper Lochsa Lands?

In short, the Upper Lochsa Exchange serves as a once of a lifetime opportunity to promote national critical habitat and enhance public recreation at a state, regional and national level, while at the same time increase economic opportunities in small Idaho communities that rely on the forest industry. The Upper Lochsa Exchange would:

- ***Promote Wildlife Habitat in Idaho and the Region.*** The exchange would allow the Forest Service to manage some of the most environmentally sensitive lands in the United States. In addition, Western Pacific Timber (WPT) and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation will provide funding to the Forest Service to be used for fish and wildlife habitat restoration work on the Upper Lochsa. This is important because this area is part of a vital wildlife corridor used by many different species of animals. The restoration work will also help enhance water quality of the Lochsa drainage--critical for support of salmon, steelhead and other water species.
- ***Effectuate Efficient and Cost Effective Management of Lands.*** Most of the lands the Forest Service would be disposing are considered difficult and costly to manage as most of the parcels are isolated or located in areas of mixed ownership. WPT would be able to manage those lands more effectively. The trade will also provide the Forest Service the opportunity to more efficiently manage federal lands in the Upper Lochsa area. For example, it will allow the Forest Service to “block up” ownership within in the Upper Lochsa area that will reduce costs in maintenance commonly associated in owning land within checkerboard ownership.
- ***Serve as Continued Public Access.*** It is WPT’s policy to allow public access for hunting and recreation on its properties through joint management plans with state and local agencies, and through such programs as “Feel Free to Hunt” in the state of Washington and “YES” in the state of Idaho.
- ***Result in a Net Gain of Public Lands.*** The current estimate is that the Forest Service will see a net gain in excess of 20,000 acres going into public ownership.
- ***Increase Recreational Opportunities.*** The Upper Lochsa land encompasses a stretch of the Lochsa River, which is designated as a Wild and Scenic River with a recreational classification. In addition, one of the tributaries running through the Lochsa property has been determined as eligible for Wild and Scenic designation in the current forest plan. Also, WPT is seeking to facilitate the addition of approximately 2,000 acres to McCroskey State Park, to be owned and managed by the Idaho State Parks and Recreation Department.
- ***Preserve Cultural and Historical Resources.*** The trade will result in public ownership of historically and culturally significant lands. These lands include portions of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail, which the Lewis and Clark expedition traveled in 1805 and 1806.

- ***Increase Local Tax Revenue.*** As a result of public lands going into private ownership, property tax revenues will increase in the affected counties, which could be used to support local schools, fire protection, libraries.
- ***Create Job Opportunities and Economic Development.*** WPT will actively harvest timber and manage the lands it acquires. It would hire local logging contractors, which in turn would provide economic support to local mills and businesses.

2. Aren't the Upper Lochsa lands the Forest Service is seeking to acquire amount to cut-over, non-accessible lands?

Some critics of the Upper Lochsa Exchange have claimed that the federal government and the American people are getting the raw end of this deal and receiving “devastated” or “barren” land. This could not be further from the truth. The Upper Lochsa lands have been well managed for over 100 years. Healthy, well stocked plantations cover many of the sections. Other parcels contain stands of well spaced trees with multiple age classes. Yes, these private sections look different from many of the older stands on the current federal land, but it does not mean they are not healthy. These lands have been managed for timber production – millions of board feet have fed local mills and provided good paying jobs for both timber and mill workers as well as many other supporting industries for years. This type of land management has created diversity across the landscape – there is not just a sea of trees all in the same age class, but a mosaic. Many species thrive in a diverse landscape such as this– deer, elk, bears, birds and many other species need the more open stands for forage while the older, more mature stands are used for cover.

The Upper Lochsa lands are easily accessible to the public. The Upper Lochsa land encompasses a stretch of the Lochsa River, which is designated as a Wild and Scenic River with a recreational classification and the Lochsa is world class when it comes to floating and fishing opportunities. In addition, thousands of Idaho and out of state visitors hunt hike and gather berries in the Upper Lochsa area. The public will continue to enjoy access to the Upper Lochsa lands and the recreational opportunities even after the Exchange.

3. Would the Public pay to restore the Upper Lochsa Lands for Forest Service management?

Under the Agreement to Initiate, WPT committed \$500,000 to be used toward water restoration of the Upper Lochsa lands. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has agreed to step efforts to match that contribution. The goal is to use WPT/RMEF dollars and obtain matches from both public and private sources with aim to raise millions for the restoration of the Upper Lochsa.

4. I heard that the lands the Forest Service is proposing to exchange out of in the Palouse district are multiple use lands that are highly used by the public (i.e. camping fishing, hiking, firewood)?

This is not the case. A majority of the lands listed under the preferred alternative are scattered, isolated parcels that the public does not significantly use. Originally, the Forest Service considered 28,000 acres of land of which it was estimated it would take roughly 20,000 acres to accomplish a value for value exchange. However, in reaction to public concerns over natural and public use, a number of parcels have been eliminated from the exchange. The parcels that do remain in the exchange are largely isolated, scattered that the public does not significantly use and there are a number of parcels the public does not have legal or physical access. These parcels are typically totally surrounded by private lands and the only way the public would obtain access would be through the permission of that land owner.

5. Could WPT close or “gate off” access of public roads that provide the public access to other federal lands that are high multi-use?

No. Under the terms of the Agreement to Initiate between the Forest Service and WPT, WPT would be required to receive such lands subject to existing public roads and would not have a legal right to shut off access to the public’s use of public roads that provide access to other federal lands. In other words, under the exchange the Forest Service will not be terminating public roads that access public property.

6. What about continued public access on lands WPT acquires from the exchange itself?

WPT’s policy is to allow public access for hunting and recreation on its properties through joint management plans with state and local agencies, and through such programs as “Hunter Access” in the state of Washington and “YES” in the state of Idaho.

7. How many acres are proposed to be exchanged out of the Palouse Ranger District and would it signify the beginning of the end of the Palouse Ranger district?

97.5% of the Palouse District lands would not be affected under the preferred alternative. Expanding, the amount of potential acres affected in the Exchange located in the Palouse Ranger District is not significant and could range between 3,653* (preferred alternative) and 6,852* acres (alternative B) depending on the alternative selected, *or 2.5 % and 4.6% of the total current Palouse Ranger District lands* (145,000 acres) respectively. It is believed that the acres listed in the exchange located in the Palouse District will be disposed whether or not the exchange occurs as they do not meet the Forest Service’s management policy criteria.

*These figures do not include the 1,200 acres located within McCroskey State Park. These lands will either be exchanged into park control or dropped out of the exchange if a deal cannot be reached that would place these lands under state ownership and control. The Forest Service has made it publically known there are no plans to dispose of the Palouse Ranger District.

8. Will the appraisal solely be based on the timber cruise?

No. The Agreement to Initiate between the Forest Service and WPT requires that the appraisal be conducted in accordance with the federal and state law and Forest Service

guidelines which mandate that the appraisal will take into consideration the timber inventory *as well as the value of improvements on all exchange properties*, such as roads.

9. Will the appraisal of the Forest Service lands take into consideration the value of the long time public improvements made to the Forest Service exchange properties, such as roads?

Yes. As required by law and Forest Service guidelines, the appraisal will take into consideration public improvements on the Forest Service and as well as improvements on the Upper Lochsa lands.

10. How can the Forest Service develop alternatives without having obtained an appraisal?

The alternatives were developed based on a “thumb-nail” appraisal and the values of the lands will ultimately be determined by a formal appraisal. During the exchange process it was *estimated* by the Forest Service that it would take approximately 20,000 acres to accomplish a “value for value” exchange. This ball park estimation was given by an independent appraiser. During the exchange process and as result of public concerns regarding public use and natural resource issues relating to certain parcels the Forest Service has eliminated about 10,000 acres from consideration from the Upper Lochsa Exchange. Under the preferred alternative, 14,000 parcels would be eliminated. Whether the Exchange consists of 14,000 or 18,000 acres, the amount of acres in the Exchange is below the estimated 20,000 acre value that would accomplish a value for value exchange. Accordingly, the Forest Service is estimating that it will be short of accomplishing a straight land value for value exchange and that a cash component will be necessary in accomplishing an equal exchange. The estimate, however, is simply an estimate. The final appraisal will determine the amount of land the Forest Service will be able to offer in the exchange, but in any event the amount of land to be considered will not exceed the 18,000 acres under Alternative B.

11. Will the public be able to participate in the appraisal process?

The appraisal does not involve a public process-by law. Under law, the appraisal is to be conducted by an independent, third party appraiser and shall be conducted in accordance with the federal and state laws and Forest Service guidelines. Once the appraisal is completed by the independent third party appraisal it will be further subject to an internal review by the Forest Service.

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