

**Statement of
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**Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, & Mining
S. 2616, Idaho County Shooting Range Land Conveyance Act
July 30, 2014**

Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of Interior on S. 2616, the Idaho County Shooting Range Land Conveyance Act, which conveys a 31-acre parcel of BLM-managed public land to Idaho County, Idaho, for use as a shooting range. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) supports the conveyance and supports S. 2616 with an amendment to add a reversionary clause if the land was to be used for non-public purposes.

Background

Idaho County is the largest county in Idaho, covering over 5.4 million acres of land in north-central Idaho. Approximately 4.4 million acres of these steep, heavily-forested lands are administered by the U.S. Forest Service; the BLM manages 91,000 acres of public land in the County, most at lower elevations. While recreational opportunities in Idaho County are abundant, the steep topography and densely-forested landscape yield few opportunities for safe recreational target shooting.

The BLM has been working in partnership with Idaho County for several years to address the County's strong interest in the establishment of a shooting range site on a 31-acre parcel of public land near Riggins. The parcel is currently being used recreationally by local hunters and residents of Riggins. The County would also like to use the range for law enforcement purposes. There is no sanctioned shooting range in Idaho County, and the BLM understands that the County is willing to regulate and maintain the shooting range for both recreational and law enforcement use.

The BLM regularly leases and conveys lands to local governments and nonprofit entities for a variety of public purposes. These leases and conveyances are typically accomplished under the provisions of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP) or through direction supplied by specific Acts of Congress. Such direction allows the BLM to help states, local communities, and nonprofit organizations obtain lands at no or low cost for important public purposes, including shooting ranges.

In June of 2011, Idaho County submitted an R&PP application to the BLM for a public shooting range on the 31-acre parcel near Riggins. The parcel is located east of the Lower Salmon River and State Route 95, and is within a portion of the Lower Salmon River corridor that was identified by the BLM for potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. Additionally, the parcel lies within an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) established by the BLM due to the presence of MacFarlane's four-o'clock, which is listed as a

threatened plant. Surveys have determined that the plant is not present on this parcel. Nonetheless, the parcel cannot be transferred administratively because of these restrictions.

S. 2616

S. 2616 requires the Secretary of the Interior to convey a 31-acre parcel of public land to Idaho County to be used as a shooting range, subject to valid existing rights and without consideration. The County is required to pay all survey costs and other administrative costs associated with the conveyance, and to release the United States from liability for uses on the land prior to the conveyance. The BLM notes that inventories and surveys conducted when analyzing the County's 2011 conveyance proposal have already been completed, and we believe these prior analyses should reduce conveyance costs for the County. The County is also required to accept reasonable terms and conditions that the Secretary determines necessary.

The BLM supports the conveyance, but would like to work with the sponsor on an amendment to S. 2616. As is standard with these types of conveyances, we recommend the addition of a reversionary clause to ensure that the parcel continues to be used as a shooting range or for other public purposes. If an effort were made to sell the land or use it for non-public purposes it would revert to the Federal government at the discretion of the Secretary.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of S. 2616, the Idaho County Shooting Range Land Conveyance Act. We appreciate the sponsor's work on this legislation, and we look forward to working with the sponsor and the Committee to meet the needs of Idaho County.