



**National Association of Counties (NACo)**  
**Public Lands Policy Statement**  
*An excerpt from NACo's American County Platform*

NACo, its Western Interstate Region, state associations of counties and individual county governments have a critical role in policy development, planning and management of federal land. Federal agencies must coordinate their management of public lands consistent with local land use plans or management policies. NACo believes that environmental and socioeconomic values must be balanced. NACo supports a philosophy of management which allows diversity of activities on public lands and local economies.

**FOREST AND RANGELAND HEALTH**

NACo supports forest health initiatives to address the threat of catastrophic events to our public forest and rangeland resources. Federal Land Management agencies shall utilize an appropriate mix of management practices, and increased private, local, and state contracts and partnerships for pre-fire management, effective fire suppression, and restoration of federal forest and rangelands.

**FEDERAL LAND OWNERSHIP**

Federal real property holdings should be appropriately managed. Congress should provide adequate and appropriate funding to support staffing, maintenance, research and operational needs of the federal land management agencies. Acquisition of new land by any federal agency should be subject to consultation with the county in which the land is located. Criteria for the transfer, sale or acquisition of public lands shall include consideration of fair market value, consultation with appropriate counties and jurisdictions, and public values.

**SPECIAL USE DESIGNATIONS**

Congress and Federal agencies should consult and confer with affected counties as early as possible when considering special land use designations that impact the use and status of public lands. Public hearings must be held in the counties affected by the proposed designation. There must be compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

**FEDERAL LAND PAYMENTS**

The federal government has long recognized and accepted that federal land holdings are a burden on local governments, and that funding is necessary for local governments to provide the types of services needed to access and use those lands. Counties must share in the benefits of economic activity on public lands through statutory formulas, which guarantee a percentage of all gross receipts to be returned to the counties where the activity occurs.

**COMMUNITY BASED LAND MANAGEMENT**

NACo supports community based conservation initiatives and calls on the incoming Administration to implement such initiatives. Federal land management agencies should use broad based vegetation management practices, in conjunction with community based partnerships for ecosystem management, to enhance the health of the public lands.

**FUNDING FOR NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCIES**

NACo will work with Congress and request increased funding to natural resource agencies that manage federal lands. Agencies such as the USDA Forest Service and DOI Bureau of Land Management, have experienced increased costs in delivering programs that are important to local communities adjacent to these public lands. As a result, there are backlogs in many management and maintenance programs.

**ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS**

NACo supports maintaining and enhancing public access to public lands; and opposes road building moratoria, road closures and decommissioning and other limiting policies without coordination with county land use plans or management policies. NACo recognizes the importance of the system of roads and rights-



of-way established under R.S. 2477. Every consideration should be given to public safety, private property, public access, and a clear process when pursuing such rights-of-way. We oppose any federal action designed to change the scope of these rights.

#### **OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE MANAGEMENT ON PUBLIC LANDS**

NACo requests that the USDA Forest Service and DOI Bureau of Land Management coordinate with county government and consider county land use plans as they develop and implement new travel policies and plans. Travel management policies, as well as interim site specific plans, should be regionally consistent across agency and state boundaries, be developed in conjunction with local governments and community based partnerships, and require off-highway vehicles (OHVs) to stay on designated roads, trails, or in designated off-road use areas. OHV use is an accepted use on public lands when it is done responsibly.

#### **DOMESTIC LIVESTOCK GRAZING**

NACo supports the enhancement of a viable rangeland livestock industry as an essential component of our country's economy and as vital to affected communities. Good grazing practices are beneficial to maintaining rangeland health and assist in reducing potential fire danger by keeping fuel loading to a manageable level.

#### **NOXIOUS WEEDS**

NACo calls for a coordinated, integrated weed management effort by federal land agencies, states and counties.