

Key Developments in Public Lands History

- 1812:** General Land Office (GLO) established within the Department of Treasury.
- 1864:** President Abraham Lincoln deeds the Yosemite Valley to the state of California to protect as a public park.
- 1872:** Congress sets aside a "Tract of Land lying near the Head-waters of the Yellowstone River as a Public park." This was the world's first national park.
- 1891:** Congress gives the president the authority to set aside public domain lands as forest reserves. Initially those reserves were managed by the GLO.
- 1897:** The Organic Act specified the purposes of the Forest Reserves.
- 1892:** President Benjamin Harrison signed an Executive Order that established the nation's first archaeological preserve at what is today Casa Grande Ruins National Monument in Coolidge, Arizona.
- 1905:** The forest reserves were transferred from the Department of the Interior to the new U.S. Forest Service within the Department of Agriculture.
- 1906:** Congress passes the Antiquities Act, which puts in place permitting requirements for archaeological excavations on federal lands, makes artifact removal without a permit a crime with potential fines, gives the president authority to proclaim national monuments.
- 1916:** Congress passes the National Parks Organic Act, transferring management of national parks and most national monuments to the National Park Service.
- 1934:** Congress passes the Taylor Grazing Act, which establishes the U.S. Grazing Service. The Grazing Service initiates a permitting process for public land grazing and is mandated to address land conservation issues.
- 1946:** Congress establishes the Bureau of Land Management, a merger of the U.S. Grazing Service and the GLO.
- 1946–1978:** The Indian Claims Commission Act was passed by Congress to create a new mechanism to resolve ancient tribal claims against the United States. The Commission ceased operations in 1978.
- 1964:** Congress passed the Wilderness Act, which defined the criteria of wilderness lands and established the National Wilderness Protection System. Wilderness lands are overlay designations on lands held by federal agencies.
- 1976:** Congress passed the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA), considered the organic act for the Bureau of Land Management. FLPMA established the agency's multiple use mandate and declared that public lands, in general, should be maintained in federal ownership. FLPMA brought BLM into the National Wilderness Protection System.
- 1976:** Congress passed the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). "NFMA changed forest planning by obliging the Forest Service to use a systematic and interdisciplinary approach to resource management and it provided for public involvement in preparing and revising forest plans." [Source: USFS online document: fseprd530507.pdf]
- 2009:** Congress establishes the National Landscape Conservation System, within the BLM "In order to conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations." It includes: national monuments, national conservation areas, wilderness and wilderness study areas, and components of the National Trails or National Wild and Scenic River systems.