

# New Mexico State Land Office

Patrick H. Lyons, Commissioner of Public Lands



## WHITES PEAK LAND EXCHANGE FACTS

In summary, by consolidating holdings, the Land Office will:

- Improve boundary distinction for trust lands
- Facilitate effective land management strategies
- Control trespass issues
- Create a quality game and wildlife area
- Improve existing roads and construct new, all-weather roads to provide safe access
- Close unnecessary roads to conserve wildlife habitat
- Develop campgrounds and facilities for hunters and recreationalists
- Implement forest restoration programs to improve forest health and wildlife habitat.

Phase 1: Four separate exchanges necessary to consolidate holdings

Phase 2: Access improvements

Phase 3: Camp ground improvements

Phase 4: Implementation of healthy forest and wildlife habitat improvement programs

Trespassing, vandalism, theft, illegal vehicle use, and poaching in the Whites Peak area are rampant.

By consolidating holdings, the Land Office would own 25,000 contiguous acres on the east side of the peak (Ortega, Rivera and Beaver Tail mesas) and 18,000 contiguous acres on the west side (Aspen Hill). By consolidating holdings, the Land Office would own 25,000 contiguous acres on the east side of the peak (Ortega, Rivera and Beaver Tail mesas) and 18,000 contiguous acres on the west side (Aspen Hill). Consolidating this acreage will vastly increase the state trust land value. Conservative estimates project the minimum land value increases at \$13.2 million.

The virtue of the exchange, the Land Office will open five new access areas, as well as improve the accessibility onto trust lands off New Mexico Highway 120.

State-owned lands in the Whites Peak area are ***not*** public lands.

These lands are ***trust*** lands, granted by the United States Congress to the Territory of New Mexico more than a century ago to serve as a source of revenue to support a public school system, which was essential to settling the West.

Today, revenues earned from energy development, farming and ranching leases, and business and community development on trust lands support public schools, seven universities, the New Mexico Military Institute, the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the New Mexico School for the Deaf, three hospitals, correctional facilities, public building repair and construction, and water conservation programs, as designated in the Constitution.

Trust lands are often intermingled with private lands, which prevents the Land Office and the private property owner from effectively managing our respective lands.

Land exchanges are significant because they allow the state to consolidate trust holdings so the Land Office can acquire better quality, more manageable, revenue-generating lands to achieve its mission to support public education.

Commissioner Lyons is the fourth land commissioner to attempt to resolve the Whites Peak conflict.

This exchange isn't a Democrat vs. Republican-thing – it's the RIGHT thing.