



USDA Forest Service Intermountain Region

LANDS AND MINERALS PROGRAM



Director of Lands and Minerals



Kathryn Conant is the Director of Lands and Minerals. Kathryn Conant has been the Regional Lands and Minerals Director, Intermountain Region, since 2012. In this capacity, Kathryn manages 45 permanent employees located throughout the Region, and oversees eight lands and minerals related programs. Prior to moving to Ogden, Kathryn spent 17 years in Washington, DC, with nine of those years serving in the U.S. Forest Service, State and Private Forestry staff. Kathryn has served in other temporary assignments such as Acting National Director for Minerals and Geology in the WO, Acting Forest Supervisor on the Bridger-Teton

National Forest and Acting Assistant Director in Strategic Planning, Budget and Accountability, as well as a six month assignment at the Council of Environmental Quality focused on public lands.

The Intermountain Region (R4) Lands and Minerals

The Intermountain Region oversee almost 32 million acres of national forest system lands, the largest of any region by 30%. The Region's Lands and Minerals programs provide important technical and policy work in support of National, Regional and Forest priorities. Staff includes eight program areas, each having a unique organizational structure and delegations.

In response to an OIG audit, in 2002 R4 implemented a centralized zone organization for valuation services, landownership adjustment and boundary and title management programs. Technical specialists for these programs are zoned at the RO. Zoned employees are co-located within Forests and Districts, and located in at least a dozen locations through the Region. Water Rights, Lands Special Uses, and Minerals and Geology have the traditional RO-Forest structure with the RO staff work focused on providing policy and budget oversight and guidance to the forests. The remaining two programs (Hydropower and Ditch Bill) are centralized at the RO levels.



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The Intermountain Region (R4) Lands and Minerals (Continued)

A Regional Lands Board (comprised of three Forest Supervisors and the RO Director) helps set regional policy and priorities for the Lands programs. Zone program of work is developed in coordination with Forests' staff. RO Director and Forest Supervisors resolve competing priorities.

Signature authority for much of the Lands Programs (including land ownership adjustment projects, Small Tracts Act projects, Townsite Act transactions, ditch bill easements, road easements, and water rights management) is delegated to the Director of Lands and Minerals. For these actions, it is the expectation that the Director and Forest Line Officers work cooperatively to ensure that priority work is accomplished. Working together, the Forests and Region can expect successful outcomes.





LANDS SPECIAL USES

A special use is an authorized occupancy, activity, improvement, or facility on the National Forest that is not governed by timber, grazing, or mining regulations. There are currently 5,685 permitted lands special uses in the Intermountain Region. These provide important services and often involve large infrastructure improvements like communication sites, fiber optic lines, electric transmission powerlines, dams/reservoirs, and roads/highways. Region 4 has 576 communication sites and 163 dams/reservoirs. Special uses also include smaller authorizations such as weather stations, recreation residences, water pipelines, apiaries and commercial filming and still photography. Region 4 has 1,387 recreation residences. Special use authorizations are issued to government entities, commercial entities, non-profits and private individuals.

LAND OWNERSHIP ADJUSTMENT (LOA) PROGRAM

The Landownership Adjustment program is responsible for all land exchanges, both administrative and legislated, and land purchases, including Land and Water Conservation fund and other Acts (Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, Receipts Act, Administrative, Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act, and Forest Service Realignment Enhancement Act). The program is also responsible for the purchase of interests in land such as road and trail rights-of-way and conservation easements. Other program responsibilities include land sales that include the administrative site conveyances and special act sales and transfers that involve the department of defense and GSA excess property. Current program priorities are obtaining legal access for timber and fuels projects and reducing the Region's lease costs by acquiring new buildings.

VALUATION SERVICES

Valuation Services provides appraisal and valuation-related consultation services for the Intermountain Region. These activities primarily take place through the Landownership Adjustment, Boundary and Title Management, and Special Uses programs for land tenure actions that require Market Value as the basis for compensation, price, or land use fee determinations.



BOUNDARY AND TITLE MANAGEMENT

The Intermountain Region has 26,000 miles of National Forest System (NFS) boundary. The Regional Boundary and Title Management (B&TM) program provides survey services to forests focused on identification of land boundaries to support priority resource management objectives and protect title of the public estate. The program provides technical assistance to forests and the Office of General Counsel (OGC) to resolve unauthorized use and occupation, title claims, trespasses and encroachments on NFS land.

- Completes surveys and marks NFS ownership boundaries and congressionally designated areas.
- Provides support for priority activities such as fuels reduction in the urban area, timber projects and recreational access needs.
- Assists in perfection of title of road easements to counties and states.
- Manages Lands Status and the withdrawal program for the region including the regional geospatial data that makes up the agency national land status viewer.
- Completes land descriptions and maps of record for Congress for specially designated areas such as wilderness and wild and scenic rivers.

WATER RIGHTS

It is Forest Service policy to obtain, maintain and protect water rights for National Forest purposes under state and federal law. Water rights are real property with value and must be managed accordingly. Over the last century, R4 has secured approximately 46,000 water rights and claims through filings with State Engineer's offices. The Forest Service complies with state water law and regulations to obtain and maintain water rights on behalf of the American people for multiple use purposes. These water rights supply the necessary water for a variety of public uses including campgrounds, recreational cabins and facilities, livestock watering, firefighting and administrative sites. Areas of work include:

- Pursuant to federal statute, the Forest Service is participating in water right adjudications (state court actions, DOJ representation) in Utah, Nevada and Idaho.

WATER USES

The Forest Service has a variety of authorities that facilitate uses of water on National Forest System lands.

- **Ditch Bill:** The Regional Office works with the Forests to process Ditch Bill Easement applications throughout the Region. Once a Ditch Bill easement has been issued, it is managed by the Forest's Special Uses Program. Authorization of water diversions are at issue and complicated by both ESA consultation and litigation.
- **FERC Hydropower:** Hydropower efforts are supported by the interregional hydropower team. The team is jointly maintained and funded by an agreement between Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4 to provide interregional support on all Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) proceedings including hydropower project licensing, relicensing, and preliminary permit applications. Currently there are 57 hydropower facilities in Region 4 involving National Forest System land. These 57 facilities are licensed to produce a combined 297.85 mega-watts (MW) of electricity.



BACKGROUND

The Minerals and Geology Program (MGM) in the Intermountain Region is the largest and most diverse in the Forest Service. Mining accounts for large contributions to local economies, especially in rural areas. However, complexities exist around mining and individual and State's rights that overlap with numerous surface resource concerns. These complexities are often compounded by a shortage of minerals administrative staff, public perception of mineral development, and litigation pressures associated with the development of new mineral proposals.

Mineral and Energy Resources are classified into three disposal categories in accordance with FS regulations at 36 CFR 228:

- Locatable Minerals are subject to the Mining Law of 1872 and include precious metals, platinum group metals, uranium, and rare earth elements.
- Leasable minerals include energy minerals such as oil, natural gas, coal, and geothermal resources; non-energy solid minerals such as phosphates and hardrock minerals on acquired federal lands; and Reserved and Outstanding Minerals (privately owned mineral estate beneath federal surface estate).
- Saleable Minerals (mineral materials) are often sold under contract and include common variety crushed stone, dimension/landscape stone, and sand/gravel.

Among all three categories, reclamation is an important component to project planning and implementation. The Forest Service minerals and geology staff interact with the Bureau of Land Management and state agencies to manage minerals on NFS lands. Mineral commodities produced from National Forests and Grasslands within the Intermountain Region include gold, silver, copper, sand, gravel, decorative and building stone, along with coal, oil and gas, phosphates and geothermal resources.



GEOLOGIC RESOURCES

The Geologic Resources program area provides expertise in the geosciences such as geology, geologic hazards, and groundwater. It administers caves and karst features, paleontological (fossil) resources, and other geologic special interest areas that occur on National Forest System lands and which serve as the landscape foundations that support diverse ecosystems.

ABANDONED MINE LANDS (AML)

The MGM program investigates and remediates abandoned mine lands from historic mining throughout the Intermountain Region. The agency is working towards reclamation and safety mitigation on thousands of Abandoned Mine Lands on NFS lands. The Forest Service in its AML Program seeks to minimize the human health and safety hazards at abandoned mines, while preserving the historic and wildlife habitat resources that they provide.

