Federal Land in the United States

Federal lands are owned and managed by the United States government and cannot be owned by private individuals. Almost one-third (640 million acres) of the continental United States is federal land and is primarily located in the Western United States. This STRATA report identifies the division of land responsibilities among the federal land management agencies and the difference in federal ownership between Western and Eastern states.

Map data retrieved from the U.S. Geological Survey

### Bureau of Land Management
Operating under the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 248.3 million acres of land and about 700 million acres of federal subsurface mineral estate. The BLM also administers grazing, mineral permits, and is charged with managing its lands to “sustain the (ir) health, diversity, and productivity.” (www.blm.gov)

### National Forest Service
Operating under the Department of Agriculture, the National Forest Service (NFS) manages 193 million acres of forest and grassland. NFS lands are open to a variety of uses including recreation and logging. The main goal of the NFS is to “sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation’s forests and grasslands.” (www.fs.fed.us)

### National Park Service
Operating under the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service has been charged with managing over 85 million acres of National Park land. National Parks were established to preserve unique “natural and cultural resources” within the continental United States, and although recreation is allowed in most of these areas, multiple use is largely restricted. (www.nps.gov)

### United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Operating under the Department of the Interior, the USFWS (or FWS) is responsible for the stewardship of over 150 million acres of land in order to “conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats.” The majority of FWS land is part of the National Wildlife Refuge. The FWS also manages fish hatcheries, education centers, and laboratories. (www.fws.gov)

### Bureau of Indian Affairs
Operating under the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) manages over 55 million acres of land and 57 million acres of mineral estate held in trust by the United States on behalf of Native Americans. The majority of these trust lands are in Indian Reservations and the BIA’s responsibility is to “protect and improve” the assets of American Indians. (www.bia.gov)

### Department of Defense
The Department of Defense manages more than 11 million acres of land across the nation. Several military entities are responsible for parcels that vary in size and purpose. These include military bases, testing grounds, and monuments with significance to the armed forces. (www.defense.gov)