

SELL UNUSED FEDERAL LAND

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TOPLINE: Congress should expand private landownership and the development of more affordable housing by requiring the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to hold annual land sales.

BACKGROUND: Historically, the federal government transferred large amounts of public land to private parties and states through laws such as the [Homestead Act of 1862](#), which allowed Americans to claim 160 acres of public land if they lived on and improved it for five years. These laws greatly expanded private ownership as about 1.3 billion acres of public land were [transferred](#) from federal ownership.

Today, the federal government [hoards](#) lands and limits private ownership, especially in the West. The federal government is by far America's largest landowner, owning about [28%](#) of all U.S. land. That is about half of the land in the 12 western U.S. states (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) and about 4% of the land in the rest of the country. Limited private land availability constrains new housing and business development, raising costs and reducing opportunities for families.

Four agencies [manage](#) more than 95% of the federal government's [640 million acres](#).

- The BLM manages [245 million acres](#);
- The USFS manages [193 million acres](#);
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages [96 million acres](#); and
- The National Park Service manages [85 million acres](#).

Action Items (Congress):

- **Require the BLM and USFS to sell** at least 1 of every 200 acres they manage each year.
 - This would exclude national parks managed by the National Park Service and wildlife refuges managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

How It Would Make Life More Affordable:

- It would increase the supply of land available for housing development.
- More land would enable the construction of more factories and industrial capacity, building more opportunities for American workers.
- It would facilitate more productive development of energy and mineral resources and responsible private stewardship of renewable resources like timber, which would help bring down costs for American families.

Related Legislation: No Net Gain in Federal Lands Act of 2025 ([H.R. 775](#)).

BOTTOMLINE: More land should be available to individual property owners who would prize their small piece of the American dream.