

September 14, 1962

CONGRESSMAN'S REPORT

By Morris K. Udall

ARIZONA'S PUBLIC LANDS -- BOTH BLESSING AND BURDEN

Arizona covers 72.6 million acres and is the 6th largest state (after Alaska, Texas, California, Montana and New Mexico); but only 15 states have fewer people. Land for growth ought to be plentiful, yet in Arizona there is a short supply in many communities where it is needed most. This paradox occurs because our state and federal governments own such a large proportion of the land. The picture looks like this:

	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Percent of State</u>
Federal Ownership	53,900,000	74
State Ownership	9,800,000	14
Private Ownership	8,800,000	12
Total	<hr/> 72,600,000	<hr/> 100

While this is a rather discouraging picture, things could be worse: Federal ownership in Alaska is 99.7%; in Nevada, 86%. And even if we consider only the 8.8 million acres of privately-owned land as the "real Arizona" our population density is still only 95 people per square mile as compared with 806 in New Jersey or 85 in Tennessee.

We would have a better tax base, and several important cities surrounded by public lands could have a more orderly growth, however, if some of the 88% owned by the U.S. and Arizona could be placed in private hands. People often ask me why great quantities of federal land cannot be made available to Arizonans, especially around major cities. This is a logical question and deserves a logical answer.

In the first place much of the federal land is located in remote areas far from our centers of population growth; 90% of our population growth is in Tucson and Phoenix. Secondly, most of the federally-owned areas are in present uses which few people would care to change. Here's a quick breakdown on the 53.9 million federal acres:

21,491,000 are set aside as permanent Indian Reservations. The Navajo Reservation by itself is larger than the state of West 30%

Virginia. There is no way of taking these lands from the Indians, and no one argues this be done.

12,900,000 acres are in National Forests and Wildlife refuges. Flagstaff, Show Low and a few other cities are surrounded by Forest Service lands and need more space for growth, but most people would object to any large scale sale of forest land. 17%

3,600,000 acres are included in military reservations such as Luke, Williams and Davis-Monthan air bases, Ft. Huachuca, Yuma Test Station, and the huge bombing and gunnery range between Ajo and Yuma. So long as the military requires these lands, they can not be sold to private owners. These activities provide tens of thousands of jobs. 5%

1,400,000 acres are in Grand Canyon, Painted Desert, Chiricahua, Sahuaro, Organ Pipe and other units of the national park system. Pending proposals such as the potential Fort Bowie National Historic Site are likely to result in slightly more, rather than less, federal land being used for these important purposes. 2%

1,400,000 acres are set aside for Lake Mead, Davis Dam, and similar federal reclamation, flood control and power projects. No change is likely. 2%

13,100,000 acres are held by the Bureau of Land Management, Interior Department, and are largely grazing lands. 18%

Total Federal 74%

Bureau of Land Management Disposal Programs

From this survey, one must conclude that all these classes of land are likely to remain principally U.S. ownership except for the 13.1 million acres of Bureau of Land Management land. It is to this source that Arizona must look primarily for additional private lands. Much of this land is now occupied by cattle and sheep growers under BLM leases, with part of the rentals going to the state. But BLM has already disposed of many thousands of acres and will continue to do so under several separate programs:

- * The "Small Tract" Act. Sales or leases up to 5 acres for residence, recreation or business can be arranged. Tracts are sold for fair market value under public bidding.

- * Public Sale Act. Up to 1520 acres in isolated or disconnected tracts may be sold, also through public bidding.
- * The Homestead Acts. Formerly a major means of federal land disposition, these laws are presently little used in Arizona, largely because they can be used only on agricultural lands which have an adequate water supply.
- * The Recreation and Public Purposes Act. Authorizes sales to cities or counties at \$2.50 per acre if used for schools, parks or other public purposes.
- * Federal Mining Laws. Many federal lands can be prospected for minerals and title obtained if commercial ore deposits are found.
- * Other Proposed Laws. Congress is considering other bills to speed up disposition of federal lands in western States.

State-Owned Lands

Any attempt to place state-owned lands in private hands encounters an entirely different set of problems. Nearly all of the 9.9 million acres owned by Arizona are in "school sections" set aside by various acts of Congress to support and encourage elementary, high school and college education. These lands are leased to cattlemen and others, and in 1961 produced from rentals (and some sales) a total of \$3.2 million-an important item in our school finances.

Most Arizona education officials are strongly opposed to any widespread disposition of these lands. Under the 1912 Enabling Act, Congress forbade Arizona from selling any of these properties except by public bid and at not less than appraised value. Occasional but limited sales are made by the State Land Department.

The 1962 Arizona Legislature petitioned Congress to modify the Enabling Act so that counties, cities and school districts could acquire state lands for park, school and public purposes either free or at less than appraised value. All members of the Arizona delegation in Congress have introduced bills to make this possible. The legislature would then determine whether, and on what terms, to make these state lands available to local governments. These bills are opposed by the State Land Commissioner and many educators who feel that general school financing should take priority, and that specific schools, cities and counties should have to bid for full cash value against potential private owners.

Conclusion

As Arizona grows and prospers it is obvious that we will need more and more privately owned land. A part of our federal lands should be made available for private development, but the available supply is not as large as one might think.

As this summary clearly reveals, federal ownership of lands in Arizona is not "all bad"; some of our greatest economic and scenic assets --world-famous Grand Canyon, our magnificent National Forests and important military bases -- are maintained by Uncle Sam. Few would have it otherwise.