

Transfer of in lieu land to Idaho appears lengthy process

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register staff photo

The transfer of some 37 thousand acres of federal land to the State of Idaho still looks like years away, despite the an-

nounced intentions of U.S. Secretary of Interior Cecil D. Andrus to speed up the process.

Andrus, former Idaho governor, finds himself on the other side of the desk after trying five

years to get started on the transfer.

An indication of the troubles was revealed only last week when the U.S. Bureau of Land Management approved only

1,120 scattered acres of a proposed 8,006 in the Island Park area for the transfer.

The state is entitled to the 37 thousand acres in exchange for state land taken near the turn of the century for creation of U.S. forests.

O'Dell A. Frandsen, Idaho Falls, district manager, recommended 6,886 acres be retained in federal ownership because they are a wildlife habitat. The other 1,120 acres, he said, do not have any significant value to wildlife habitat or migration route and are not essential to any federal resources.

Taking action

Frandsen hastened to add in reply to a question why the BLM was not hastening the proposed transfer as urged by Andrus that the BLM is taking action.

He said the approval is not a final decision and there could be changes.

At Washington, Andrus said he had not seen the reason for the BLM rejection of most of the transfer application and could not comment.

Andrus said he is anxious to speed up the transfer but that it must be done on a sound basis from an environmental point of view.

He pointed out that when he was governor and thus chairman of the State Land Board he pushed for transfer of federal land owed to the state.

"I felt it was up to the State Land Board to fulfill the state constitution," he said. "I also recognize maybe some Idahoans don't want some transfer because of future uses and abuses."

He then pointed out that many people in Idaho Falls, Island Park, St. Anthony, Rexburg and other points in East feel if the state gets the land the acreage could be used in the future for cottage sites.

Idaho Gov. John V. Evans said if the transfer problems are not resolved in a reasonable

time that the state will file a lawsuit.

Andrus said he hoped this won't be necessary, that the transfer can be made without unnecessary delay.

"I hope everyone can wait," he said. "There is still considerable paper work. However, if there is a lawsuit we have plenty of federal lawyers around."

In view of Evans being admitted to the hospital at Boise Wednesday night for a hip operation, a scheduled meeting by the state land board with Andrus for next Tuesday at Washington has been postponed until Evans fully recovers in about a month.

Loss revenue

When Lt.-Gov. Jack Murphy headed a land board committee, he complained the state is losing millions of dollars by not having ownership of the federal lands in possible mining royalties and other revenue.

Andrus said when he was governor he was concerned that the land received by the state would be of like value, rather than geography.

He also pointed out that a land board subcommittee had picked land for the exchange.

At the U.S. BLM office at

Boise, Vince Strobel said his figures showed the state already had asked for transfer of some 15,500 acres. This included 8,007 at Island Park, 5,001 in the Coeur d'Alene District, and 2,503 in the Shoshone District.

At the district BLM office in Idaho Falls, Ken Satterfield, chief of resource management, said the 1,120 acres approved embraced two parcels in the Shotgun area west of Island Park and some three or four other pieces around Henrys Lake, north of Island Park.

Cause for rejection

He said of those rejected, there was one block of little more than 5,000 acres in Shotgun Valley west of Island Park, three others of 300 or 400 acres each also in Shotgun Valley and some 1,000 acres more around Henrys Lake.

He explained the federal land was retained because it is a wildlife habitat and migration route.

Satterfield added one of the biggest concerns is in the sewer and water plan at Island Park. He said there is concern on putrefaction, a condition where algae build up from sewer and cesspool wastes which contaminate the Island Park water.

He noted the BLM also has been keeping in touch with the Fremont Zoning and Planning Commission on its plans but so far such a plan has not gone in effect.

Satterfield said the BLM recommendations were of verbal nature, subject to possible changes.

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U.S. SECRETARY OF INTERIOR and former Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus, at left, and present Idaho Gov. John V. Evans are engaged in the long delayed transfer of some 37 thousand acres of federal land the federal government owes Idaho for taking forest land near the turn of the century. Investigation indicates it may take several more years to complete the transfer although Andrus has urged speedup. (Post-Register staff photo)