

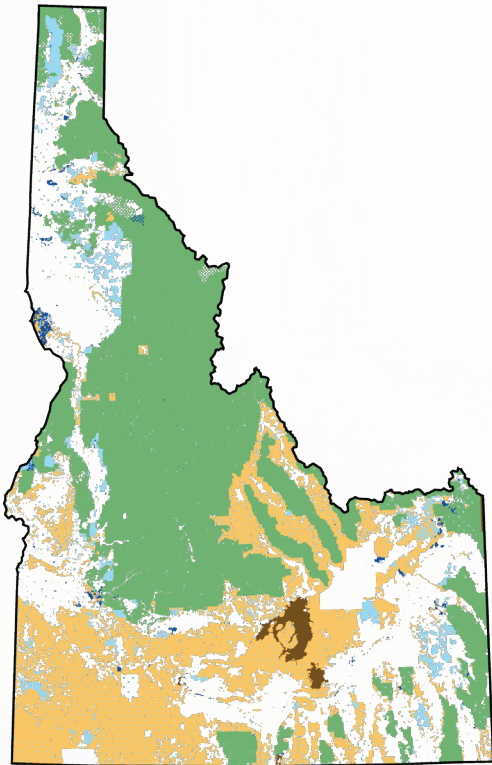


PUBLIC LANDS REPORT | JUNE 2016

ACCESS DIVIDED:

A CLOSER LOOK AT IDAHO

COMPILED BY MATTHEW ANDERSON



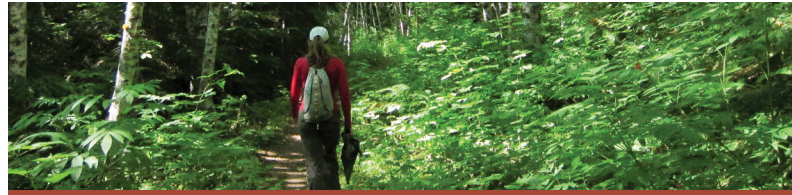
- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Forest Service
- National Park Service
- State Trust Lands
- State Parks and Other State Lands



Idaho's State Trust Lands and Recreation

Of the 45 million acres of state-owned lands in the West, nearly 90 percent are managed by state trust agencies. Trust lands are the result of land grants made by the federal government to Western states, mostly at the time of statehood, for the purpose of generating revenue to support schools and other public institutions. State trust lands operate under a legal requirement that the land generate long-term financial benefit for specific beneficiaries. States earn revenues from trust lands through a variety of activities, including timber harvesting, grazing, energy development, and land sales. Recreation has not historically been an active part of trust land management. In recent years, however, state trust agencies have evolved to accommodate more recreational opportunities, but each state varies in the amount and types of recreation it allows, and under what conditions.

The Idaho Department of Lands manages 2.4 million acres across the state and allows the public to freely recreate on 70 percent of these lands. Camping, hunting, off-highway vehicle riding (OHV) and fishing are all permitted on Idaho's trust lands. The Idaho Fish and Game leases trust lands that would not otherwise be open to the public and allows public access and sportsmen to utilize them. Outfitters can lease state trust lands as well. These leases can either be exclusive or non-exclusive to other outfitters, but the general public is allowed to hunt and fish on all trust lands leased to outfitters. The Idaho Department of Lands also generates revenue by collecting \$1 annually from the registration of every OHV in the state.



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Policy Recommendations

- Across the West, a trend toward accommodating more recreational opportunities on state trust lands is emerging. Idaho has been an integral part of this movement and should enact policies that continue to promote recreation on its state trust lands.
- Idaho does not charge the public to recreate on state trust lands. This is large part because of the state's liability laws that would make Idaho liable for claims from people recreating on these lands if it directly charged a fee. The state should consider amending its liability laws and start charging those who recreate. The Idaho Department of Lands receives \$1 annually from the registration of every off-highway vehicle to manage dispersed recreation on trust lands, and the Idaho Fish & Game pays to keep them freely accessible for hunters and fishers. However, those who camp, hike, cross country ski, horse-back ride, and engage in other outdoor activities do not pay for the use of these lands. The state should require these types of recreationalists to purchase a one-year use permit. This program would help Idaho's state trust lands fulfill their mandate to generate revenue for specific beneficiaries and keep these lands accessible.
- Idaho should work toward covering more than half of its state park expenditures through visitor fees. A number of measures can be taken to promote this such as adopting more public-private partnerships to keep costs down and become more responsive to the types of recreational opportunities visitors desire. This will make state parks less dependent on state funding and improve the quality of visitors' experiences.

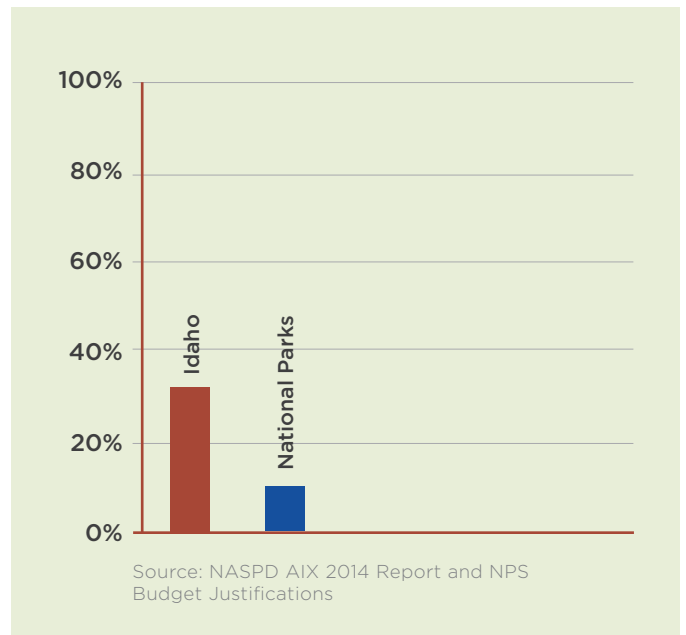
Idaho's State Parks and Recreation

Each state has a park system offering a range of recreation opportunities that may include primitive camping, plush lodges, snorkeling or skiing. The general mission of state park systems is to manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources in a state and to provide outdoor recreation opportunities for the public. All Western state park systems rely on user fees to help fund park management to some extent, but some also rely on general funds from state legislatures or other park-dedicated funds from sources such as fishing and hunting licenses, lottery revenues, and boat and vehicle registrations.

State parks are incredibly popular and receive more recreation visits per acre than any of the federal agencies, including the National Park Service. The state of Idaho receives 82 visitors per acre compared with five per acre at national parks in the West. The popularity of Idaho's state parks is in large part due to the types and quality of recreation opportunities the state provides. This popularity allows the state's park department to cover 32 percent of its operat-

ing costs through visitor fees alone. In comparison, Western national parks only generate enough revenue through these fees to cover 10 percent of their expenditures (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1:
STATE PARK EXPENDITURES COVERED BY VISITOR FEES (2013)



Summing Up

While the role of the role of federal land agencies in supplying recreational opportunities in the West is widely known, Idaho's state-owned lands also play an important role – one that is not as widely recognized or understood. Idaho has proven to be responsive to recreational demands and able to provide the types of recreational activities people desire, both on its trust lands and in its state parks.



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