



Idaho Department of Lands, Ag Producers, Have Much in Common

BY DUSTIN MILLER, DIRECTOR, IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF LANDS

At statehood, Congress granted Idaho a checkerboard of property, the 16th and 36th sections of each township creating a legal trust for the sole purpose of financially supporting nine beneficiaries, primarily public schools. The 2.5 million remaining acres from this grant are called Endowment Lands and may be found across every corner of Idaho.

The Idaho State Board of Land Commissioners oversees the management of Endowment Lands, with the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) tasked with managing a combined 2.5 million acres of forestland, rangeland and roughly nineteen thousand acres of farmland. The commissioner's include Idaho's Governor, State Controller, Attorney General, Secretary of State and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

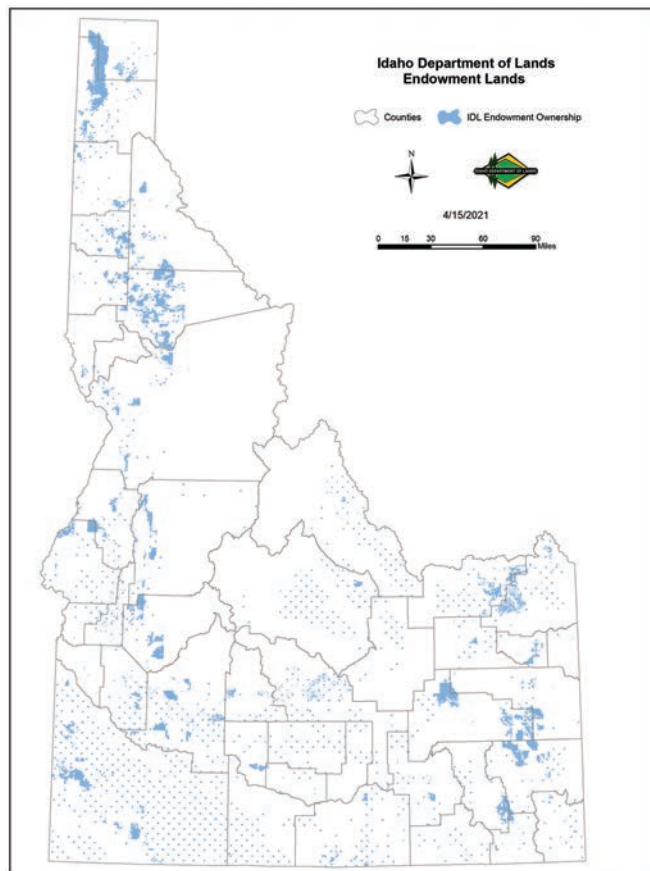
The Idaho constitutional requires that the Land Board maximize revenue earned from Endowment Lands to help support the beneficiaries. IDL's approach is different than federal land managers who must always take into consideration a diversity of uses. IDL's undivided loyalty is to the beneficiaries, and its mission is to make money to help support them.

Most of the revenue IDL generates from Endowment Lands comes from timber sales, a renewable "crop" managed under a sixty-to-eighty-year rotation. Land is also leased for communication sites, recreation, residential/commercial uses, conservation, mineral extraction, grazing and farming. Often, leases for compatible uses are stacked one upon another, amplifying the revenue potential of the land. For all Endowment Lands leased or sold, Idaho law requires dispositions to occur via public auctions.

Information how you can lease Endowment Lands is available online at www.idl.idaho.gov.

Wheat is grown on a slice of Endowment Land, about 2,300 acres under 17 leases. Last year, endowment lessees reported growing 1,761 acres of dryland wheat and 107 acres of irrigated wheat. Roughly 419 acres were laid fallow. In 2021 wheat producers averaged 42 bushels per acre from leased Endowment Lands.

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- Burn Permits are **REQUIRED** during closed fire season from May 10 through October 20.
- They're free and available online 24/7!
- For general debris burning visit BurnPermits.idaho.gov
- For crop residue burning visit <https://www.deq.idaho.gov/air-quality/smoke-and-burning/crop-residue-burning/>



wildfire risks. Now, more than ever, all must do their part to prevent unwanted human-caused fires. Last year, 62% of fires on land protected by IDL were human caused, and all were preventable.

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Idaho Department of Lands also protects 6.3 million acres of state, private and federal land from wildfire. While IDL’s primary fire responsibility is protecting forestland, the agency often fights fires on ag land within its fire protective districts. An example of this was last year’s Bedrock Fire near Lenore that burned more than eleven thousand acres of agricultural and timberland.

Severe fire seasons appear to be Idaho’s new norm. More people are moving into the wildland urban interface and adjacent to ag land, too. These trends combined with drought conditions and declarations in 34 counties should heighten everyone’s concerns about



Wildfire doesn’t respect property lines. A debris fire started on one piece of property can quickly spread to neighboring timber or ag land. Debris burning is one of the most frequent causes of wildfire on land protected by IDL. The risks posed by runaway debris or escaped burns on ag land is tremendous, because with just a little wind, fires can quickly engulf thousands of acres destroying valuable crops and killing livestock.

To help prevent fires during higher risk periods, Idaho law establishes a closed fire season from May 10 through October 20. During the closed season, Idahoans who live outside city limits are required to obtain a state fire burn permit from IDL before burning. Burning crop residue also requires a permit, but ag producers initiate the permit application process through the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. Permits for burning both debris and crop residue are free and available online via a self-service system.

Idaho’s burn permit system reduces the number of false alarms and allows fire crews to respond only when truly needed. IDL investigates all fires on land it protects and is required by law to seek reimbursement for suppression costs for negligent, human caused fires.

Like ag producers, IDL understands that land management decisions made today impact the productivity of Endowment Lands tomorrow. Future generations of endowment beneficiaries, namely school children, are counting on IDL to make wise decisions, and put the beneficiaries first. ■