



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on March 3, 2010

Obama Administration Set to Seize Millions of Acres in the West

Not satisfied with placing banks, insurance companies, and the car industry under the control of the federal government, President Obama has turned his sights on the American West.

This is the startling revelation contained in a letter published Tuesday by the *Washington Times* penned by South Carolina Senator Jim DeMint. In the three-page exposé, Senator DeMint cites a [21-page secret Obama Administration document](#) reportedly bearing the designation “Internal Draft-NOT FOR RELEASE” wherein the President sets forth his plan to federalize more than 10 million acres of land in the Western United States by placing it under the “protection” of the Department of the Interior. The pernicious nature of this scheme is illuminated when one discovers that the “federal government owns approximately 650 million acres nationwide, including about 80% of the land in Nevada and 63% of the land in Utah.”



According to DeMint’s description of the memo, the President identifies 14 pieces of land that “might be good candidates” for the unilateral executive land grab. Of the myriad valid reasons for opposing this action, Senator DeMint lists the loss of jobs (“ranching, forestry, mining, and energy development”) and the loss of tax revenue that will “dry up” the funds needed to maintain “schools, firehouses, and community centers.”

Ostensibly, the proposed seizure of so many valuable tracts of land is justified as a measure necessary for the preservation of habitats and hiking trails. This would be accomplished by proclaiming the parcels “monuments” as provided for by the Antiquities Act of 1906. Under the provisions of that Act (officially styled the “Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities), a president is empowered to restrict the use of public land by way of executive order. The first president to exercise this authority was Theodore Roosevelt who created Devil’s Tower National Monument and the Grand Canyon National Monument under the Act’s auspices. More recently, George W. Bush [cordoned off almost 200,000 square miles](#) of the Pacific Ocean, proclaiming them to be undersea monuments.

It was the misuse (constitutionally speaking, there is no proper use) of this power by former Presidents Carter and Clinton that prompted Representative Robert Bishop (R-Utah) to blow the whistle on this inchoate plan for a massive federal land grab. During the Carter Administration, over 56 million acres of oil-rich Alaskan wilderness was appropriated by the executive branch and slapped with the



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“monument” label. So heinous and controversial was this overreaching that Congress weakened the Antiquities Act by passage of the Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act requiring Congressional approval for any seizure of land over 5,000 acres.

As for President Clinton, he ordered such forfeitures 22 times during his eight years in the White House, locking away 5.9 million acres all told throughout the country. It is one of these uses that is near and dear to the heart of Representative Bishop. In 1996, Bill Clinton created the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument by taking control of 1.9 million acres of land in southern Utah. Over 135,000 acres of this land was being leased by private developers were producing over 65,000 barrels of oil a year from five active wells. Bill Clinton’s fiat shut down those operations and capped those wells for good, depriving the country of a significant source of domestic energy.

Representative Bishop fears that if he hadn’t made the memo public then President Obama would have followed his predecessors and latched onto millions of square miles of valuable property. The editorial written by Senator De Mint states that the Obama Administration already has 13.5 million acres on its “shopping list” of prime real estate. Particularly noteworthy is the Department of the Interior’s zeal to stake a claim to land in Nevada because it considers it to be a “center of climate change and scientific research.”

The locations targeted in the Obama Administration’s secret plot to seize public land by stroke of the pen include the following: the Northwest Sonoran Desert, Arizona; the Berryessa Snow Mountains, California; the Bodie Hills, California; the expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, California; the Modoc Plateau, California; the Vermillion Basin, Colorado; the Northern Montana Prairie, Montana; the Heart of the Great Basin, Nevada; the Lesser Prairie Chicken Preserve, New Mexico; the Otero Mesa, New Mexico; the Owyhee Desert, Oregon and Nevada; the Cedar Mesa region, Utah; the San Rafael Swell, Utah; and the San Juan Islands, Washington.

Proving that in this case he puts his measures where his mouth is, Senator [DeMint sponsored an amendment](#) to prevent President Obama from issuing an executive order carving out any land for a “national monument” from the already shrinking available acreage that as yet remains outside federal control.

{youtube}NBr5tAq8fjk{/youtube}

Unsurprisingly, the Senate voted 58-38 against the DeMint resolution and played patsy once again to the executive branch’s haughty disregard for the limited power granted it by the Constitution and for the Tenth Amendment’s once impregnable wall safeguarding the sovereignty of the fifty states. If such abuses continue to go unchecked soon there will no longer be a nation known as the United States of America. In its place, there will stand the United State of America.

Photo of Sen. Jim DeMint: AP Images



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