



Courtesy of Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Mule deer would be among the species to benefit if the state acquired a 5,000-acre ranch shown here in Lincoln County, according to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

WDFW scouts for more land to purchase

Potential purchases include farm and grazing fields

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, which owns or manages 1 million acres, has identified 10 more tracts of land it may buy.

The properties total nearly 10,000 acres and range from a 5,542-acre ranch in Lincoln County in Eastern Washington to 13 acres of wetlands in Snohomish County in Western Washington. Most of the properties have been used for livestock grazing or crop production.

WDFW would set the land aside for hunting, fishing, recreation and wildlife preservation. Some land could be leased to ranchers or farmers, said Cynthia Wilkerson, WDFW land conservation and restoration section manager.

WDFW now leases 83,763 acres for grazing and 22,181 acres for agriculture statewide.

WDFW estimates the 10 properties would collectively cost \$13.3 million, though the department has not yet had the lands independently appraised or made offers to landowners, she said.

WDFW will take public comments until Feb. 12 on whether to add the properties to the 11 properties the department already plans to purchase in 2017-19. The bulk of the money would come from a state appropriation or federal grants.

The 10 properties WDFW is seeking comment are:

- Lincoln County: 5,542 acres of mostly shrub-steppe

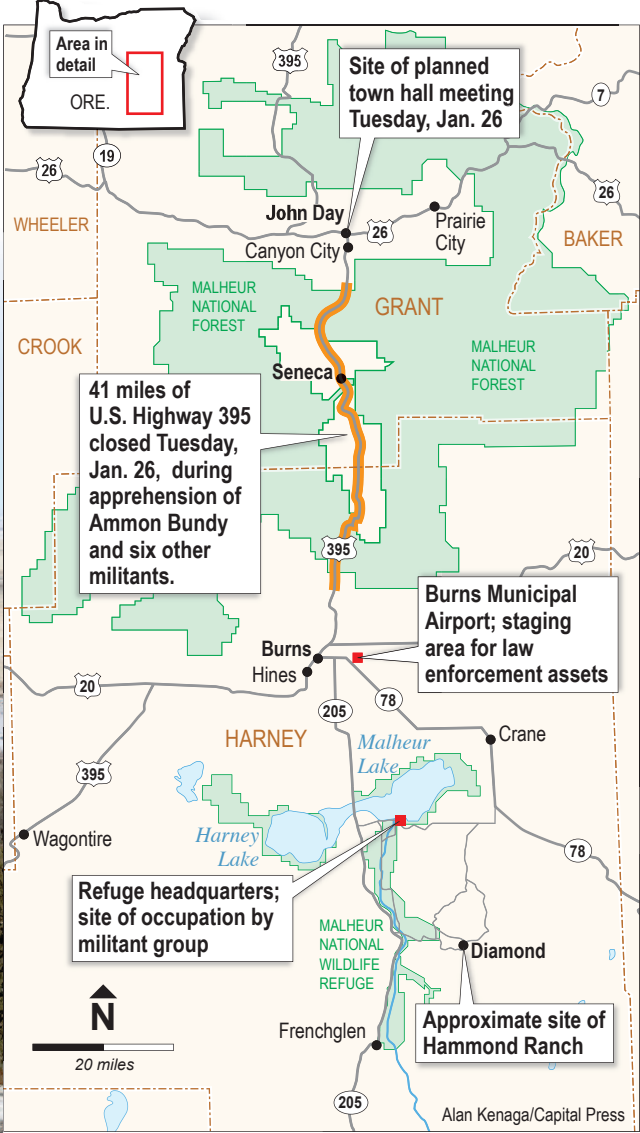
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CHANGE MAY BE HARDER

The takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge jump-started the debate over how government manages rural land, but it didn’t end it.



A sign at the entrance to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge spells out some of the frustration Westerners have with federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management. BELOW: An aerial view of the refuge headquarters compound.



Oregon showdown further polarizes the federal land debate. Experts say the incident is likely to reinforce opinions on both sides.



Owyhee Canyonlands wilderness proposal unresolved

Local opposition strong against 2.5 million-acre monument

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

The occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge may have been broken, but a divisive wilderness proposal remains unresolved in Southeast Oregon.

The underlying issues are familiar: Anger over federal

land management and government “over-reach,” and frustration over loss of economic opportunity in the rural West.

The Bend-based environmental group Oregon Natural Desert Association, backed by the Keen Footwear company of Portland, has proposed a 2.5 million acre Owyhee Canyonlands wilderness

and conservation area.

Ranchers and other Malheur County residents are dead set against it. “Not only no, but hell no,” prominent rancher Bob Skinner said.

The Obama administration, which could establish the canyonlands area by presidential proclamation, has given no sign what it will do. Many

people speculate the administration did not want to throw gas on the fire while the wildlife refuge occupation was going on.

“We don’t know where it is in the process, there’s nobody who knows that,” Skinner said.

The proposed area is bigger than either the Yellowstone, Yosemite or Grand Canyon national parks, critics point out, and would cover 40 percent of Malheur County. Residents

believe designation would be accompanied by restrictions and regulations that would prohibit or severely complicate grazing, mining, hunting and recreation.

While proponents say traditional uses of the land will be allowed, a local group called Citizens in Opposition to the Owyhee Canyonlands Monument does not believe them.

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