



From Left: Carrizo Plain National Monument in California. The South Fork of the Snake River in Idaho. The Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument in California. Lawmakers in Idaho and other states say they plan to let Utah “test the waters in court and to move forward with a similar lawsuit if their neighbor prevails.” Bureau of Land Management photos

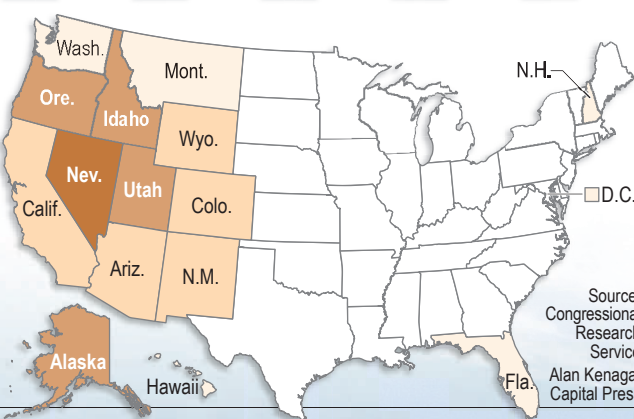
LEADING THE CHARGE

Utah plans court battle to loosen Uncle Sam’s grip on public land

Federal land by state

Land area by percent of state

0-10% 11-30% 31-50% 51-80% > 80%



By JOHN O’CONNELL
Capital Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah Rep. Ken Ivory is on the front line of an approaching legal battle to wrestle millions of acres of land from federal control, and legislators in other Western states are intently watching his progress.

The Utah Republican says Western economies have long been held hostage by the federal government — roughly 47 percent of the land in the 11 Western states and 61 percent of Alaska are under federal control, compared with 4 percent in the other states. Sixty-five percent of Utah is federal land.

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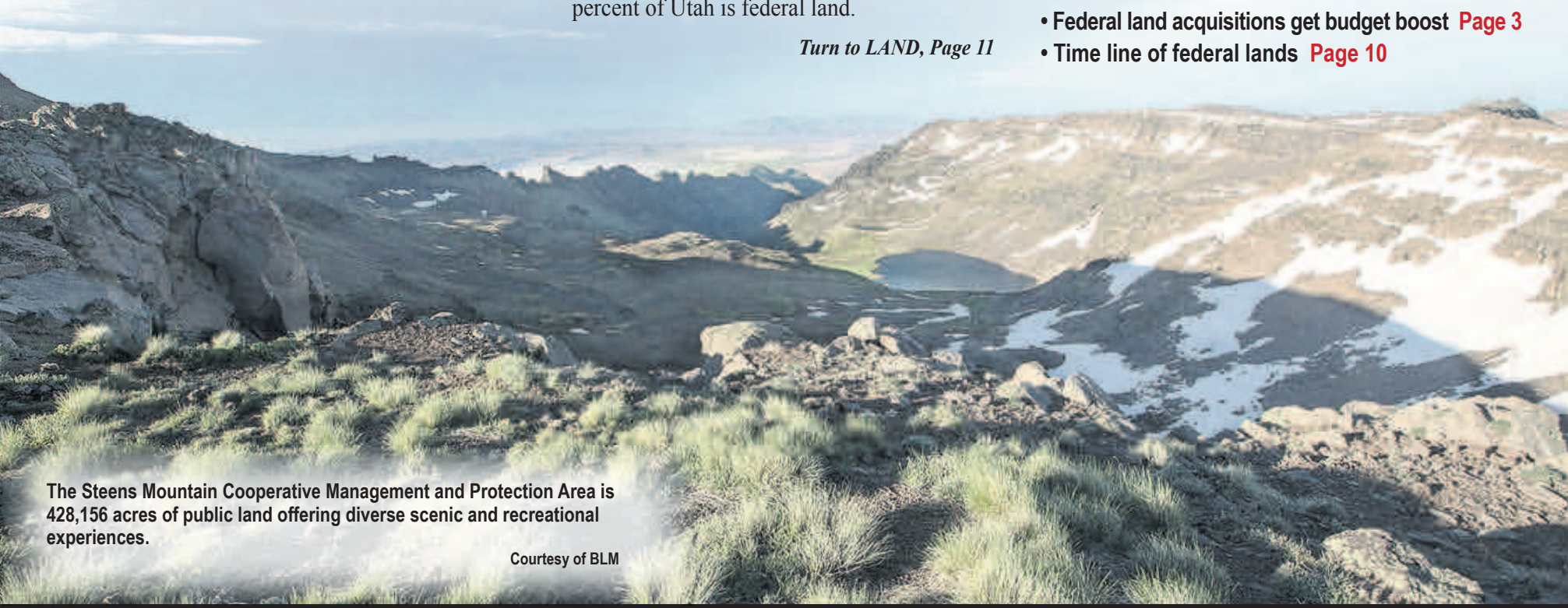


John O’Connell/Capital Press

Utah state Rep. Ken Ivory.

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The Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area is 428,156 acres of public land offering diverse scenic and recreational experiences.

Courtesy of BLM

Organic seed usage grows

Trend strongest among smallest farmers

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Organic farmers are generally using more organically grown seed, though the trend is most apparent among the smallest growers, according to a recent survey.

Organic farmers were asked about their seed usage as part of the upcoming report about the “state of organic seed” in 2016, which is being written by the Organic Seed Alliance nonprofit group.

Growers reported planting about 69 percent of their vegetable acreage with organic seed, up from 55 percent five years earlier.

Acreage planted with organic seed also shot up from about 49 percent to 66.5 percent for cover crops and 72 percent to 77 percent for field crops.

Forage acreage planted with organic seed declined slightly, from 61 percent to 59 percent.

While the Organic Seed Alliance is heartened by this trajectory, it’s least pronounced among the largest

farmers who have the potential to make a significant impact on organic seed usage, said Jared Zystro, the group’s assistant director for research and education.

“Smaller farms tended to use much more organic seed,” Zystro said during the alliance’s recent conference in Corvallis, Ore.

Among farms with fewer than 10 acres, for example, 75 percent of the vegetable acreage was planted with organic seed, compared to about 20 percent of the acreage for farms with more than 480 acres, the survey found.

A lack of desired varieties was the main reason farmers cited as their reason for not using more organic seed, followed by insufficient quantities, a dearth of desirable traits and high prices, the survey said.

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Capital Press file

GMO Roundup Ready alfalfa is shown in this photo. Local government authority over genetically engineered crops is being reconsidered by Oregon lawmakers roughly three years after they prohibited most city and county seed restrictions.

Oregon lawmakers rethink biotech pre-emption

Bill would allow local governments to regulate biotech crops

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Local government authority over genetically engineered crops is being reconsidered by Oregon lawmakers roughly three years after they prohibited most city and county seed restrictions.

Critics of biotechnology claim that lawmakers haven’t enacted meaningful policies for genetic engineering since adopting a 2013 law pre-empting local governments from setting their own seed rules.

The pre-emption bill was

included in a broader legislative package that included public employee retirement system reforms that the Oregon Supreme Court later invalidated.

Proponents of House Bill 4122, which would repeal statewide pre-emption specifically for genetically engineered crops, claim local governments should be permitted to prevent cross-pollination between organic, conventional and biotech cultivars.

“In an ideal world, farmers will work together, but in reality, people are stubborn and do as they please,” said Jared Watters, a Jackson County farmer, during a Feb. 9 hearing before the House Committee on Consumer Protection and Government Effectiveness.

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