

AZSFWC has opposed any effort to transfer Federal Public Lands to the States. Our April 3, 2015 letter to Governor Ducey regarding bills being considered at the time supports that position. Then on April 4, 2016, our AZSFWC Resolution further delineates our stance on the matter.

The following is an assessment of the issues by longtime sportsman and conservationist Larry Audsley of Tucson. Larry recently agreed to return to the AZ Wildlife Federation Board to concentrate his efforts primarily on opposing any such land transfer.

His words speak for themselves!

In recent years there's been a resurgence of efforts to wrest public lands from federal control and turn them over to the states. Arizona sportsmen recognize this movement for what it is: A chance for developers, investors and politicians to profit while sacrificing our wildlife and hunting opportunities.

Some would have us believe the current uprising is the result of overbearing federal regulation. While that sounds plausible, the driving force behind this movement is, and always has been, greed and the pursuit of power. It was tried in the early 1930s and again in the late 40s and early 50s, long before the federal regulations boom of the 1960s and 70s. Each effort tailors its marketing message to the issues of its time, but commercial and political gain is the movement's constant source of energy and inspiration.

Most sportsmen would agree that the federal agencies should do a better job of accommodating wildlife management and outdoor recreation. But there's no indication that state management would be any better. To the contrary, past experience suggests the state would use our national forests, wildlife refuges and BLM lands as cash machines to finance state services while lowering taxes. Many of the politicians promoting this idea have openly said that's their intention.

Even on unsold lands managed by the state, hunters would lose out. When lands are managed for revenue yield, the average hunter is quickly priced out. One need only look to the fees charged on Arizona's Indian reservations or on private land in New Mexico and Texas to see how Arizona hunting would change under state land management.

Arizona's federal lands provide the habitat for most of our elk, turkey, deer, bighorn sheep and other treasured game species. State control would lead to loss and destruction of the habitat and convert our remaining wildlife to cash crops. We should not take lightly this attack on our hunting heritage.