

State Trust Lands in the West: Fiduciary Duty in a Changing Landscape (Updated)

Peter W. Culp, Andy Laurenzi, Cynthia C. Tuell, and Alison Berry

State Trust Lands in the West (Updated) introduces readers to the concept of state trust lands, which Congress granted to each state upon inception for the purpose of supporting public institutions, primarily K-12 public schools. This report explores the history and current status of trust lands in the West, where 85 percent of the remaining 46 million acres of these lands are concentrated. And it offers examples of initiatives to help land managers and other interested parties fulfill their multiple trust responsibilities while producing larger, more reliable revenues for trust beneficiaries, accommodating public interests and concerns, and enhancing the overall decision-making environment for trust management.


This comprehensive report is an updated version of the original 2006 publication. It reflects the current status of initiatives profiled in the case studies, and the graphics, charts, and appendices include statistics from fiscal year 2013. *State Trust Lands in the West* is the product of Western Lands and Communities, a joint program of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the Sonoran Institute.

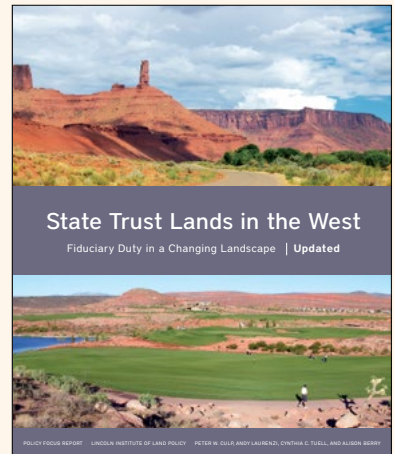
State trust lands are an often misunderstood category of land ownership in the U.S. According to Stephanie Sklar, CEO of the Sonoran Institute, “This popular report was updated and reprinted so it can continue to serve as an introductory primer on the issue; one that clearly illustrates the varying degrees of flexibility the states have in managing their trusts, all while meeting their fiduciary responsibility to the beneficiaries.” She adds that Sonoran Institute makes a practice of sending

this report annually to all new trust land managers, “The history and core content of the report have not changed significantly, but updated data makes it more timely and useful.”

State Trust Lands in the West and a companion website, www.statetrustlands.org, show how much land each state holds in trust, the type of revenue-generating activities conducted on trust lands, who the beneficiaries are, and the annual revenue generated and distributed to the beneficiaries.

Across the West, communities are changing rapidly as a result of population growth and an ongoing nationwide shift toward a more diversified, knowledge-based economy. This report presents strategies and approaches that state trust land managers have taken in response, including these measures:

- Establish comprehensive asset management frameworks that balance short-term revenue generation with long-term value maintenance and enhancement.
- Incorporate collaborative planning approaches with external stakeholders to achieve better trust land management.
- Encourage real estate development activities that employ sustainable land disposition tools and large-scale planning processes, especially in fast-growing areas.
- Support conservation projects that enhance revenue potential, offer ecosystem services, and allow multiple uses of trust lands.
- Introduce comprehensive reforms to expand flexibility and accountability of trust land management systems. 



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ALSO AVAILABLE

In a related report, *Conserving State Trust Lands: Strategies for the Intermountain West*, authors Susan Culp and Joe Marlow examine strategies to conserve state trust lands with ecological and environmental value, while maintaining the trust obligation to earn revenue for K-12 schools and other beneficiaries.

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