

January 1995

# FEDERAL LANDS

## Information on Land Owned and on Acreage With Conservation Restrictions





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**Resources, Community, and  
Economic Development Division**

B-259705

January 30, 1995

The Honorable Don Young  
Chairman, Committee on  
Resources  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Richard Pombo  
House of Representatives

The federal government owns about 650 million acres, about 30 percent of the nation's total surface area.<sup>1</sup> Four federal land management agencies—the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and National Park Service (NPS)—are responsible for managing about 95 percent of this federally owned land; the Department of Defense manages most of the remainder. These four agencies managed a total of about 623 million acres as of September 30, 1993, or over 27 percent of the approximately 2.3 billion acres in the United States. In addition, over the past 30 years, the Congress has enacted a number of laws to protect natural resources on federal, state, and private lands. Among other things, these laws affect what can be done on these lands in connection with the air, water, soils, plants, and animals. In addition, the use of some federal lands is encumbered for conservation purposes by legislative or administrative restrictions.<sup>2</sup>

Concerned about trends in the amount of land owned by the federal government and in the regulation of private property, you requested that we, among other things, review the trends in federal land ownership and regulation of private land. As agreed with your offices, this fact sheet identifies over the 29-year period from June 30, 1964, through September 30, 1993, the changes in the amount of federally owned land (1) managed by the four major federal land management agencies and (2) encumbered for conservation purposes by legislative or administrative restrictions.

As agreed with your offices, we plan to issue a more comprehensive report later this year that will address the (1) reasons for the changes in federal

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<sup>1</sup>As of September 30, 1991, which is the latest available nationwide information.

<sup>2</sup>Land encumbered for conservation purposes includes, among other things, land set aside for national parks, national wildlife refuges, wilderness and wilderness study areas, and wild and scenic rivers as well as areas of critical environmental concern.

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land ownership, (2) methods used by the federal government to acquire land, and (3) amount of private land under the regulatory control of the federal government.

In summary, from the end of fiscal year 1964 through fiscal year 1993, the overall amount of federal land managed by the four major federal land management agencies decreased from about 701 million acres to about 623 million acres, an overall reduction of over 77 million acres, or about 11 percent. Although an overall decrease occurred during this 29-year period, the amount of land managed by the four agencies increased in 46 states and the District of Columbia by almost 21 million acres and decreased in 4 states by over 97 million acres, of which about 96 million acres were in Alaska. Furthermore, the overall decrease is skewed because of two unique situations in Alaska that resulted in the transfer of about 112 million acres of BLM land. The two situations involved the transfer of (1) about 76 million acres to the state of Alaska in accordance with the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958, as amended (Public Law 85-508), and (2) about 36 million acres to Native Alaskans in accordance with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1601, et seq.).

Excluding these two large land transfers, the overall amount of land managed by the four agencies actually increased by about 34 million acres over the 29-year period, including an increase of about 16 million acres in Alaska. Three of the agencies had increases in the amount of federal land that they managed—the Forest Service’s increase was about 5 million acres, FWS’ increase was about 65 million acres, and NPS’ increase was about 49 million acres. These increases were the result of (1) land transfers from BLM for the purposes of expanding existing, or creating new, national forests, wildlife refuges, and parks in Alaska and (2) new land acquisitions. BLM had a decrease of about 85 million acres, primarily because of transfers of BLM land to other federal agencies such as FWS and NPS. At the end of fiscal year 1993, the four agencies managed over 50 percent of the land in five states and over 25 percent of the land in an additional seven states.

Since fiscal year 1993, the amount of land managed by the four agencies has continued to increase as a result of the expansion of existing, or creation of new, national forests, wildlife refuges, and parks. For example, the agencies acquired about 203,000 acres in fiscal year 1994. Of this amount, the Forest Service acquired about 72,000 acres, BLM about 27,000 acres, FWS about 82,000 acres, and NPS about 22,000 acres.

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The amount of the four agencies' land encumbered for conservation purposes by legislative or administrative restrictions increased from about 51 million acres (about 7 percent of the agencies' total acreage) in fiscal year 1964, to about 131 million acres (nearly 19 percent of the agencies' total acreage) in fiscal year 1979, and to about 271 million acres (almost 44 percent of the agencies' total acreage) in fiscal year 1993. Since fiscal year 1993, the Congress has set aside additional acreage for conservation purposes by designating additional wilderness areas and creating new national parks. For example, the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-433) designated about 7.7 million additional acres of BLM, NPS, and Forest Service lands as wilderness and created three new national parks from BLM land.

Section 1 discusses the overall trends in land managed by the four federal land management agencies from the end of fiscal year 1964 through fiscal year 1993 and then shows this information by state and by agency. Section 2 shows, as of September 30, 1993, the agencies' total acreage in each state, the acreage managed by the four agencies in each state, and the percentage of total acreage that is managed by the four agencies. Section 3 contains information, as of September 30, 1993, about the number of acres managed in each state by the four agencies and the amount and percentage of that acreage encumbered for conservation purposes by legislative or administrative restrictions. It also contains information about the types of legislative or administrative restrictions that have been directed toward specific portions of Forest Service and BLM lands. We did not gather this information for FWS and NPS lands because the two agencies' lands are, generally, established entirely for conservation purposes.

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## Scope and Methodology

We obtained and reviewed documents and other data from the four agencies covered by our review for the lands they manage. We also obtained computerized data files on the lands managed, which we input into our own data base for analysis purposes. We also included in our data base, data from printed reports obtained from the agencies. As agreed with your offices, we did not verify the completeness, accuracy, and reliability of the data maintained in the agencies' data bases. Such a verification would require a significant investment of time and resources because of the immense volume of data contained in the data bases. We did, however, take steps to reconcile inconsistencies in the data contained in the agencies' computerized data files and their printed reports. We interviewed senior-level land management officials at each of these

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agencies' headquarters as well as at selected field locations. Our review was conducted between June and December 1994.

As requested, we did not obtain written comments from the agencies included in our review. We did, however, discuss the data included in this fact sheet with officials of the Department of Agriculture, including the Assistant Director of the Forest Service's Lands Staff, and the Department of the Interior, including BLM's Assistant Division Chief for Lands and FWS and NPS realty and land resources specialists, who agreed with the accuracy of the information. Several technical clarifications were offered by these officials, which have been incorporated where appropriate.

As requested, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this fact sheet until 30 days from the date of this letter. At that time, we will make copies available to the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior; the Chief of the Forest Service; the Directors of BLM, FWS, and NPS; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; interested congressional committees and Members of Congress; and other interested parties. We will also provide copies to others upon request. Please call me at (202) 512-7756 if you or your staff have any questions about this fact sheet. Major contributors to this fact sheet are listed in appendix I.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Duffus III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

James Duffus III  
Director, Natural Resources  
Management Issues

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## Abbreviations

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service
GAO	General Accounting Office
NPS	National Park Service

# Trends in Land Managed by Four Federal Land Management Agencies From the End of Fiscal Year 1964 Through Fiscal Year 1993

From June 30, 1964, through September 30, 1993, the overall amount of land managed by the four major federal land management agencies—the Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service and the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and National Park Service (NPS)—decreased from about 701 million acres to about 623 million acres, an overall reduction of over 77 million acres, or about 11 percent. Although an overall decrease occurred during this 29-year period, the amount of land managed by the four agencies increased in 46 states and the District of Columbia by almost 21 million acres and decreased in 4 states by over 97 million acres.

Most of the 97-million-acre decrease—about 96 million acres—occurred in Alaska. The overall decrease is skewed, however, because of two unique situations in Alaska that resulted in the transfer of about 112 million acres of BLM land. The two situations involved the transfer of (1) about 76 million acres to the state of Alaska in accordance with the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958, as amended (Public Law 85-508), and (2) about 36 million acres to Native Alaskans in accordance with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1601, *et seq.*). Excluding these two large land transfers, the overall amount of land managed by the four agencies actually increased by about 34 million acres over the 29-year period, including an increase of about 16 million acres in Alaska. Table 1.1 shows the comparison of acreage managed by the four federal agencies in fiscal years 1964 and 1993, both including and excluding the effects of the two major BLM land transfers in Alaska.

**Table 1.1: Comparison of Acreage Managed by the Four Federal Agencies, Fiscal Years 1964 and 1993**

Agency	Acres managed		Acreage change	Acreage change excluding two major Alaska transfers <sup>a</sup>
	1964	1993		
Forest Service	186,274,576	191,525,377	5,250,801	5,250,801
Bureau of Land Management	464,346,607	267,640,286	(196,706,321)	(85,006,321)
Fish and Wildlife Service	22,396,317	87,375,963	64,979,646	64,979,646
National Park Service	27,500,745	76,571,878	49,071,133	49,071,133
<b>Total</b>	<b>700,518,245</b>	<b>623,113,504</b>	<b>(77,404,741)</b>	<b>34,295,259</b>

Note: Numbers shown in parentheses indicate a decrease.

<sup>a</sup>This column excludes two large and unique BLM land transfers of about 112 million acres in Alaska that took place between fiscal years 1964 and 1993 because these transfers skew the overall data.

Source: GAO’s analysis of data from the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior.

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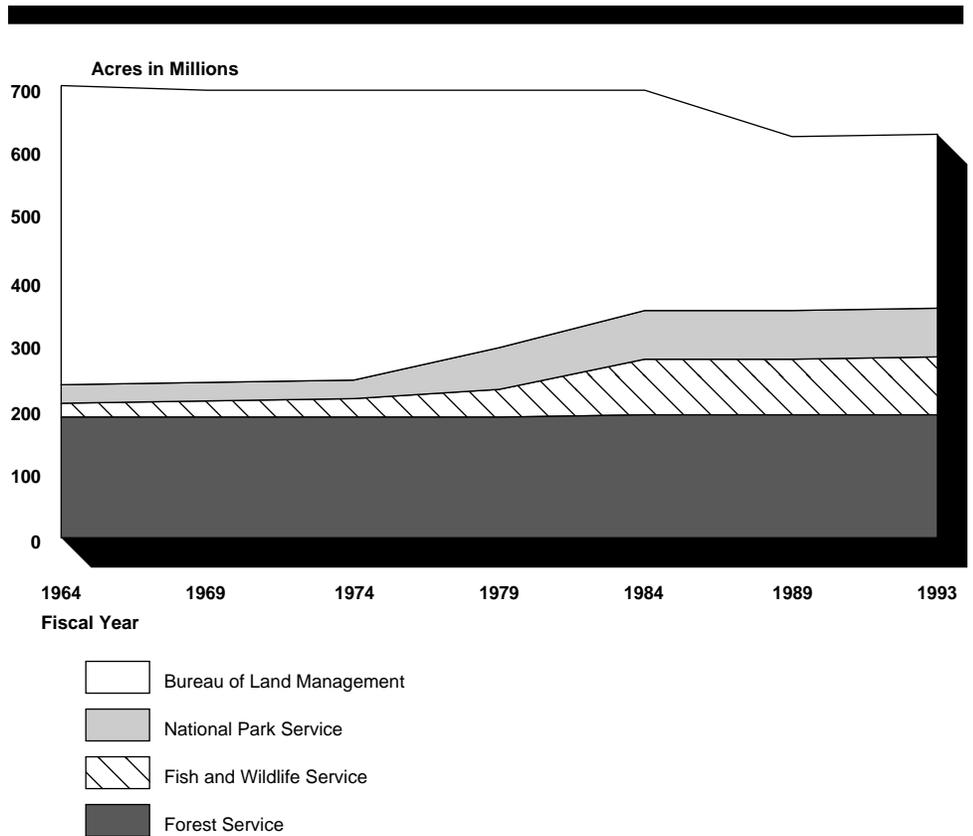
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Over the 29-year period, the Forest Service, FWS, and NPS each had increases in the amount of federal land that they managed. These increases—over 5 million acres for the Forest Service, nearly 65 million acres for FWS, and about 49 million acres for NPS—were the result of (1) land transferred from BLM for the purposes of enlarging existing, or creating new, national forests, wildlife refuges, and parks in Alaska and (2) new land acquisitions. BLM-managed land decreased by nearly 197 million acres during the period, primarily because of the transfers of its land to FWS and NPS, to the state of Alaska, and to Native Alaskans.

The major transfers of land from BLM to FWS occurred in 1979 and 1980 when about 12 million acres and about 37 million acres were transferred, respectively, for the purpose of expanding the national wildlife refuge system. The major transfer of land from BLM to NPS occurred in 1979 when about 41 million acres were transferred for the purpose of expanding existing, or creating new, national parks, monuments, and preserves. Under the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958, the state of Alaska was authorized to select almost 104 million acres from BLM's acreage. Through the end of fiscal year 1993, about 87 million of these acres (about 76 million acres between fiscal years 1964 and 1993) had been transferred from BLM to the state of Alaska. Under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, about 40 million acres were set aside for Native Alaskans; about 36 million acres had been transferred from BLM to Native Alaskans by the end of fiscal year 1993. Figure 1.1 shows in 5-year increments from fiscal year 1964 through fiscal year 1993 the changes in acreage managed by the four agencies.

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**Figure 1.1: Changes in Acreage of Land Managed by the Four Federal Agencies, Fiscal Years 1964-93**



Since fiscal year 1993, the amount of land managed by the four agencies has continued to increase as a result of the expansion of existing, or creation of new, national forests, wildlife refuges, and parks. For example, the agencies were authorized to acquire about 203,000 acres in fiscal year 1994. Of this amount, the Forest Service acquired about 72,000 acres, BLM about 27,000 acres, FWS about 82,000 acres, and NPS about 22,000 acres. In addition, under the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-433), BLM transferred about 3 million acres to NPS for the establishment of the newly created Mojave National Preserve, Death Valley National Park, and Joshua Tree National Park.

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Table 1.2 shows, by state, the changes in the amount of acreage managed by the four agencies in fiscal years 1964 and 1993. Tables 1.3 through 1.6 show, by state, the changes in the amount of acreage managed by the Forest Service, BLM, FWS, and NPS, respectively.

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**Table 1.2: Total Acreage of Land Managed by the Four Federal Agencies, by State, Fiscal Years 1964 and 1993**

State <sup>a</sup>	Acres managed		Acreage change
	1964	1993	
Alabama	651,729	798,465	146,736
Alaska	335,715,092	239,509,874	(96,205,218)
Arizona	26,926,251	29,867,616	2,941,365
Arkansas	2,557,313	3,219,380	662,067
California	40,142,169	42,987,699	2,845,530
Colorado	23,229,253	23,437,010	207,758
Connecticut	972	6,692	5,720
Delaware	15,193	23,968	8,775
District of Columbia	6,910	6,926	16
Florida	2,719,077	3,836,610	1,117,533
Georgia	1,199,609	1,391,611	192,002
Hawaii	241,133	528,732	287,599
Idaho	32,733,251	32,437,746	(295,505)
Illinois	262,238	339,475	77,237
Indiana	129,283	212,275	82,992
Iowa	27,762	39,996	12,234
Kansas	123,522	135,772	12,249
Kentucky	585,039	778,815	193,776
Louisiana	830,538	1,363,174	532,636
Maine	114,656	168,516	53,860
Maryland	60,571	97,906	37,334
Massachusetts	45,306	65,184	19,878
Michigan	3,285,726	3,729,649	443,923
Minnesota	3,119,091	3,626,258	507,167
Mississippi	1,217,851	1,498,890	281,039
Missouri	1,424,117	1,600,992	176,876
Montana	26,078,794	26,745,613	666,819
Nebraska	486,960	527,205	40,246
Nevada	53,123,054	56,845,790	3,722,736
New Hampshire	679,930	735,068	55,138
New Jersey	32,052	103,369	71,317
New Mexico	23,250,166	22,920,318	(329,848)
New York	46,524	86,258	39,735
N. Carolina	1,569,062	2,003,825	434,763
N. Dakota	1,477,827	1,694,152	216,324
Ohio	122,080	251,460	129,380

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State <sup>a</sup>	Acres managed		Acreage change
	1964	1993	
Oklahoma	388,081	410,556	22,475
Oregon	31,699,972	32,104,965	404,992
Pennsylvania	499,941	588,636	88,695
Rhode Island	26	1,497	1,471
S. Carolina	728,177	741,651	13,474
S. Dakota	2,453,947	2,636,447	182,500
Tennessee	859,258	1,019,636	160,378
Texas	1,746,392	2,299,264	552,872
Utah	33,025,449	32,446,350	(579,099)
Vermont	239,238	364,391	125,153
Virginia	1,759,711	2,088,739	329,028
Washington	11,293,883	11,598,462	304,578
West Virginia	913,949	1,083,988	170,039
Wisconsin	1,710,038	2,003,012	292,974
Wyoming	28,970,082	30,103,622	1,133,541
<b>Total</b>	<b>700,518,245</b>	<b>623,113,504</b>	<b>(77,404,741)</b>

Note 1: Numbers shown in parentheses indicate a decrease.

Note 2: Acreage changes and totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>For our analysis, we included the District of Columbia as a state.

Source: GAO's analysis of data provided by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior.

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**Table 1.3: Total Acreage of Land Managed by the Forest Service, by State, Fiscal Years 1964 and 1993**

State <sup>a</sup>	Acres managed		Acreage change
	1964	1993	
Alabama	631,542	661,309	29,767
Alaska	20,741,964	22,124,288	1,382,324
Arizona	11,410,808	11,247,052	(163,756)
Arkansas	2,423,425	2,540,103	116,678
California	19,970,522	20,621,894	651,372
Colorado	14,330,694	14,471,811	141,117
Connecticut	0	24	24
Delaware	0	0	0
District of Columbia	0	0	0
Florida	1,075,089	1,136,796	61,707
Georgia	786,784	863,980	77,196
Hawaii	0	1	1
Idaho	20,345,861	20,442,914	97,053
Illinois	211,554	270,760	59,206
Indiana	125,890	191,593	65,703
Iowa	360	0	(360)
Kansas	107,114	108,175	1,061
Kentucky	460,693	682,679	221,986
Louisiana	591,637	602,090	10,453
Maine	50,023	53,040	3,017
Maryland	0	0	0
Massachusetts	1,651	0	(1,651)
Michigan	2,579,834	2,852,172	272,338
Minnesota	2,770,352	2,820,193	49,841
Mississippi	1,134,006	1,153,507	19,501
Missouri	1,372,081	1,487,022	114,941
Montana	16,637,813	16,847,192	209,379
Nebraska	339,716	351,973	12,257
Nevada	5,058,500	5,805,929	747,429
New Hampshire	678,104	722,753	44,649
New Jersey	0	0	0
New Mexico	9,086,505	9,323,059	236,554
New York	13,747	13,446	(301)
N. Carolina	1,125,196	1,239,318	114,122
N. Dakota	1,104,850	1,105,789	939
Ohio	110,852	217,942	107,090

(continued)

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State <sup>a</sup>	Acres managed		Acreage change
	1964	1993	
Oklahoma	271,403	301,448	30,045
Oregon	15,465,016	15,660,825	195,809
Pennsylvania	471,620	513,170	41,550
Rhode Island	0	0	0
S. Carolina	587,164	610,682	23,518
S. Dakota	1,988,290	2,011,604	23,314
Tennessee	598,837	628,590	29,753
Texas	775,296	754,843	(20,453)
Utah	7,946,494	8,108,302	161,808
Vermont	232,469	350,294	117,825
Virginia	1,453,853	1,649,524	195,671
Washington	9,688,321	9,167,362	(520,959)
West Virginia	905,647	1,032,121	126,474
Wisconsin	1,469,215	1,519,089	49,874
Wyoming	9,143,784	9,258,719	114,935
<b>Total</b>	<b>186,274,576</b>	<b>191,525,377</b>	<b>5,250,801</b>

Note 1: Numbers shown in parentheses indicate a decrease.

Note 2: Acreage changes and totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>For our analysis, we included the District of Columbia as a state.

Source: GAO's analysis of data provided by the Department of Agriculture.

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**Table 1.4: Total Acreage of Land Managed by the Bureau of Land Management, by State, Fiscal Years 1964 and 1993**

State <sup>a</sup>	Acres managed		Acreage change
	1964	1993	
Alabama	1,971	110,963	108,992
Alaska	288,541,188	88,860,328	(199,680,860)
Arizona	13,034,217	14,255,889	1,221,672
Arkansas	2,074	291,166	289,092
California	15,616,779	17,284,258	1,667,479
Colorado	8,311,968	8,309,082	(2,886)
Connecticut	0	0	0
Delaware	0	0	0
District of Columbia	0	0	0
Florida	1,423	25,277	23,854
Georgia	0	0	0
Hawaii	0	0	0
Idaho	12,310,977	11,848,706	(462,271)
Illinois	0	227	227
Indiana	0	0	0
Iowa	0	378	378
Kansas	1,297	0	(1,297)
Kentucky	0	0	0
Louisiana	7,288	309,611	302,323
Maine	0	0	0
Maryland	0	0	0
Massachusetts	0	0	0
Michigan	5,946	74,854	68,908
Minnesota	40,732	150,104	109,372
Mississippi	2,227	57,211	54,984
Missouri	323	2,232	1,909
Montana	8,262,282	8,076,362	(185,920)
Nebraska	6,058	7,493	1,435
Nevada	47,194,741	47,969,220	774,479
New Hampshire	0	0	0
New Jersey	0	0	0
New Mexico	13,826,454	12,888,035	(938,419)
New York	0	0	0
N. Carolina	0	0	0
N. Dakota	77,070	60,223	(16,847)
Ohio	0	0	0

(continued)

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State <sup>a</sup>	Acres managed		Acreage change
	1964	1993	
Oklahoma	29,124	2,338	(26,786)
Oregon	15,617,181	15,722,868	105,687
Pennsylvania	0	0	0
Rhode Island	0	0	0
S. Carolina	0	0	0
S. Dakota	280,473	279,085	(1,388)
Tennessee	0	0	0
Texas	0	0	0
Utah	23,472,577	22,147,772	(1,324,805)
Vermont	0	0	0
Virginia	0	0	0
Washington	259,170	351,753	92,583
West Virginia	0	0	0
Wisconsin	181	160,167	159,986
Wyoming	17,442,886	18,394,684	951,798
<b>Total</b>	<b>464,346,607</b>	<b>267,640,286</b>	<b>(196,706,321)</b>

Note 1: Numbers shown in parentheses indicate a decrease.

Note 2: Acreage changes and totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>For our analysis, we included the District of Columbia as a state.

Source: GAO's analysis of data provided by the Department of the Interior.

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**Table 1.5: Total Acreage of Land Managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service, by State, Fiscal Years 1964 and 1993**

State <sup>a</sup>	Acres managed		Acreage change
	1964	1993	
Alabama	9,047	14,692	5,645
Alaska	18,634,685	76,321,744	57,687,059
Arizona	6,977	1,672,499	1,665,522
Arkansas	123,899	285,135	161,236
California	58,188	238,780	180,592
Colorado	19,937	63,910	43,973
Connecticut	0	342	342
Delaware	15,193	23,968	8,775
District of Columbia	0	0	0
Florida	106,955	240,662	133,707
Georgia	377,787	470,064	92,278
Hawaii	1,765	272,278	270,513
Idaho	17,969	47,061	29,092
Illinois	50,593	68,346	17,753
Indiana	111	7,802	7,692
Iowa	26,028	37,955	11,927
Kansas	15,073	27,131	12,058
Kentucky	61,438	2,040	(59,398)
Louisiana	229,217	439,454	210,237
Maine	22,701	44,319	21,618
Maryland	19,425	39,306	19,881
Massachusetts	8,117	12,127	4,009
Michigan	102,045	112,940	10,895
Minnesota	212,544	422,762	210,218
Mississippi	56,980	185,521	128,542
Missouri	39,392	45,619	6,227
Montana	114,287	600,274	485,987
Nebraska	138,813	162,183	23,370
Nevada	222,612	2,292,739	2,070,127
New Hampshire	40	3,042	3,002
New Jersey	17,046	55,002	37,956
New Mexico	85,600	326,581	240,981
New York	12,690	23,602	10,912
N. Carolina	96,549	395,700	299,151
N. Dakota	225,457	455,788	230,331
Ohio	2,669	7,772	5,103

(continued)

**Section 1**  
**Trends in Land Managed by Four Federal**  
**Land Management Agencies From the End**  
**of Fiscal Year 1964 Through Fiscal Year**  
**1993**

State <sup>a</sup>	Acres managed		Acreage change
	1964	1993	
Oklahoma	79,654	96,891	17,237
Oregon	451,015	525,901	74,886
Pennsylvania	4,258	9,960	5,703
Rhode Island	26	1,492	1,466
S. Carolina	136,571	104,638	(31,933)
S. Dakota	40,644	191,413	150,769
Tennessee	1,958	44,891	42,933
Texas	117,416	375,673	258,257
Utah	97,303	100,156	2,853
Vermont	4,252	5,928	1,675
Virginia	16,685	117,449	100,764
Washington	107,716	135,797	28,081
West Virginia	215	1,708	1,493
Wisconsin	166,650	188,179	21,530
Wyoming	40,127	56,748	16,621
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,396,317</b>	<b>87,375,963</b>	<b>64,979,646</b>

Note 1: Numbers shown in parentheses indicate a decrease.

Note 2: Acreage changes and totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>For our analysis, we included the District of Columbia as a state.

Source: GAO's analysis of data provided by the Department of the Interior.

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**Table 1.6: Total Acreage of Land Managed by the National Park Service, by State, Fiscal Years 1964 and 1993**

State <sup>a</sup>	Acres managed		Acreage change
	1964	1993	
Alabama	9,169	11,501	2,332
Alaska	7,797,255	52,203,513	44,406,259
Arizona	2,474,249	2,692,176	217,927
Arkansas	7,915	102,976	95,061
California	4,496,680	4,842,767	346,087
Colorado	566,654	592,207	25,553
Connecticut	972	6,327	5,354
Delaware	0	0	0
District of Columbia	6,910	6,926	16
Florida	1,535,610	2,433,876	898,266
Georgia	35,038	57,567	22,528
Hawaii	239,368	256,453	17,085
Idaho	58,444	99,065	40,621
Illinois	91	142	51
Indiana	3,283	12,880	9,597
Iowa	1,374	1,663	289
Kansas	39	466	427
Kentucky	62,909	94,097	31,188
Louisiana	2,396	12,019	9,623
Maine	41,932	71,158	29,225
Maryland	41,146	58,600	17,454
Massachusetts	35,537	53,057	17,520
Michigan	597,901	689,683	91,782
Minnesota	95,463	233,199	137,736
Mississippi	24,638	102,651	78,012
Missouri	12,321	66,120	53,799
Montana	1,064,411	1,221,784	157,373
Nebraska	2,373	5,556	3,183
Nevada	647,201	777,902	130,701
New Hampshire	1,786	9,273	7,487
New Jersey	15,006	48,367	33,361
New Mexico	251,607	382,643	131,037
New York	20,087	49,210	29,123
N. Carolina	347,317	368,807	21,490
N. Dakota	70,450	72,351	1,902
Ohio	8,560	25,746	17,187

(continued)

**Section 1**  
**Trends in Land Managed by Four Federal**  
**Land Management Agencies From the End**  
**of Fiscal Year 1964 Through Fiscal Year**  
**1993**

State <sup>a</sup>	Acres managed		Acreage change
	1964	1993	
Oklahoma	7,901	9,880	1,979
Oregon	166,760	195,371	28,611
Pennsylvania	24,064	65,506	41,442
Rhode Island	0	5	5
S. Carolina	4,442	26,331	21,889
S. Dakota	144,540	154,344	9,805
Tennessee	258,463	346,155	87,692
Texas	853,680	1,168,748	315,069
Utah	1,509,075	2,090,120	581,045
Vermont	2,517	8,169	5,652
Virginia	289,173	321,766	32,593
Washington	1,238,676	1,943,549	704,873
West Virginia	8,087	50,158	42,072
Wisconsin	73,992	135,577	61,585
Wyoming	2,343,284	2,393,471	50,187
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,500,745</b>	<b>76,571,878</b>	<b>49,071,133</b>

Note 1: Numbers shown in parentheses indicate a decrease.

Note 2: Acreage changes and totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>For our analysis, we included the District of Columbia as a state.

Source: GAO's analysis of data provided by the Department of the Interior.

# Percentage of Land in Each State Managed by Four Federal Land Management Agencies

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Of the nation's approximately 2.3 billion acres, the Forest Service, BLM, FWS, and NPS managed about 623 million acres, or about 27 percent of the total acres as of the end of fiscal year 1993. The percentage of each state's total acreage that was managed by these agencies varied widely—from less than 1 percent in Iowa to about 81 percent in Nevada. The four agencies managed in excess of 50 percent of the land in five states—Alaska (about 66 percent), Idaho (about 61 percent), Nevada (about 81 percent), Oregon (about 52 percent), and Utah (about 62 percent). As figure 2.1 shows, the agencies' land holdings as of September 30, 1993, were in excess of 25 percent in 12 states, between 10 and 25 percent in 4 states and the District of Columbia, between 5 and 10 percent in 8 states, between 2 and 5 percent in 11 states, and less than 2 percent in the remaining 15 states.



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**Section 2**  
**Percentage of Land in Each State Managed**  
**by Four Federal Land Management Agencies**

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31 percent in fiscal year 1964 and more than one-third of the 27 percent in fiscal year 1993. Without Alaska, the four agencies' land holdings accounted for about 16 and 17 percent in fiscal years 1964 and 1993, respectively. As figure 2.2 shows, in fiscal years 1964 and 1993, 4 states had decreases in the percent of federal land managed by the four agencies, 32 states and the District of Columbia had increases of less than 1 percent, 7 had increases of between 1 and 2 percent, 5 had increases between 2 and 5 percent, and 2 had increases in excess of 5 percent.



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within each state that is managed by each of the four agencies, individually.

**Table 2.1: Percentage of Each State's Acreage Managed by the Four Federal Agencies, as of September 30, 1993**

<b>State<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Total acres</b>	<b>Acres managed by four federal agencies</b>	<b>Agencies' percentage</b>
Alabama	32,678,400	798,465	2.44
Alaska	365,481,600	239,509,874	65.53
Arizona	72,688,000	29,867,616	41.09
Arkansas	33,599,360	3,219,380	9.58
California	100,206,720	42,987,699	42.90
Colorado	66,485,760	23,437,010	35.25
Connecticut	3,135,360	6,692	0.21
Delaware	1,265,920	23,968	1.89
District of Columbia	39,040	6,926	17.74
Florida	34,721,280	3,836,610	11.05
Georgia	37,295,360	1,391,611	3.73
Hawaii	4,105,600	528,732	12.88
Idaho	52,933,120	32,437,746	61.28
Illinois	35,795,200	339,475	0.95
Indiana	23,158,400	212,275	0.92
Iowa	35,860,480	39,996	0.11
Kansas	52,510,720	135,772	0.26
Kentucky	25,512,320	778,815	3.05
Louisiana	28,867,840	1,363,174	4.72
Maine	19,847,680	168,516	0.85
Maryland	6,319,360	97,906	1.55
Massachusetts	5,034,880	65,184	1.29
Michigan	36,492,160	3,729,649	10.22
Minnesota	51,205,760	3,626,258	7.08
Mississippi	30,222,720	1,498,890	4.96
Missouri	44,248,320	1,600,992	3.62
Montana	93,271,040	26,745,613	28.68
Nebraska	49,031,680	527,205	1.08
Nevada	70,264,320	56,845,790	80.90
New Hampshire	5,768,960	735,068	12.74
New Jersey	4,813,440	103,369	2.15
New Mexico	77,766,400	22,920,318	29.47
New York	30,680,960	86,258	0.28

(continued)

**Section 2**  
**Percentage of Land in Each State Managed**  
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<b>State<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Total acres</b>	<b>Acres managed by four federal agencies</b>	<b>Agencies' percentage</b>
N. Carolina	31,402,880	2,003,825	6.38
N. Dakota	44,452,480	1,694,152	3.81
Ohio	26,222,080	251,460	0.96
Oklahoma	44,087,680	410,556	0.93
Oregon	61,598,720	32,104,965	52.12
Pennsylvania	28,804,480	588,636	2.04
Rhode Island	677,120	1,497	0.22
S. Carolina	19,374,080	741,651	3.83
S. Dakota	48,881,920	2,636,447	5.39
Tennessee	26,727,680	1,019,636	3.81
Texas	168,217,600	2,299,264	1.37
Utah	52,696,960	32,446,350	61.57
Vermont	5,936,640	364,391	6.14
Virginia	25,496,320	2,088,739	8.19
Washington	42,693,760	11,598,462	27.17
West Virginia	15,410,560	1,083,988	7.03
Wisconsin	35,011,200	2,003,012	5.72
Wyoming	62,343,040	30,103,622	48.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,271,343,360</b>	<b>623,113,504</b>	<b>27.43</b>

Note: Acreage totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>For our analysis, we included the District of Columbia as a state.

Source: GAO's analysis of data provided by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior.

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Percentage of Land in Each State Managed  
by Four Federal Land Management Agencies**

**Table 2.2: Acreage of Each State Managed by the Four Federal Agencies, as of September 30, 1993**

<b>State<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Forest Service</b>	<b>Bureau of Land Management</b>	<b>Fish and Wildlife Service</b>	<b>National Park Service</b>	<b>Total acreage managed</b>
Alabama	661,309	110,963	14,692	11,501	798,465
Alaska	22,124,288	88,860,328	76,321,744	52,203,513	239,509,874
Arizona	11,247,052	14,255,889	1,672,499	2,692,176	29,867,616
Arkansas	2,540,103	291,166	285,135	102,976	3,219,380
California	20,621,894	17,284,258	238,780	4,842,767	42,987,699
Colorado	14,471,811	8,309,082	63,910	592,207	23,437,010
Connecticut	24	0	342	6,327	6,692
Delaware	0	0	23,968	0	23,968
District of Columbia	0	0	0	6,926	6,926
Florida	1,136,796	25,277	240,662	2,433,876	3,836,610
Georgia	863,980	0	470,064	57,567	1,391,611
Hawaii	1	0	272,278	256,453	528,732
Idaho	20,442,914	11,848,706	47,061	99,065	32,437,746
Illinois	270,760	227	68,346	142	339,475
Indiana	191,593	0	7,802	12,880	212,275
Iowa	0	378	37,955	1,663	39,996
Kansas	108,175	0	27,131	466	135,772
Kentucky	682,679	0	2,040	94,097	778,815
Louisiana	602,090	309,611	439,454	12,019	1,363,174
Maine	53,040	0	44,319	71,158	168,516
Maryland	0	0	39,306	58,600	97,906
Massachusetts	0	0	12,127	53,057	65,184
Michigan	2,852,172	74,854	112,940	689,683	3,729,649
Minnesota	2,820,193	150,104	422,762	233,199	3,626,258
Mississippi	1,153,507	57,211	185,521	102,651	1,498,890
Missouri	1,487,022	2,232	45,619	66,120	1,600,992
Montana	16,847,192	8,076,362	600,274	1,221,784	26,745,613
Nebraska	351,973	7,493	162,183	5,556	527,205
Nevada	5,805,929	47,969,220	2,292,739	777,902	56,845,790
New Hampshire	722,753	0	3,042	9,273	735,068
New Jersey	0	0	55,002	48,367	103,369
New Mexico	9,323,059	12,888,035	326,581	382,643	22,920,318
New York	13,446	0	23,602	49,210	86,258
N. Carolina	1,239,318	0	395,700	368,807	2,003,825
N. Dakota	1,105,789	60,223	455,788	72,351	1,694,152

(continued)

**Section 2**  
**Percentage of Land in Each State Managed**  
**by Four Federal Land Management Agencies**

<b>State<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Forest Service</b>	<b>Bureau of Land Management</b>	<b>Fish and Wildlife Service</b>	<b>National Park Service</b>	<b>Total acreage managed</b>
Ohio	217,942	0	7,772	25,746	251,460
Oklahoma	301,448	2,338	96,891	9,880	410,556
Oregon	15,660,825	15,722,868	525,901	195,371	32,104,965
Pennsylvania	513,170	0	9,960	65,506	588,636
Rhode Island	0	0	1,492	5	1,497
S. Carolina	610,682	0	104,638	26,331	741,651
S. Dakota	2,011,604	279,085	191,413	154,344	2,636,447
Tennessee	628,590	0	44,891	346,155	1,019,636
Texas	754,843	0	375,673	1,168,748	2,299,264
Utah	8,108,302	22,147,772	100,156	2,090,120	32,446,350
Vermont	350,294	0	5,928	8,169	364,391
Virginia	1,649,524	0	117,449	321,766	2,088,739
Washington	9,167,362	351,753	135,797	1,943,549	11,598,462
West Virginia	1,032,121	0	1,708	50,158	1,083,988
Wisconsin	1,519,089	160,167	188,179	135,577	2,003,012
Wyoming	9,258,719	18,394,684	56,748	2,393,471	30,103,622
<b>Total</b>	<b>191,525,377</b>	<b>267,640,286</b>	<b>87,375,963</b>	<b>76,571,878</b>	<b>623,113,504</b>

Note: Acreage totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>For our analysis, we included the District of Columbia as a state.

Source: GAO's analysis of data provided by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior.

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# Federally Managed Land Encumbered for Conservation Purposes by Legislative or Administrative Restrictions

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Over the 29-year period from June 30, 1964, through September 30, 1993, the amount of federal land managed by the Forest Service, BLM, FWS, and NPS that had legislative or administrative restrictions placed on its use for conservation purposes increased from about 51 million acres in fiscal year 1964, to about 131 million acres in fiscal year 1979, and to about 271 million acres in fiscal year 1993. Of the 1964 acreage, FWS and NPS had about 50 million of the nearly 51 million acres, and the Forest Service and BLM had the remainder. The percentage of these four agencies' lands that had conservation restrictions was about 7 percent in fiscal year 1964, nearly 19 percent in fiscal year 1979, and nearly 44 percent in fiscal year 1993. The acreage with conservation restrictions may change in future years as congressional decisions are made about the designation of additional land for such things as wilderness and national parks. For example, the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-433) designated an additional 7.7 million acres of BLM, NPS, and Forest Service lands as wilderness and created three new parks from BLM land.

All of the lands managed by FWS and NPS are generally considered to be restricted for conservation purposes: Both of these two agencies had substantial increases in the amount of land they were responsible for between fiscal years 1964 and 1993. Generally, the Forest Service and BLM do not restrict all lands for conservation purposes. Rather, they manage their lands for multiple uses to best meet the present and future needs of the American people and to sustain, in perpetuity, outputs of various renewable natural resource commodities and to provide for other uses. However, some Forest Service and BLM lands have special or unique qualities that warrant protection through restrictions that are placed on how the lands are to be managed and used. The portions of Forest Service and BLM lands that have had legislative or administrative restrictions placed on their use for conservation purposes increased from the end of fiscal year 1964 through fiscal year 1993. Restrictions on such things as the use of motorized equipment, construction of buildings and roads, development of commercial enterprises, and landing of aircraft are imposed at the time the land is legislatively or administratively set aside for conservation purposes.

Wilderness area designations are authorized by the Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131). As of September 30, 1993, 96 million acres of Forest Service, BLM, FWS, and NPS land had been designated as wilderness by the Congress. Another 33 million acres had been designated as wilderness study areas. Until a decision has been made by the Congress about which wilderness study areas should be named as wilderness areas, these acres

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**Section 3**  
**Federally Managed Land Encumbered for**  
**Conservation Purposes by Legislative or**  
**Administrative Restrictions**

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are protected for conservation purposes and therefore are not available for other purposes, with certain exceptions. Wild and scenic river designations are made pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.). Since that time, over 1 million acres of federal lands along rivers have been designated by the Congress as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The fact that land has a restriction that sets it aside for conservation purposes does not preclude all activities within the designated area. For example, although the Wilderness Act restricts access to, and the development of, a given wilderness area, the “wilderness” designation generally allows, among other things, the existence of administrative structures, the development of minerals and the grazing of livestock in those instances where valid existing rights have already been established, access to private lands inside the wilderness, and use of nonmotorized recreational vehicles. Similar restrictions and allowances apply to wilderness study areas.

A principal protection afforded by a wild and scenic river designation is the prohibition of water resource projects that may divert or hinder the flow of the river. Road construction, hunting, fishing, and mining and mineral leasing may be permitted under some circumstances, depending on the classification of the river and whether the activities are consistent with the values of the area being protected and other federal and state laws.

Most of the federal acreage with conservation restrictions is located in 13 western states. Figure 3.1 shows, as of September 30, 1993, the percentage of land in each of these states managed by the Forest Service, BLM, FWS, and NPS (as reflected in the shading of each state) and the percentage of that land that is further restricted for conservation purposes (as reflected by the number shown within each state).

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 Conservation Purposes by Legislative or  
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**Figure 3.1: Percentage of Four Agencies' Land in Western States and Percentage of That Land Restricted for Conservation Purposes, as of September 30, 1993**



Table 3.1 shows the total acreage managed by each of the four federal agencies at the end of fiscal years 1964, 1979, and 1993 and the total acreage with conservation restrictions. Table 3.2 shows, by state, the total

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acreage managed by the four federal agencies, the amount of acreage with conservation restrictions, and the percentage of acreage with conservation restrictions, as of September 30, 1993. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 show, respectively, the amount of Forest Service and BLM acreage at the end of fiscal years 1964, 1979, and 1993 that has been encumbered for conservation purposes, according to the type of conservation restriction.

**Table 3.1: Acres Managed by the Four Federal Agencies and Percentage With Conservation Restrictions, Fiscal Years 1964, 1979, and 1993**

	Forest Service	Bureau of Land Management	Fish and Wildlife Service	National Park Service	Totals
1964					
Total acreage managed	186,274,576	464,346,607	22,396,317	27,500,745	700,518,245
Conservation acreage	1,435,909	628	22,396,317	27,500,745	51,333,599
Percent with conservation restrictions	0.77	<sup>a</sup>	100.00	100.00	7.33
1979					
Total acreage managed	187,422,847	397,505,869	43,045,987	64,961,020	692,935,723
Conservation acreage	22,911,081	74,513	43,045,987	64,961,020	130,992,601
Percent with conservation restrictions	12.22	0.02	100.00	100.00	18.90
1993					
Total acreage managed	191,525,377	267,640,286	87,375,963	76,571,878	623,113,504
Conservation acreage	49,410,180	57,738,928	87,375,963	76,571,878	271,096,949
Percent with conservation restrictions	25.80	21.57	100.00	100.00	43.51

<sup>a</sup>Percentage is miniscule.

Source: GAO's analysis of data provided by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior.

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**Table 3.2: Acres Managed by the Four Federal Agencies and Percentage With Conservation Restrictions, by State, as of September 30, 1993**

<b>State<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Acreage managed</b>	<b>Acreage with conservation restrictions</b>	<b>Percentage of land with conservation restrictions</b>
Alabama	798,465	69,068	8.65
Alaska	239,509,874	150,786,769	62.96
Arizona	29,867,616	8,471,260	28.36
Arkansas	3,219,380	662,726	20.59
California	42,987,699	33,356,996	77.60
Colorado	23,437,010	5,774,565	24.64
Connecticut	6,692	6,669	99.66
Delaware	23,968	23,968	100.00
District of Columbia	6,926	6,926	100.00
Florida	3,836,610	2,846,197	74.19
Georgia	1,391,611	699,239	50.25
Hawaii	528,732	528,732	100.00
Idaho	32,437,746	9,673,448	29.82
Illinois	339,475	99,421	29.29
Indiana	212,275	33,705	15.88
Iowa	39,996	39,618	99.05
Kansas	135,772	27,597	20.33
Kentucky	778,815	138,407	17.77
Louisiana	1,363,174	544,033	39.91
Maine	168,516	127,477	75.65
Maryland	97,906	97,906	100.00
Massachusetts	65,184	65,184	100.00
Michigan	3,729,649	917,658	24.60
Minnesota	3,626,258	1,467,556	40.47
Mississippi	1,498,890	300,676	20.06
Missouri	1,600,992	181,204	11.32
Montana	26,745,613	7,412,851	27.72
Nebraska	527,205	182,833	34.68
Nevada	56,845,790	9,532,809	16.77
New Hampshire	735,068	117,242	15.95
New Jersey	103,369	103,369	100.00
New Mexico	22,920,318	4,105,287	17.91
New York	86,258	72,812	84.41
N. Carolina	2,003,825	995,353	49.67
N. Dakota	1,694,152	528,891	31.22

(continued)

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 Federally Managed Land Encumbered for  
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<b>State<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Acreage managed</b>	<b>Acreage with conservation restrictions</b>	<b>Percentage of land with conservation restrictions</b>
Ohio	251,460	33,595	13.36
Oklahoma	410,556	147,291	35.88
Oregon	32,104,965	7,096,777	22.10
Pennsylvania	588,636	109,580	18.62
Rhode Island	1,497	1,497	100.00
S. Carolina	741,651	207,056	27.92
S. Dakota	2,636,447	442,905	16.80
Tennessee	1,019,636	468,411	45.94
Texas	2,299,264	1,581,821	68.80
Utah	32,446,350	7,402,687	22.82
Vermont	364,391	110,208	30.24
Virginia	2,088,739	676,222	32.37
Washington	11,598,462	4,793,535	41.33
West Virginia	1,083,988	190,641	17.59
Wisconsin	2,003,012	369,411	18.44
Wyoming	30,103,622	7,466,862	24.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>623,113,504</b>	<b>271,096,949</b>	<b>43.51</b>

Note: Acreage totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>For our analysis, we included the District of Columbia as a state.

Source: GAO's analysis of data provided by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior.

**Section 3  
Federally Managed Land Encumbered for  
Conservation Purposes by Legislative or  
Administrative Restrictions**

**Table 3.3: Acres of Forest Service  
Lands With Conservation Restrictions,  
Fiscal Years 1964, 1979, and 1993**

<b>Type of restriction</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>1979</b>	<b>1993</b>
Wilderness	0	15,083,975	34,583,833
Wilderness study area	0	1,689,871	6,619,770
Wild and scenic river	0	204,955	487,205
Area of critical environmental concern	0	0	0
Research natural area	79,205	136,321	288,888
National conservation area	0	0	0
National monument	0	0	3,404,244
National primitive area	0	2,810,242	173,762
National recreation area	0	1,779,701	2,362,208
National game refuge	1,356,704	1,202,084	1,218,953
National scenic-research area	0	3,932	6,630
Other <sup>a</sup>	0	0	264,687
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,435,909</b>	<b>22,911,081</b>	<b>49,410,180</b>

<sup>a</sup>“Other” includes archeological areas, botanical areas, and geological areas.

Source: GAO’s analysis of data provided by the Department of Agriculture.

**Table 3.4: Acres of Bureau of Land  
Management Lands With Conservation  
Restrictions, Fiscal Years 1964, 1979,  
and 1993**

<b>Type of restriction</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>1979</b>	<b>1993</b>
Wilderness	0	1,738	1,653,529
Wilderness study area	0	0	26,554,685
Wild, scenic, and recreation river	0	14,267	829,448
Area of critical environmental concern	0	0	9,534,450
Research natural area	28	38,068	326,449
National conservation area	0	0	14,323,431
National natural or historic landmark	600	600	599,042
National primitive area	0	0	0
Scientific research area	0	0	0
National recreation area	0	0	1,000,000
National game refuge	0	0	0
National scenic-research area	0	0	1,365,280
Other <sup>a</sup>	0	19,840	1,552,614
<b>Total<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>628</b>	<b>74,513</b>	<b>57,738,928</b>

<sup>a</sup>“Other” includes national outstanding natural areas.

<sup>b</sup>BLM officials told us that some double counting may exist among the various conservation categories but that they could not readily determine the extent thereof.

Source: GAO’s analysis of data provided by the Department of the Interior.

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