

Fly Fishers International

Policy on Public Lands and Waters of the United States

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Position Statement

Fly Fishers International is a global organization dedicated to the support, enhancement and protection of the recreational opportunities and enjoyment of fishing with the artificial fly. We do this through teaching all aspects of fly fishing and most importantly through our advocacy, demonstration and voice for conservation of our natural resources. Clearly, conservation of fishes and their habitats is fundamental to our opportunities and those of our children to fly fish. Those habitats largely are the connected waters of the United States, the streams, lakes, rivers and estuaries that must remain clean, healthy and functional. Just as important are the health and wellbeing of the watersheds that recharge, nourish and protect the function of our wetlands. These habitats collectively reside by ownership, law and public policy as public resources and lands. Many are managed and protected by state or federal agencies or environmental law on the public behalf, while others are protected by private interests or environmental organizations in perpetuity as conservation easements. Regardless of ownership or legal designation, they collectively are much more valuable than simply as wetlands, watersheds and fish habitat. These are the habitats of a vast array of wildlife, plant and insect species, including those that may be threatened or endangered with extinction across our country. What must not be forgotten is that these very landscapes of minerals, waters and plants are essential to our own quality of life as human habitat. These are the landscapes that grow the plant communities that produce the clean air we breathe and process carbon dioxide into oxygen. The wetlands that clean and recharge our sources of fresh water are necessary to our lives. There is no question that these lands must be protected for our recreational interests and our own quality of life as humans. Not least of importance is the economic value of access to these public lands and waters for study, enjoyment and appreciation. These values now exceed three quarters of a trillion dollars returned back into our economy each year. Federal lands alone return \$650 billion dollars and support an estimated 6 million jobs.

Theodore Roosevelt recognized the profound values of public lands when he “applied his presidential prerogatives in setting aside and preserving for public benefit a number of scientific, historical and scenic sites” with his 1903 designation of the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge on the east coast of Florida. This was the first of what now comprises millions of acres across our continent that serve the public benefit he recognized. Unfortunately, our public lands and the biological, social and economic values they represent are now threatened with narrow interests by those who seek to transfer budgetary responsibility and/or liquidate these essential public lands!

It therefore is FFI Policy to advocate for the essential protection of public lands and waters of the United States for their ecological, recreational and economic function and value and to endorse as public policy the administration of these lands to include applicable law, finance, policy and management responsibility, as necessary to assure enjoyment, health and other public benefits. It is our position that any proposal to change, transfer or liquidate ownership and or management responsibility of public lands has a significant likelihood to adversely affect the biological health, function and wellbeing of natural systems and the wildlife species they support. It further is our position that any such proposed action should receive full evaluation for public review and comment in the form of an Environmental Impact Statement under provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act. It is through such Policy and position that opportunities to enjoy fly fishing will endure.