



National
Center for
Public Lands
Counties

National Center for Public Lands Counties

Advancing the policy and practice study of America's public lands counties

**Powered by the Western Interstate Region
and the NACo Research Foundation**

Public Lands in Washington State

- 43%, or 19.8 million acres, of lands in Washington State are publicly owned.
- Public ownership varies widely by county - from Whitman County with approximately 5% public land ownership to Skamania County with more than 86% public land ownership.
- Of the 19.8 million acres in public ownership, 12.7 million, or 64 percent, are owned by the federal government in Washington State.
- Federal and State Lands are important economic generators for a number of natural resource base industries, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, support cultural values, and provide a variety of environmental benefits.
- Public lands are also important Federal and State revenue sources for counties, with more than \$110 million annually in revenue to counties.

Public Land Payments in Washington State

• Secure Rural Schools (Federal)	26 of 39 Counties	\$18.2 million (FFY2021)
• Payment in Lieu of Taxes (Federal)	37 of 39 Counties	\$26.3 million (FFY2022)
• Dept of Energy Payment (Federal)	3 of 39 Counties	\$1.78 million (FFY2020)
• Refuge Revenue Sharing (Federal)	25 of 39 Counties	\$490,000 (FFY2021)
• WDFW PILT (State)	14 of 39 Counties	\$2 million (FY2021)
• DNR PILT (State)	30 of 39 Counties	\$1.87 million (FY2021)
• DNR Timber	19 of 39 Counties	\$64.5 million (Annual Average)
• Local and Tribal Consistency Fund 2022/2023)	38 of 39 Counties	\$63.5 million (Total FFY

FURTHER THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE COUNTY ROLE IN RESPONSIBLE LAND, WATER AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- **County governments are leaders in the intergovernmental partnership** with federal lands management agencies
- **We work with officials from all levels of government, private stakeholders and other interested parties** to reduce fuel loads on federal lands, prudently develop our natural resources to meet the nation's economic needs, improve local economies, enhance recreational access to public lands, and conserve our lands and waters for future generations
- With improved understanding of our unique role, **Congress has invested record sums recently to support public lands counties**, including Payments In-Lieu of Taxes (PILT), Secure Rural Schools (SRS), and other revenue sharing programs
- **Congress also granted new authorities to federal lands agencies** to broaden the scope, pace and scale of their on-the-ground resource management work with local governments
- **HOWEVER, we must continue to tell the county story**, research innovation practices, nurture and build new relationships and networks, and address the mounting challenges and opportunities facing public lands counties

NATIONAL CENTER FOR PUBLIC LANDS COUNTIES

- **Counties must research, evaluate and share lessons learned about the critical county contribution to sustainable resource management and evidenced-based practices** for developing and enhancing collaborative partnerships, including public-private-community collaborations and intergovernmental coordination
- Therefore, the NACo and WIR Boards of Directors both moved at the 2022 NACo Annual Conference in July 2022 to proceed with developing the **National Center for Public Lands Counties**
- **The Center will weave together the narrative around public lands counties and the national interest** in our prosperity by showing how public lands are interconnected with the country's needs. For example, a wildfire on federal land near a major water source could jeopardize water quality in a large urban region
- **The National Center for Public Lands Counties will be an essential resource for public lands counties** by sharing these stories with county officials, intergovernmental partners, the media, think tanks and other key influencers to demonstrate how prosperous public lands counties create a prosperous America

MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

- **MISSION:** Advance the policy and practice study, research, and learning networks for America's public lands counties
- **IMPERATIVE:** Enhance the long-term policy and practice research, capacity and information exchange of elected and appointed leaders from America's public lands counties, including with federal and state policymakers, key stakeholders and influencers, the media, and the general public
- **OBJECTIVES:**
 - Enhance the understanding of national, state and county policymakers and influencers of the unique policy and practice issues facing America's county officials in areas with federal public lands
 - Develop the policy and practice research, case studies, public forums, and learning networks necessary to advance and inform our nation's policies and practices (including at the federal, state and local levels) impacting public lands counties
 - Foster intergovernmental relationships and dialogue on the intersection of federal, state and local policymaking and practices across the broad range of issues facing public lands counties, such as: landscape health, wildfire risk mitigation, watershed protection, economic competitiveness and job creation, enhanced public access to federal lands and waters, species management, and biodiversity health
- **FUNDRAISING GOAL:** \$15 million over two years to establish a new research fund, known as the National Center for Public Lands Counties, within the NACo Research Foundation and co-governed with NACo's Western Interstate Region (WIR) leadership

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FUNDRAISING GOAL

- For the National Center for Public Lands Counties to meet its mission and serve as a long-term tool for public lands counties, **a voluntary investment** from state associations representing public lands counties is needed
- NACo staff, state associations of counties executives and county officials set a **fundraising goal of \$15 million over the next two years** to build the staff capacity and partnerships to conduct this critical research and keep the Center on a sustainable financial course
- **State association executives are asked to meet with their members and determine by January 31, 2023** what their state association can pledge as a voluntary contribution to the Center
- These funds will be **managed under a 501(c)(3) within the NACo Research Foundation to support WIR's collaboration** with the National Center for Public Lands Counties. *These funds will not be used for any partisan political purposes*
- **Initially, the Center will need 1-2 hard-working, passionate and talented writers** who can help us tell the county story and conduct and develop key research to meet the National Center's goals. We will then build staffing capacity, unique programming and impactful resources as appropriate

GOVERNANCE

- **National Center's Governing Board will consist of:**
 - WIR Executive Committee (President, 1st VP, 2nd VP, Immediate Past President)
 - NACo Public Lands Steering Committee Chair
 - NACo Public Lands Steering Committee Subcommittee Chairs
 - Federal Lands Gateway County Official appointed by the NACo Public Lands Steering Committee Chair
 - NACo West Region Representative
 - NACo Executive Director
 - Executive Director from WIR Immediate Past President's home state
 - NACo Public Lands Legislative Director and WIR Liaison, serving as NACo staff liaison to the governing board
- **Governing Board will meet on a regular basis and** develop an annual workplan based on the research priorities selected by the WIR Board of Directors and NACo Public Lands Steering Committee. At the WIR Annual Conference each May, the WIR Board of Directors and the NACo Public Lands Steering Committee will review the activities and performance of the Center, and consider and adopt the proposed workplan for the next year.



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