

11/1/25



Understanding Public Lands GEN 405 – Session 5

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What Are Public Lands?

- **Public lands are 600Million+ acres owned collectively by all U.S. citizens.**
 - 92% of Federal public land is in the Western USA
- **Managed by several federal agencies for conservation, recreation, and multiple uses.**
- **They protect natural, cultural, and historic treasures for future generations.**
- **The largest collection of undistributed wealth in the World**

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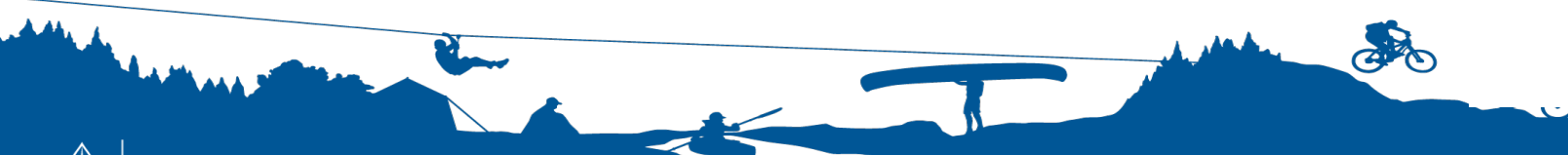
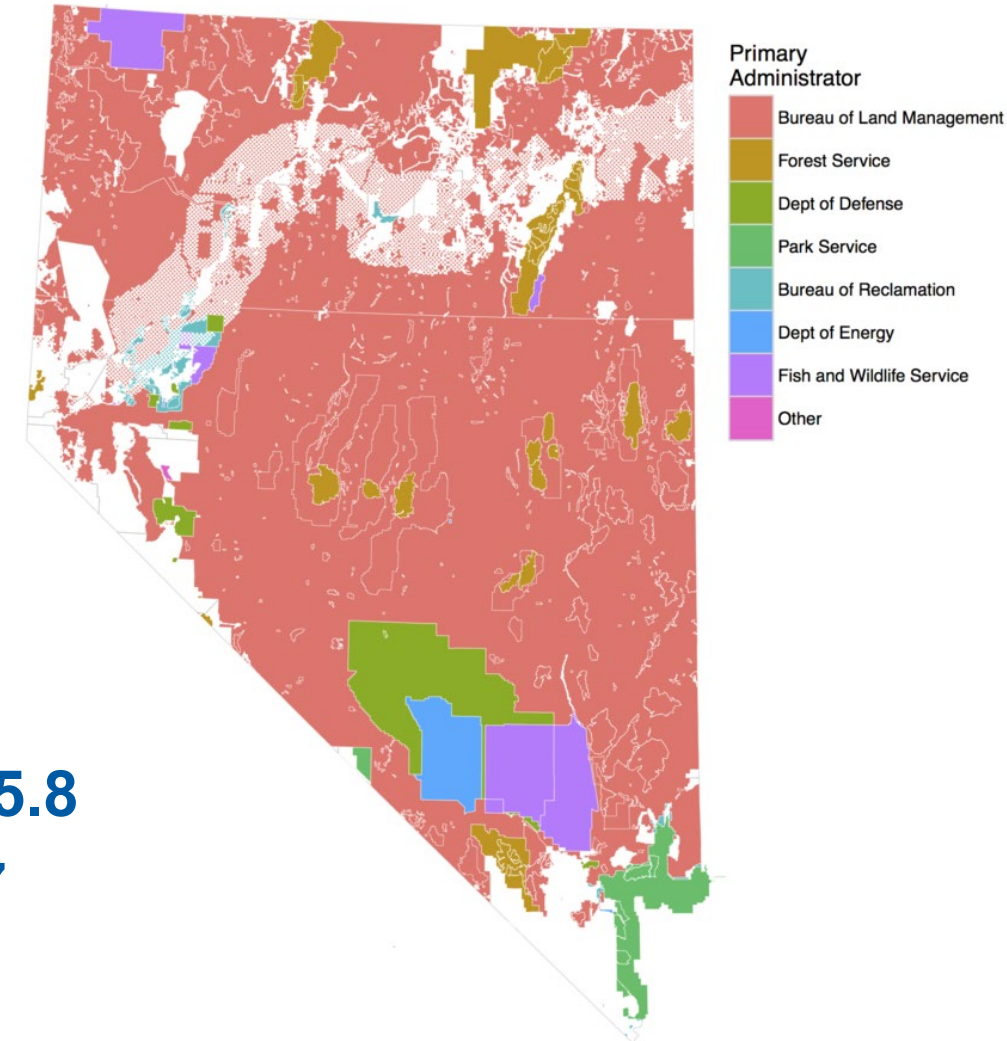


Federal + State Public Lands

Iowa 1.04%, Kansas 0.92%

1. Alaska – 89.2%
2. Nevada – 81.1%
3. Utah – 70.4
4. Idaho – 66.6
5. Wyoming – 54.7
6. Arizona – 53.6
7. California – 42.36
8. New Mexico – 40.6
9. Colorado – 40
10. New York – 37
11. Washington – 36.4
12. Montana – 34.9
13. Oregon – 31.6
14. Florida – 26.2
15. Michigan – 22.5
16. New Jersey – 17.71
17. Minnesota – 17.6
18. Wisconsin – 16.2
19. New Hampshire – 15.8
20. Pennsylvania – 14.7

Land Owned or Administered by the US Federal Government





Why Scouts Should Care

- **Public lands are the foundation for outdoor adventure and learning.**
- **They provide opportunities for camping, hiking, and service projects.**
- **Stewardship and respect for nature are core Scouting values.**
- **Scouts use public lands for camping, hiking, and leadership training.**
- **Many Eagle Scout projects improve trails and habitats.**
- **Strong partnerships exist between Scouting and park rangers.**

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The Four Main Federal Land Agencies

- **National Park Service (NPS): Protects and preserves national treasures.**
 - Reservations and hiking permits almost always required
 - Permits issued months in advance and “week of”
- **U.S. Forest Service (USFS): Manages forests for recreation and resources.**
 - Some permits may be required
- **Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Oversees multiple-use lands.**
 - Permits very rarely required
- **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS): Protects wildlife habitats.**

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National Park System Designations

- **National Parks** – Large natural areas with varied features.
- **National Monuments** – Designated by the President to protect landmarks.
- **National Preserves** – Allow certain regulated uses like hunting.
- **Historic Sites, Memorials, and Battlefields** – Preserve cultural history.

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Examples by Type

- **National Park:** Yellowstone National Park
- **National Monument:** Devils Tower
- **National Historic Site:** Independence Hall
- **National Seashore:** Cape Cod
- **National Trail:** Appalachian Trail

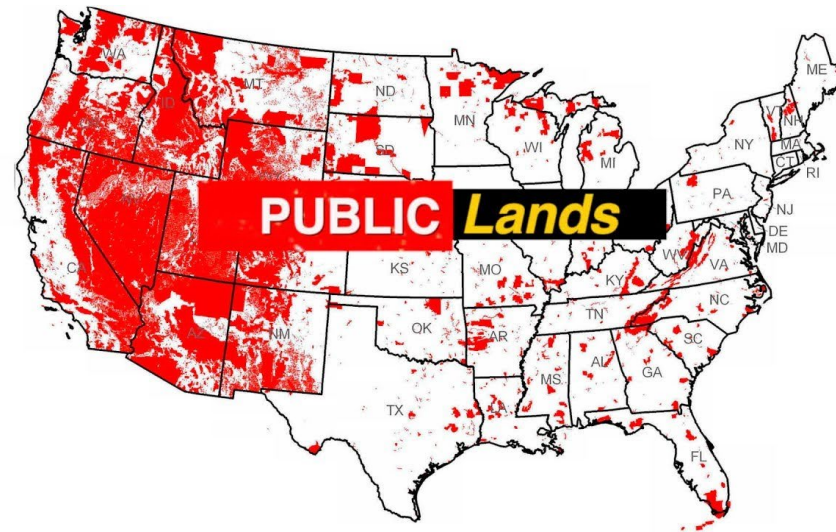


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Other Public Lands

- **Forest Service lands:** recreation, wildlife, and timber.
- **BLM lands:** open range, trails, camping, and responsible use.
- **Wildlife Refuges:** habitat protection with limited recreation.



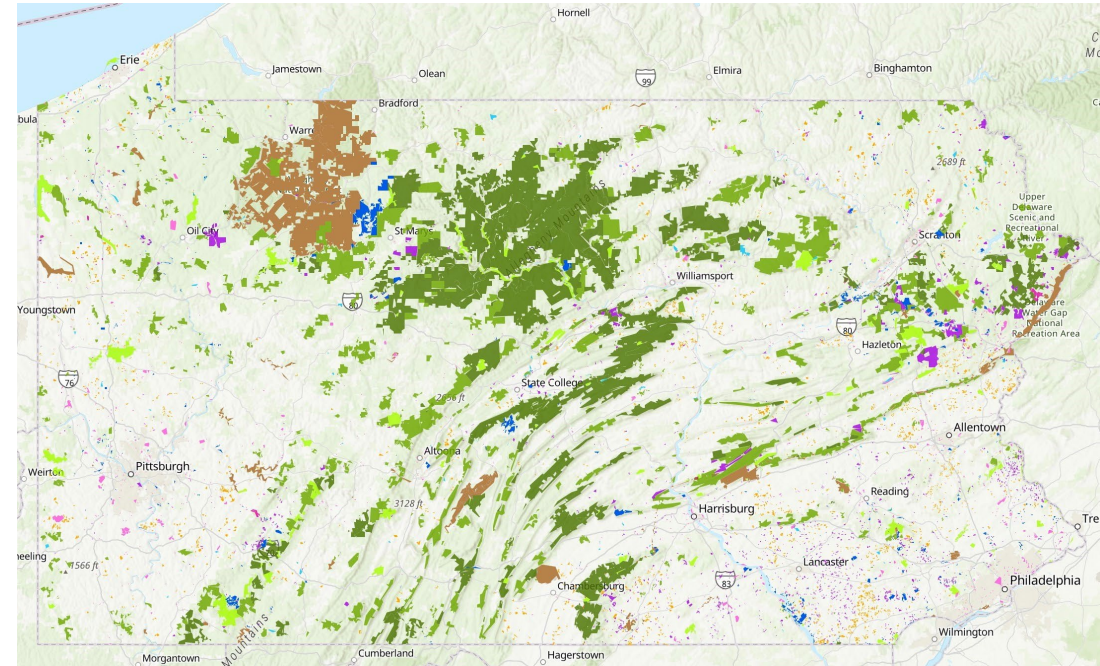
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Pennsylvania Public Lands

- **4.5 Million+ Acres!**
 - 14.7% of land area
 - 20th in the US
- **DWG National Rec. Area**
- **Allegheny National Forest – 500k acres**
- **State Forests – 2.2M Acres**
- **State Parks – 283k acres**
- **State Game Lands – 1.5M acres**

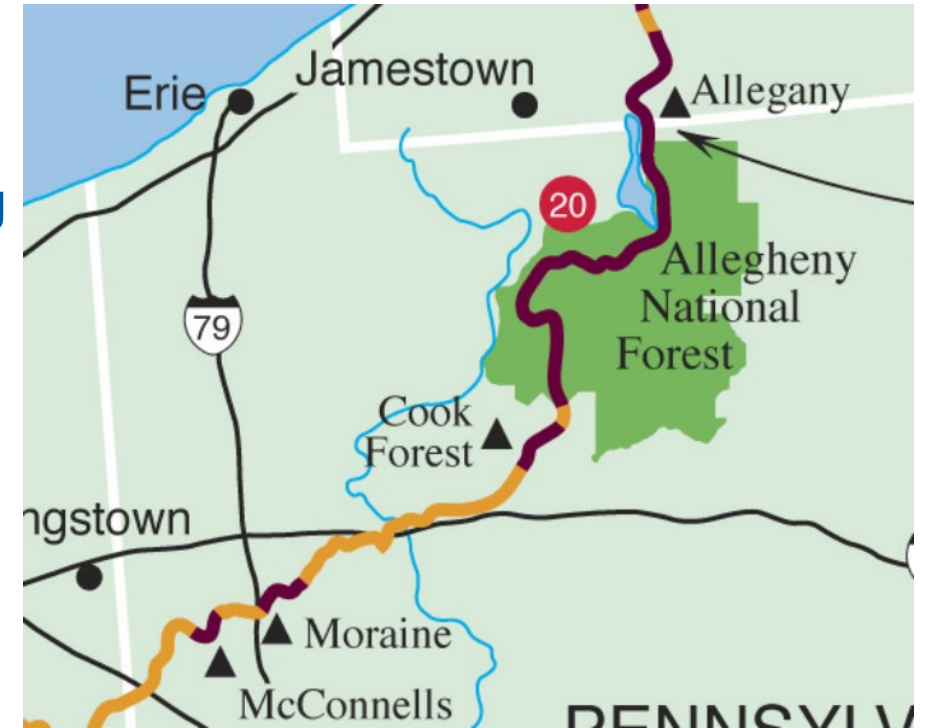


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Pennsylvania Public Lands

- **Allegheny National Forest – 500k acres**
 - 14 day camp limitation
 - Free Entry
 - Generally, no reservations or permits required
 - Follow Leave No Trace Principles – primitive camping



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Pennsylvania Public Lands

- **State Forests – 2.2M Acres**
 - 1 night camping duration (without permit)
 - Max group size = 10 (without permit)
 - Follow Leave No Trace Principles – primitive camping
 - Free Entry
 - No fires allowed 3/1 to 5/25
 - Generally, no reservations or permits required
 - Pine Creek Gorge campsites require reservation





Pennsylvania Public Lands

- **State Parks – 283k acres**
 - Reservation required for all camping
 - Some parks offer day of reservations, most do not
 - Group sites are available
 - Some parks have backpack or paddle in camping spots – must pre register
 - Showers and flush toilets may be available



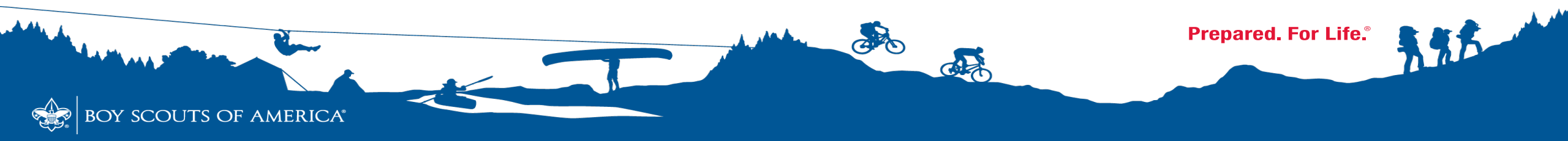
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Pennsylvania Public Lands

- **State Game Lands – 1.5M acres**
 - Be considerate of hunters
 - No camping except immediately along AT
 - Hiking is allowed
 - Orange hat AND vest required 11/15-12/15
 - Max group size = 10 (without permit)
 - Small fires allowed for cooking or warming up
 - No bathrooms or trash cans

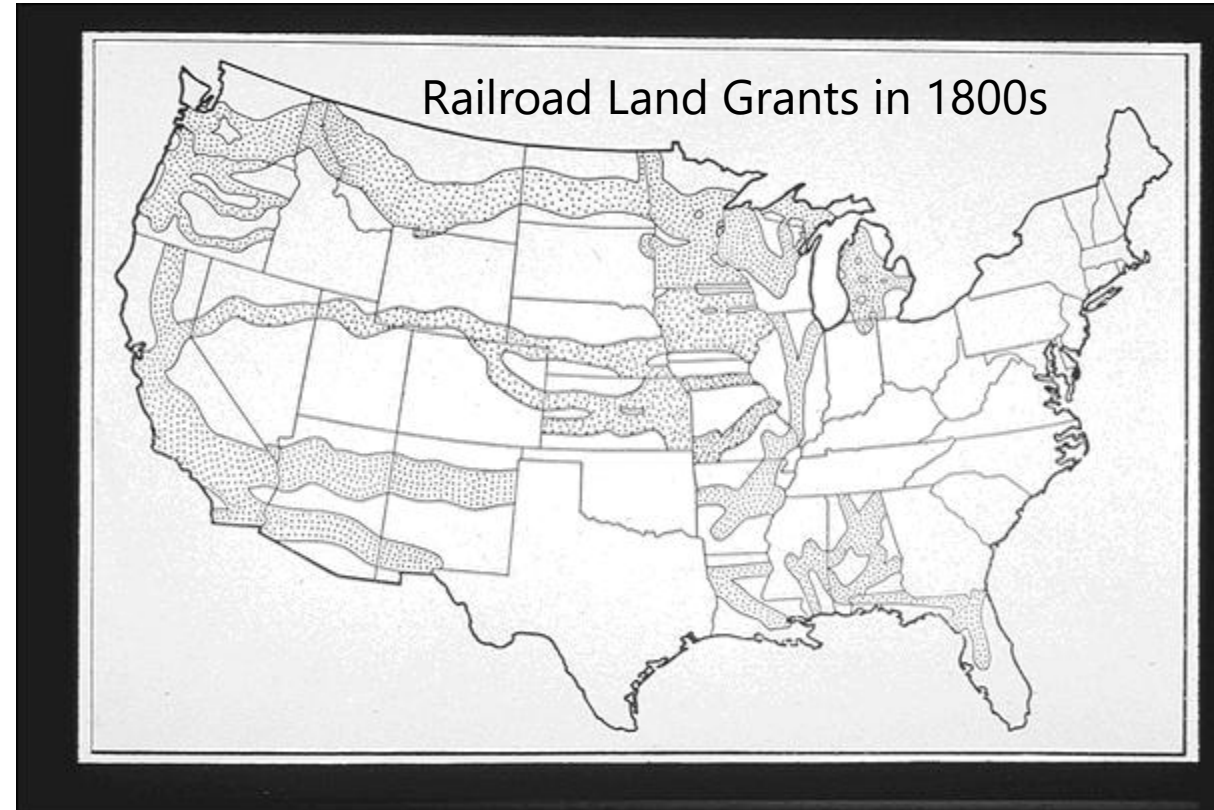


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Know where you are

- Checkerboard - 16 Million+ unaccessible acres



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Scouting and Public Lands

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Leave No Trace Principles

1. Plan ahead and prepare.
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
3. Dispose of waste properly.
4. Leave what you find.
5. Minimize campfire impacts.
6. Respect wildlife.
7. Be considerate of others.



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Public Lands Are Yours — Protect Them

Remember the Outdoor Code:

- **As an American, I will do my best to:**
- **Be clean in my outdoor manners,**
- **Be careful with fire,**
- **Be considerate in the outdoors,**
- **And be conservation-minded.**



Public lands belong to everyone, leave them better than you found them!

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