

## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE LAND STATUS RECORD SYSTEM

The Forest Service must have accurate knowledge of the legal status of their lands. By law, specific areas or categories must be managed for specific purposes or may have certain management restrictions. In addition, there are many private property rights, both on NFS land and on intermingled or adjacent private land, that may be affected by or may affect Forest Service management.

The first administrative guidance concerning land status was on June 24, 1907, in a pamphlet entitled "Instructions to Boundarymen" and was signed by Gifford Pinchot. It provided direction on inventory and control of NFS land by noting boundary lines on maps and showing the boundaries to local people, particularly those who had used NFS land for grazing or other purposes.

The Forest Service Manual dated November 5, 1908, issued the first direction for land status record standardization. Standard symbology was added to General Land Office (GLO) survey plats, which were bound into status atlases with handwritten notations. These varied in detail, accuracy and content at each Forest Service District Office.

Direction for the status records on land acquired under the Act of March 1, 1911, (Weeks Act) were established in the Forest Service manual dated December 1, 1911. A Forest Service land acquisition handbook was published on October 15, 1924 and contained detailed instructions on land status records.

Land status records remained unchanged for the next 40 years. There was one system with local variations for the Western public land and one system with local variations for the Eastern colonial states. During this time, NFS land grew in complexity as Congress passed numerous authorities for land acquisition, transfer, disposal and exchange.

In 1958, the Forest Service began a modernization project to update land status records. The objectives were:

- Review all documents pertaining to National Forest landownership including those retained by the GLO as a result of the Act of February 1, 1905, called the Transfer Act.
- Conduct a title examination and determination of the rights held by the government on all land within the exterior boundaries of the National Forests, and on all land previously held by the Forest Service (i.e., exchanged land, school land, railroad grants, homestead entry patents, mineral patents)
- Identify and update all official government survey information
- Recompute the acreage of the NFS land

In addition to the conversion project, the Forest Service established a nationwide standard landownership status record, the Land Status Atlas, which is the land status record used by the Agency today. The atlas contains status maps and a summary tabular record of the landownership title, partial interests, encumbrances and use restrictions that pertain to NFS land or interest in land.

In 1978, the Forest Service began an automation project to computerize all tabular records in the land status atlas. The Landownership Management System (LOMS) was conceived and two databases were developed. The Landownership Status (LOS) database and the Land Use Restriction (LUR) database were developed to house the tabular information. In April of 1986, FLUR (Forest Land Use Restriction) database was released Service-wide to replace the LUR database.

On June 26, 1991, rules were published in CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) to establish the Land Status Record System (LSRS), which is a record of the landownership title, status and jurisdiction for all NFS land, and for interests in private, state or other federal agency land administered by the Forest Service. The objective of the LSRS system was to provide realty information to agency and public users in the most effective way possible.

In February 1992, the Chief of the Forest Service established the Information Management Framework. One of the primary objectives of the framework is to establish a corporate database. The Forest Service Lands Staff has a development project to make land status, including the land survey network, a foundation for corporate applications, geographic information systems (GIS) and interagency data sharing. This project is known as ALP (Automated Lands Project).

ALP is the latest development in a long history of Agency efforts to keep records of NFS legal land interests.