

**Forest Service Handbook
National Headquarters - Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 5500 – Landownership Title Management
Chapter 5590 – Landownership Status**

Amendment: 5500-2016-1

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Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Superseded Directive: 5590 (Amendment 5500-2003-1, 5/21/2003)

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Responsible Staff:

Explanation of changes: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

5591: Revises incorrect citation to the CFR.

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5590.1 - Authority

The rules at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, section 200.12 (36 CFR 200.12) establish the Land Status Records System as the official public record evidencing title and jurisdiction for all National Forest System lands. The rules also establish the minimum information to be maintained in the system. The text of the regulation is set out in Exhibit 01.

Hundreds of other laws, Presidential proclamations, and Executive orders make provisions for or may impose certain title conditions or restrictions on the use, protection, improvement, development, and administration of National Forest System lands.

5590.1 - Exhibit 01

36 CFR 200.12

{200.12 Land status and title records.

(a) Land Status Records System. The Land Status Records System is the official, permanent repository for all realty records and land title documents for National Forest System lands. It includes an automated database which contains an accurate account of: acreage, condition of title, administrative jurisdiction, rights held by the United States, administrative and legal use restrictions, encumbrances, and access rights on land or interests in land in the National Forest System.

(1) Components. The system shall include, but is not limited to, the following components:

(i) A current and accurate Land Status Atlas for each National Forest, National Grassland, and other proclaimed or designated administrative unit, which shall graphically portray on maps keyed to a tabular summary the following categories of information:

(A) Jurisdiction of and condition of title to lands administered as part of the National Forest System.

(B) All encumbrances on National Forest System lands.

(C) All partial interests administered by the Forest Service on other lands.

(D) All use restrictions, withdrawals, and special designated areas on National Forest System lands.

(E) The acreage of National Forest System lands, including riparian lands.

(ii) A master Land Status File, from which the data for the Atlas is derived and which includes the following:

(A) Discrete title files of each landownership adjustment.

(B) The original authorizing documents establishing or adjusting National Forest System lands and interests therein.

(C) Withdrawals, use restrictions, and special designated areas on National Forest System lands.

(D) Other information as deemed necessary.

5590.1 - Exhibit 01--Continued

(iii) Such reporting systems as are needed to provide title or status reports.

(2) Display of Information. Information in the system may be collected and maintained in narrative, graphic, tabular, or other form and may be entered into and maintained in automated systems as well as produced in paper form in accordance with such administrative direction as the Chief of the Forest Service or Regional Foresters may establish.

(b) Availability. A Land Status Atlas shall be maintained at each National Forest administrative unit or subunit, such as Ranger Districts or National Recreation Area offices. Each Regional Office shall maintain copies of the Atlas for all National Forests within that Region. Related land title and realty records for each National Forest System unit shall be maintained at the administrative headquarters of that unit. The Land Status Atlas and such title and realty records as are held at an administrative unit shall be available for public inspection.

5590.2 - Objective

The management objectives of maintaining the Land Status Records System are to:

1. Ensure that the Federal government has accurate, complete, and current title and other realty information on lands, including all partial interests, encumbrances, dominant tenements, and reservations in lands, administered by the Forest Service;
2. Ensure that the public has reasonable access to and opportunity to inspect Forest Service realty information; and
3. Provide a reliable basis for reporting to the Secretary, the Congress, and the public on the status of lands administered by the Forest Service.

5590.4 - Responsibilities

5590.41 - Director of Lands, Washington Office

The Director of Lands is responsible for developing and recommending standards for compilation and maintenance of data in the Land Status Records System. This includes design and development of automated land status databases and systems to store and retrieve standard data elements such as landownership status and land-use reporting.

The Director is also responsible for reviewing the adequacy of system maintenance by field units and the publication of the annual Lands Areas of the National Forest System report.

5590.42 - Regional Foresters

In addition to the responsibility assigned in 36 CFR 200.12, each Regional Forester is responsible for:

1. The implementation and maintenance of the land status database for each National Forest within the Region, including support of the national automated status systems.
2. The retention of the official land status master file for all lands in the Region.
3. The transmitting of copies of applicable records to each Forest on a recurrent basis.
4. The documentation and maintenance in case files of all necessary title and realty information for land acquisition or disposal or other landownership adjustments executed by the Regional Forester.

5590.43 - Forest Supervisors

Each Forest Supervisor is assigned the responsibility to:

1. Report to the Regional Lands Director on a timely basis any action that affects the full use of National Forest System land and associated land status data under the Supervisor's jurisdiction that needs to be noted in the Land Status Records System.
2. Document and maintain in case files all necessary title and realty information for land acquisition or disposal or other landownership adjustments executed by the Forest Supervisor.
3. Provide the public with access to a current copy of the Land Status Atlas in the Supervisor's Office.

5590.44 - District Rangers

Each District Ranger is assigned the responsibility to:

1. Report to the Forest Supervisor any action that affects the District's land status.
2. Field check for accuracy the completed realty records furnished through the Forest Supervisor.
3. Document and maintain in case files all necessary title and realty information for land acquisition or disposal or other landownership adjustments executed by the District Ranger.
4. Provide the public with access to a current copy of the Land Status Atlas for the district.

5590.5 - Definitions

Definitions for specialized terms used throughout this chapter follow.

National Forest System Land. National Forest System lands include all National Forest lands reserved or withdrawn from the public domain of the United States, all National Forest lands acquired through purchase, exchange, donation, or other means, the National Grasslands and utilization projects, and other lands or interest therein which are administered by the Forest Service or are designated for administration through the Forest Service as a part of the system (16 U.S.C. 1609).

5591 - Land Status Records System

As established in 36 CFR 200.12, the Land Status Records System is the official repository for all realty records and land title documents for National Forest System lands. The records include an accurate account of acreage, condition of title, administrative jurisdiction, rights held by the United States, administrative and legal use restrictions, encumbrances, and access rights on land or interests in land in the National Forest System.

Maintenance of the Land Status Records System includes the final review, processing, posting, and permanent retention of records creating any change in landownership status. This includes

notation and filing of laws and Executive orders affecting landownership and jurisdiction, all landownership adjustments (exchange, purchase, donation, transfer, boundary modification, title claims, sales, grants, excess property), use restrictions (withdrawals, designations, dedications, wilderness, other special areas), encumbrances (rights-of-way acquired or granted, reservations, outstanding rights, partial interests, easements), and changes attributable to resurveys.

Before National Forest System lands or interest in lands can be managed, the location, condition of title, and any restrictions on the use of those lands or interests must be known. All of this information must be presented in graphic (map or plat) and tabular form in the Land Status Atlas in accordance with the landownership status user guides.

5591.1 - Land Status Master File

This code is established to permit field units to issue any needed supplements.

5591.2 - Land Status Database

This code is established to permit field units to issue any needed supplements.

5591.3 - Reports

Field units must submit data for the annual Land Areas of the National Forest System report (Forest Service publication FS-383) to the Washington Office Lands Staff by October 15 of each year. Refer to the Land Areas Reporting Systems User Guide (LAR) for instructions on entering the required data.