

2014 Proposed Resolution No. Lands – 1

Submitted by: Montana Wildlife Federation, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, Colorado Wildlife Federation, Arizona Wildlife Federation, Wyoming Wildlife Federation, Nevada Wildlife Federation, Idaho Wildlife Federation

Transfer of Public Lands

1 WHEREAS, public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest
2 Service, National Park Service and other federal agencies represent a birthright of the American
3 people, provide invaluable habitat for fish and wildlife, afford opportunities for hunting, fishing,
4 and other recreation, and support sustainable local economic activity; and

5 WHEREAS, the first thirteen colonies created the first Public Domain when they
6 relinquished to the federal government their several claims to what was then the West, and all of
7 the western states other than Texas (which entered the union as an independent republic) were
8 created out of federal territory by formal acts of Congress; and

9 WHEREAS, the western states were created from public domain lands by acts of
10 Congress and relinquished any and all claims to ownership of federal lands existing within their
11 boundaries pursuant to the language within their respective Enabling Acts; and

12 WHEREAS, State legislators in Western and other states with large amounts of federal
13 public land have passed or are attempting to pass ideologically-inspired proposals directing the
14 federal government to extinguish its title to millions of acres of these lands and transfer title to
15 the states in which these lands are located for various purposes, including ultimately selling the
16 land to private interests; and

17 WHEREAS, some members of the United States Congress are proposing selling
18 substantial amounts of federal public lands to private interests or transferring lands to states in
19 order to generate short-term revenue and advance an anti-government political agenda; and

20 WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Federation supports a policy of retention of public
21 lands and strict compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act which authorizes
22 only limited disposal or exchange of federal public lands and only after careful public review of
23 the values of those lands; and

24 WHEREAS, wholesale exchange, sale or giveaway of millions of acres of federal public
25 lands, whether to states or private entities, is unnecessary and constitutes an irretrievable loss to
26 all citizens of this nation as part of their national heritage; and

27 WHEREAS, state legislative mandates to the federal government to extinguish title
28 appear to violate the U. S. Constitution's Property and Supremacy clauses; and

29 WHEREAS, The National Wildlife Federation has vigorously opposed similar proposals
30 for blanket disposal of federal public lands in 1983 and 1984 during the Sagebrush Rebellion and
31 again in 2006, establishing a firm precedent of contesting such attempts;

32 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, in
33 annual meeting assembled May 1-3, 2014, in Baltimore, Maryland, hereby reaffirms its
34 unequivocal opposition to large-scale exchange, sale or giveaway of federally managed public
35 lands by the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service or
36 other federal land management agencies; and

37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the National Wildlife Federation supports affiliates
38 building grassroots support to combat legislative, administrative, and legal attempts to force
39 divestiture of federal lands and educating citizens about the practical consequences of such
40 proposals; and

41 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation urges the U.S.
42 Department of Justice to forcefully and resolutely litigate against any state that pursues a
43 directive mandating the federal government to extinguish title to federal lands and transfer that
44 title to the state; and

45 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the National Wildlife Federation urges Congress
46 and the President to reject legislation that proposes to transfer federal lands to states, sell federal
47 lands to private interests, or otherwise liquidate the federal estate.

