

# MANAGING THE WEST

Wisconsin Arkansas Washington Nevada  
North Dakota Utah Alaska Arizona  
Wyoming Minnesota the future  
Texas Oregon South Dakota Oklahoma  
Montana Colorado New Mexico Idaho

Summer 2019

Volume 7 - Issue 2

Welcome to the Summer 2019 issue of *Managing the West*...



After 33 years with the Utah Trust Lands Administration I was privileged to receive an opportunity to follow Kathy Opp into the position of your Executive Director. I've been involved in the Association for many years in the capacities of Secretary, Treasurer, and a member of the Asset Committee. I truly appreciate the work that is done and the challenges all of the states have in managing their assets for their beneficiaries.

Since I came on board on February 1st there have been a lot of great things happening, most of which were put into motion last summer in Duluth and have been continued with the hard work of state and affiliate members. The great progress of all the work groups is highlighted later in this newsletter and I look forward to working with everyone on our next steps to raise the profile of our group so we can become the go-to source for trust land management issues.

We had a successful Washington DC fly-in event in March. We were able to spend time with administration officials in the Department of the Interior, Environmental Protection Agency and the US Forest Service as well as many Congressional members. We are going to be discussing moving this type of event to the fall to enable more participation from state members since the spring is generally a very busy time of year with legislatures in session. Just yesterday I returned from the Western Governors Association summer meeting in Vail, Colorado. I was able to make some new connections and I'm happy to report, with our input, the WGA passed a resolution encouraging federal land exchanges and purchases with states. That resolution can be read in full by following this link: [WGA Resolution](#)

I'm excited to keep working with all of you and am looking forward to a great conference in Whitefish. See you all on July 28th!

Lisa Schneider  
Executive Director, WSLCA



**2019 WSLCA**

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### Secretary Birdwell set to retire

Harry Birdwell, who has served as the Secretary of the Commissioners of the Land Office and President of WSLCA for the past two years, has advised Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt of his upcoming plans to retire. The WSLCA summer meeting in Whitefish will serve as Secretary Birdwell's final secretarial duty.

During his tenure in Oklahoma, Secretary Birdwell served as the 49th Secretary of the Commissioners of the Land Office and is the second longest serving Secretary in Oklahoma state history. Distributions to beneficiaries have been unprecedented under Secretary Birdwell's leadership. More than \$1 billion has been distributed to both K-12 and Higher Education beneficiaries during the 8 years he has served as Secretary. Additionally, the permanent trust fund has grown by \$800 million from \$1.6 billion when he became Secretary in 2011 to \$2.4 billion upon retirement in 2019. Secretary Birdwell has elevated the professionalism of the agency and strived to hire the very best individuals in their respective fields to serve the agency's mission of managing assets to support education.

As president of WSLCA, Secretary Birdwell has worked to advocate for cooperation for management of public land between the federal government and the states. Specifically, the importance of cooperative federalism and the essential meaningful consultation that should be part of regulatory and rule-making activity of the federal government toward the states. As stakeholders, the states should be at the table and be included in the discussions on rules and legislation that affect trust land managers' abilities to follow constitutional and statutory authorities and mandates. Secretary Birdwell has also worked diligently to expand affiliate membership and to specifically include affiliates in meaningful conversations affecting trust land management.

Congratulations and best wishes, but most of all "Thank You" to Secretary Birdwell for his dedicated leadership to the beneficiaries he serves in the state of Oklahoma, as well as his tireless leadership to WSLCA over the last two years.

### April Virtual Meeting - Abbreviated Recap

A WSLCA virtual meeting was held Wednesday, April 10, 2019. Member States and Affiliates participating were Alaska, Arkansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, PCC and CalPortland.

Following brief activity reports provided by WSLCA staff, individuals who attended the Washington DC Fly-in held March 12-13, 2019. Attendees provided positive summaries related to the agency visits with Department of the Interior, Environmental Protection Agency and US Forest Service and discussed possibilities for revising the schedule and the format for future meetings. Some of the ideas presented for consideration were:

- Encourage member states to establish relationships and encourage attendance at hosted events by congressional members of both political parties.
- Create a more structured agenda for the agency meetings as opposed to a "meet and greet" format.
- Schedule future events for the fall, in advance of State legislative sessions, to encourage better State attendance.

The strategic initiative Organization Team provided an update on the status and next steps of the Association reorganization project. Virtual meeting participants shared in an onscreen review of the draft bylaws that will be presented for approval at the summer meeting in Whitefish, MT.

Association resolutions old and new were discussed. Hundreds of old WSLCA resolutions that have been approved by the Association during its 60-year existence will be presented for retirement at the summer meeting. New and refreshed resolutions will need to be drafted well in advance of the summer conference to allow member states to have time to review and vet resolutions within their agencies prior to being asked to vote on them in Montana come July.

The meeting was capped off by Montana staff providing a rundown of summer conference activities and sessions.

For a more detailed version of meeting notes, contact Association Secretary, Aaron Vande-Linde ([aaron.vande-linde@state.mn.us](mailto:aaron.vande-linde@state.mn.us)).

## New Name, New Logo, Old Mission

Guided by the efforts of the 2018 Organization and Branding teams, the Association is thrilled to announce that a new organization structure, a new name, and a new logo will be highlights of the 2019-2020 Association year.

- A new name (National Association of Trust Lands) has already been agreed upon by a majority of the voting members of the Association and will be made part of the new Association by-laws. It was chosen to help raise the profile of the group and better represent the members and their mission.
- New Articles of Incorporation have been prepared to incorporate the Association in the State of Arizona ([view here](#)).
- New by-laws have been drafted and will be presented for approval at the summer meeting. We want to ensure that member states have ample opportunity to review the bylaws prior to the voting on them in July. ([view here](#))
- A new logo that visually weaves the education aspect into the natural resources management aspect of our mission is ready to unveil (view in Whitefish, MT!)

Why National Association of Trust Lands? Why Arizona? Why new by-laws? This [FAQ document](#), developed by the Organization team, is filled with background information and is the perfect resource for inquiring minds who want to know.

Do you have news? Or questions about the WSLCA organization? Please contact Lisa or Linda .

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## Summer conference news...

2019 marks year 70 for the Western States Land Commissioners Association. 1949 – the year trust managers from 11 western states were inspired to establish this Association to meet in community in an effort to “keep watch” over the assets entrusted to their care for the purpose of helping states fund education. 1949 – when gas was \$.17/gallon, minimum wage was \$.70/hour and the first Volkswagen Beetle rolled off the lot in the U.S. under the watchful eye of President Harry S. Truman.

Much has changed since 1949 and yet we are often told that the more things change the more they stay the same. That would appear to be so as a review of Association resolutions going back to the earliest years of WSLCA shows that many of the issues addressed in 1949 closely resemble the issues of today (trust fund investments, conservation, Federal lands, grazing administration, public perception of trust lands, etc.).

Also unchanged is the diligence of the Association over the past seven decades to stay involved to the extent possible in setting policy that would potentially impact the numerous and diverse beneficiaries of the work being done in our member states.

To remain relevant, and to maintain a credible voice in shaping future land and asset management policy, the Association is committed to learning, teaching, and collaborating to identify best practices and to stay refreshed on current trends and technology.

Much of this is done via conferences like the one planned for Whitefish, MT July 28-August 1, 2019. Our gracious hosts from the Montana Department of Natural Resources have some exciting and informative events planned for attendees of this year’s event. Don't miss this unique opportunity to join peers and associates in the shadow of Glacier National Park as the Association membership engages in discussions pertinent to day-to-day technical issues surrounding land and financial management. Continuing Professional Education sessions relating to minerals management will be offered. Be inspired not only by the natural beauty of the area, but by the message of nationally renowned motivational speaker Sam Kavanagh. Sam will share a compelling tale of living without

limitations, looking beyond the challenges to realize success. Also discussed will be strategic initiatives for the upcoming year, including refreshing WSLCA branding, and other topics intended to further advance the mission and message of the Association. The agenda has been posted on the Association website and weekly emails are being prepared to provide sneak peeks of featured sessions and speakers right up until the conference begins.

If you have not yet registered for the conference, now is the time. [Register on-line here!](#) The [hotel block](#) (Group ID: WSLCA19, Password: Whitefish) at the conference center will be released on June 28. Securing accommodations after that date could prove challenging during this intensely busy tourist season near Glacier National Park. See the conference agenda [here](#).



## Resolutions and the Summer Conference

Prior to this year's summer conference, we would like to give members ample opportunity to review draft resolutions and provide input to be considered and voted upon in Whitefish. Draft resolutions can be viewed on the Association website at <https://www.wslca.org/draft-resolutions.html>. Comments can be directed to Executive Director, Lisa Schneider at [lyschneider.sl@gmail.com](mailto:lyschneider.sl@gmail.com).

In addition, hundreds of resolutions that have been approved by WSLCA over the past 60 years are technically still "active" since they did not include sunset provisions and have not at any point been officially retired. The Executive Committee has recommended that action be taken at the summer meeting to sunset all existing resolutions. Current resolutions that are still relevant will be refreshed and reapproved in Whitefish. For access to all resolutions, active and archived, visit <https://www.wslca.org/resolutions.html>.

## The Impact of Strategic Doing

The 2018 summer conference in Duluth, MN produced a number of strategic initiative teams that spent the past year working on focus areas identified as priorities for advancing the mission of the Association. Those teams were made up of state and affiliate members and held numerous virtual meetings subsequent to the Duluth meeting. The success of the teams and the validity of the process is evident in the following summary of accomplishments realized by team efforts since the Duluth conference.

### Organization

- ✓ Determined it would be optimal to incorporate the new Association in Arizona and drafted the requisite Articles of Incorporation.
- ✓ Drafted new Bylaws and reviewed them with membership during the April 2019 virtual meeting in preparation for consideration and approval during the 2019 summer meeting in Whitefish, MT.
- ✓ Prepared FAQs for the membership regarding the proposed changes and outlined the implementation timetable.

### Media

- ✓ Selected a vendor to provide the platform and support services to host the Association website.
- ✓ Designed and implemented a new website which was launched in October, 2018.
- ✓ Established the ability to process payments through the Association website so member states hosting conferences can use this platform for on-line registrations rather than contracting with a separate vendor.
- ✓ Designed a template and collected data for individual member state info pages.
- ✓ Designated the WSLCA Executive Assistant as the contact for refreshing information on the website.

### Branding

- ✓ Generated a list of potential new names for review by the Executive Committee. (The *National Association of State Trust Lands* was selected by the Executive Committee and approved by the state members in February, 2019.)
- ✓ Procured bids for redesign of the Association logo and contracted with Plaudit Design in Minnesota.
- ✓ Collaborated with Plaudit Design in April, 2019 to design a new logo which will be

revealed at the summer conference in Whitefish, MT.

## Conference

- ✓ Developed a survey subsequent to the 2018 summer conference to determine how the membership would like future conferences to be structured.
- ✓ Published survey results indicating the following preferences.
  - Continue to have two conferences annually,
  - Hold conferences in a variety of locations,
  - Retain current conference format, length, and content,
  - Feature speakers in more general areas such as leadership, business operations and administration, and
  - Create more networking opportunities, particularly between state and affiliate members

## Education

- ✓ Identified topics that would appeal to a wide cross section of members,
- ✓ Assigned team members to lead the work needed in the areas of: minerals, asset management, real estate, and submerged lands, and
- ✓ Committed team members to work with conference hosts to select speakers and obtain proper accreditation through state or national groups so sessions will be eligible for CE or CLE hours.

## Policy

- ✓ Prepared a member state Key Contacts and Decision-Makers matrix.
- ✓ Identified and published member state associations with other organizations such as WGA, NAFWA, etc.
- ✓ Compiled affiliate member areas of expertise as well as their availability to assist in projects.
- ✓ Established an Association policy process to: (1) identify a policy issue; (2) begin team analysis; (3) determine if the specific issue would be best served by a Resolution or if a Letter of Support would be more effective; (4) recommend an approach and gain approval of the membership (5) distribute the Resolution or Letter of Support to appropriate entities.

We are excited to gather in Whitefish to establish teams for 2019-2020 that will be tasked with ensuring that the Association can continue to build on the momentum and accomplishments realized

during the past year. To aid in that effort, former Executive Director Kathy Opp will be facilitating two sessions during the conference. The Monday session will be to train tables guides and knowledge keepers who help lead the teams through planning and implementation. The Tuesday session is intended to engage individuals, both state members and affiliates, in identifying projects, setting a course to completion and volunteering personal assets to aid in that effort. Teams defined for the 2019-2020 Association year are

- Winter 2020 – Conference/Education Team Curriculum Development
- Professional Development/Continuing Education Advancement
- Association Communications and Branding
- Membership Expansion

We have proven this approach to be effective. Pick an area of interest and plan to join us on July 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> to be a part of the ongoing advancement of your Association priorities and objectives.

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## Recommend a Member!

WSLCA is a growing network of professionals, including state and industry leaders in a variety of organizations, who support responsible management of state trust lands on behalf of public and endowed beneficiaries. It is through the support of our valued Affiliate Members that the WSLCA is able to enhance and extend our impact, deliver high quality continuing education content and strengthen relationships that complement our mission. Please take a moment to connect with and thank our current Affiliate Members listed on our web page [Valued-Supporters](#). If you know other public and private entities and individuals who share common interests in the WSLCA's objectives please contact a WSLCA Executive Committee member to recommend them for membership. The Affiliate Membership program allows the opportunity to participate in the WSLCA's biannual conferences and other events, to work with us on key initiatives and to talk directly with members on issues of national importance.



# Western States Land Commissioners Association

Register  
Now!

## *2019 Summer Conference*

July 28 - August 1, 2019 | Whitefish, Montana



At the gateway of Glacier National Park, Whitefish is the premier destination for outdoor recreation and culture in Northwestern Montana.

The 2019 Summer Conference will focus on the dynamics of recreational use of state trust lands. Expect a diverse agenda of presentations and tours, all set at the beautiful Lodge at Whitefish Lake.



### **Registration & Additional Information**

[www.wslca.org](http://www.wslca.org)  
<http://lodgeatwhitefishlake.com>  
[www.explorewhitefish.com](http://www.explorewhitefish.com)  
[www.nps.gov/glac](http://www.nps.gov/glac)