Public Law 103-255
103d Congress

An Act

May 19, 1994
[S. 341]

To provide for a land exchange between the Secretary of Agriculture and Eagle and Pitkin Counties in Colorado, and for other purposes.

National Forest System.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) Eagle and Pitkin Counties in the State of Colorado (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the "Counties") are offering to convey to the United States approximately one thousand three hundred and seven acres of patented mining claim properties owned by the Counties within or adjacent to the White River National Forest (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the "National Forest inholdings"), including approximately six hundred and sixty nine acres of inholdings within the Holy Cross, Hunter-Fryingpan, Collegiate Peaks, and Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Areas;

(2) the properties identified in paragraph (1) are National Forest inholdings whose acquisition by the United States, would facilitate better management of the White River National Forest and its wilderness resources; and

(3) certain lands owned by the United States within Eagle County comprising approximately two hundred and seventeen acres and known as the Mt. Sopris Tree Nursery (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the "nursery lands") are available for exchange and the Counties desire to acquire portions of the nursery lands for public purposes.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to provide the opportunity for an exchange whereby the Counties would transfer to the United States the National Forest inholdings in exchange for portions of the nursery lands;

(2) to provide an expedited mechanism under Federal law for resolving any private title claims to the National Forest inholdings if the exchange is consummated; and

(3) after the period of limitations has run for adjudication of all private title claims to the National Forest inholdings, to quiet title in the inholdings in the United States subject to valid existing rights adjudicated pursuant to this Act.

SEC. 2. OFFER OF EXCHANGE.

(a) OFFER BY THE COUNTIES.—The exchange directed by this Act shall be consummated if within ninety days after enactment of this Act, the Counties offer to transfer to the United States,

AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

pursuant to the provisions of this Act, all right, title, and interest of the Counties in and to approximately—

(1) one thousand two hundred and fifty eight acres of lands owned by Pitkin County within and adjacent to the boundaries of the White River National Forest, Colorado, and generally depicted as parcels 1–53 on maps entitled "Pitkin County Lands to Forest Service", numbered 1–11, and dated April 1990, except for parcels 20 (Twilight), 21 (Little Alma), the Highland Chief, and Alaska portions of parcel 25 depicted on map 7, and parcel 52 (Iron King) on map 11, which shall remain in their current ownership; and

(2) forty-nine acres of land owned by Eagle County within and adjacent to the boundaries of the White River National Forest, Colorado, and generally depicted as parcels 54–58 on maps entitled "Eagle County Lands to Forest Service", numbered 12–14, and dated April 1990, except for parcel 56 (Manitou) on map 14 which is already in National Forest ownership.

(b) EXCHANGE BY THE SECRETARY.—Subject to the provisions of section 3, within ninety days after receipt by the Secretary of Agriculture (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the "Secretary") of a quitclaim deed from the Counties to the United States of the lands identified in subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary, on behalf of the United States, shall convey by quitclaim deed to the counties, as tenants in common, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to approximately one hundred and thirty-two acres of land (and water rights as specified in section 7 and the improvements located thereon), as generally depicted as tract A on the map entitled "Mt. Sopris Tree Nursery", dated October 5, 1990.

SEC. 3. RESERVATIONS AND CONDITIONS OF CONVEYANCE.

(a) RESERVATIONS.—In any conveyance to the Counties pursuant to section 2, the Secretary shall reserve—

(1) all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to approximately eighty-five acres of land (and improvements located thereon), which are generally depicted as tracts B (approximately twenty-nine acres) and C (approximately fifty-six acres) on the map referred to in section 2(b);

(2) water rights as specified in section 7(a); and

(3) any easements, existing utility lines, or other existing access in or across tract A currently serving buildings and facilities on tract B.

(b) REVERSION.—It is the intention of Congress that any lands and water rights conveyed to the Counties pursuant to this Act shall be retained by the Counties and used solely for public recreation and recreational facilities, open space, fairgrounds, and such other public purposes as do not significantly reduce the portion of such lands in open space. In the deed of conveyance to the Counties, the Secretary shall provide that all right, title, and interest in and to any lands and water rights conveyed to the Counties pursuant to this Act shall revert back to the United States in the event that such lands or water rights or any portion thereof are sold or otherwise conveyed by the Counties or are used for other than such public purposes.

(c) EQUALIZATION OF VALUES.—Values of the respective lands exchanged between the United States and the Counties pursuant

to this Act are deemed to be of approximately equal value, without any need for cash equalization, as based on a statement of value prepared by qualified Forest Service appraisers and dated February 12, 1993.

(d) RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL.—The Secretary may convey any or all of the nursery lands reserved pursuant to subsection (a) of this section for fair market value under existing authorities, except that the Secretary shall first offer the Counties the opportunity to acquire the lands. This right of first refusal shall commence upon receipt by the Counties of written notice of the intent of the Secretary to convey such property, and the Counties shall have sixty days from the date of such receipt to offer to acquire such properties at fair market value as tenants in common. The Secretary shall have sole discretion as to whether to accept or reject any such offer of the Counties.

SEC. 4. STATUS OF LANDS ACQUIRED BY THE UNITED STATES.

(a) NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS.—The National Forest inholdings acquired by the United States pursuant to this Act shall become a part of the White River National Forest (or in the case of portions of parcels 39, 40, and 41 depicted on map 9, and a portion of parcel 54 of map 12, part of the Gunnison and Arapahoe National Forests, respectively) for administration and management by the Secretary in accordance with the laws, rules, and regulations applicable to the National Forest System.

16 USC 1132 note.

(b) WILDERNESS.—The National Forest inholdings that are within the boundaries of the Holy Cross, Hunter-Fryingpan, Collegiate Peaks, and Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Areas shall be incorporated in and deemed to be part of their respective wilderness areas and shall be administered in accordance with the provisions of the Wilderness Act governing areas designated by that Act as wilderness.

SEC. 5. RESOLVING TITLE DISPUTES TO NATIONAL FOREST INHOLDINGS.

(a) QUIET TITLE ACT.—Notwithstanding any other provisions of law and subject to the provisions of subsection (c) of this section, section 2409a of title 28, United States Code (commonly referred to as the "Quiet Title Act") shall be the sole legal remedy of any party claiming any right, title, or interest in or to any National Forest inholdings conveyed by the Counties to the United States pursuant to this Act.

Publication.

(b) LISTING.—Upon conveyance of the National Forest inholdings to the United States, the Secretary shall cause to be published in a newspaper or newspapers of general circulation in Pitkin and Eagle Counties, Colorado, a listing of all National Forest inholdings acquired pursuant to this Act together with a statement that any party desiring to assert a claim of any right, title, or interest in or to such lands must bring an action against the United States pursuant to such section 2409a within the same period described by subsection (c) of this section.

(c) LIMITATION.—Notwithstanding section 2409a(g) of title 28, United States Code, any civil action against the United States to quiet title to National Forest inholdings conveyed to the United States pursuant to this Act must be filed in the United States District Court for the District of Colorado no later than the date that is six years after the date of publication of the listing required by subsection (b) of this section.

(d) VESTING BY OPERATION OF LAW.—Subject to any easements or other rights of record that may be accepted and expressly disclaimed by the Secretary, and without limiting title to National Forest inholdings conveyed by the Counties pursuant to this Act, all other rights, title, and interest in or to such National Forest inholdings if not otherwise vested by quitclaim deed to the United States, shall vest in the United States on the date that is six years after the date of publication of the listing required by subsection (b) of this section, except for such title as is conveyed by the Counties, no other rights, title, or interest in or to any parcel of the lands conveyed to the United States pursuant to this Act shall vest in the United States under this subsection if title to such parcel—

(1) has been or hereafter is adjudicated as being in a party other than the United States or the Counties; or

(2) is the subject of any action or suit against the United States to vest such title in a party other than the United States or the Counties that is pending on the date six years after the date of publication of a listing required by subsection (b) of this section.

(e) COSTS AND ATTORNEY'S FEES.—(1) At the discretion of the court, any party claiming right, title, or interest in or to any of the National Forest inholdings who files an action against the United States to quiet title and fails to prevail in such action may be required to pay to the Secretary on behalf of the United States, an amount equal to the costs and attorney's fees incurred by the United States in the defense of such action.

(2) As a condition of any transfer of lands to the Counties under this Act, the Counties shall be obligated to reimburse the United States for 50 percent of all costs in excess of $240,000 not reimbursed pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection associated with the defense by the United States of any claim or legal action brought against the United States with respect to any rights, title, and interest in or to the National Forest inholdings. Payment shall be made in the same manner as provided in section 6 of this Act.

SEC. 6. REIMBURSEMENT TO THE UNITED STATES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—As a condition of any transfer of lands to the Counties under this Act, in addition to any amounts required to be paid to the United States pursuant to section 5(e), in the event of a final determination adverse to the United States in any action relating to the title to the National Forest inholdings, the United States shall be entitled to receive from the Counties reimbursement equal to the fair market value (appraised as if they had marketable title) of the lands that are the subject of such final determination.

(b) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—Any money received by the United States from the Counties under section 5(e) or subsection (a) of this section shall be considered money received and deposited pursuant to the Act of December 4, 1967, as amended (and commonly known as the Sisk Act, 16 U.S.C. 484a).

(c) IN-KIND PAYMENT OF LANDS.—In lieu of monetary payments, any obligation for reimbursement by the Counties to the United States under this Act can be fulfilled by the conveyance to the United States of lands having a current fair market value equal

to or greater than the amount of the obligation. Such lands shall be mutually acceptable to the Secretary and the Counties.

SEC. 7. WATER RIGHTS.

(a) ALLOCATION AND MANAGEMENT.—The water rights in existence on the date of enactment of this Act in the Mt. Sopris Tree Nursery, which comprise well water and irrigation ditch rights adjudicated under the laws of the State of Colorado, together with the right to administer, maintain, access, and further develop such rights, shall be allocated and managed as follows:

(1) The United States shall convey to the Counties as undivided tenants in common all rights associated with the five existing wells on the properties.

(2) If the Secretary determines that water from the five existing wells is necessary to meet culinary, sanitary, or domestic uses of the existing buildings retained by the United States pursuant to section 3(a), the Counties shall make available to the United States, without charge, enough water to reasonably serve such needs and shall additionally, if requested by the United States, make every effort to cooperatively provide to the United States, without charge, commensurate with the Counties own needs on tract A, water to serve reasonable culinary, sanitary, and domestic uses of any new buildings which the United States may construct on its retained lands in the future.

(3) All Federally owned irrigation ditch water rights shall be reserved by the United States.

(b) MODIFICATION OF ALLOCATION.—If the Secretary and the Counties determine the public interest will be better served thereby, they may agree to modify the precise water allocation made pursuant to this section or to enter into cooperative agreements (with or without reimbursement) to use, share, or otherwise administer such water rights and associated facilities as they determine appropriate.

SEC. 8. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.

(a) TIME REQUIREMENT FOR COMPLETING TRANSFER.—If the Counties make a timely offer, pursuant to section 2(a), the transfers of lands authorized and directed by this Act shall be completed no later than one year after the date of enactment of this Act.

(b) BOUNDARY MODIFICATIONS.—The Secretary and the Counties may mutually agree to make modifications of the final boundary between tracts A and B prior to completion of the exchange authorized by this Act if such modifications are determined to better serve mutual objectives than the precise boundaries as set forth in the maps referenced in this Act.

(c) TRACT A EASEMENT.—The transfer of tract A to the Counties shall be subject to the existing highway easement to the State of Colorado and to any other right, title, or interest of record.

(d) VALIDITY.—If any provision of this Act or the application thereof is held invalid, the remainder of the Act and application thereof, except for the precise provision held invalid, shall not be affected thereby.

(e) FOREST HEADQUARTERS AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES.—The White River National Forest headquarters and administrative office in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, are hereby transferred from the jurisdiction of the United States General Services Administration to the jurisdiction of the Secretary, who shall retain such facilities unless and until otherwise provided by subsequent Act of Congress.

Approved May 19, 1994.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S. 341:

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 103-432, Pt. 1 (Comm. on Natural Resources).
SENATE REPORTS: No. 103-61 (Comm. on Energy and Natural Resources).
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:
Vol. 139 (1993): June 29, considered and passed Senate.
Vol. 140 (1994): May 10, considered and passed House.