

# STATE OF NEW YORK

3096

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

## IN ASSEMBLY

January 23, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. SANTABARBARA -- read once and referred to the  
Committee on Governmental Operations

AN ACT to amend the public lands law, in relation to establishing a  
right of first refusal in the state for federal public land to be  
transferred; and to amend the real property law, in relation to estab-  
lishing the manner in which documents regarding federal lands shall be  
recorded

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assem-  
bly, do enact as follows:

- 1 Section 1. The public lands law is amended by adding a new section  
2 21-a to read as follows:  
3 § 21-a. Conveyance of federal lands. 1. For purposes of this section,  
4 the following terms apply:  
5 a. "Conservation plan" means a habitat conservation plan developed  
6 pursuant to section 10 of the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16  
7 U.S.C. Sec. 1539) and its implementing regulations, as the federal act  
8 and regulations exist as of the first of January, two thousand twenty-  
9 four.  
10 b. "Conveyance" includes any method, including sale, donation or  
11 exchange, by which all or a portion of the right, title, and interest of  
12 the United States in and to federal lands located in the state is trans-  
13 ferred to another entity.  
14 c. "Federal public land" means any land owned and managed by the  
15 United States, including the surface estate, the subsurface estate, or  
16 any improvement on those estates, which is owned and managed by the fish  
17 and wildlife service, the forest service and the national park service.  
18 d. "Infrastructure" means any development or construction that is not  
19 on or appurtenant to the federal public land at the time of transfer.  
20 2. a. Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, it is the policy  
21 of the state to discourage conveyances that transfer ownership of feder-  
22 al public lands in the state from the federal government.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 b. (i) Except as provided in this section, conveyances of federal  
2 public lands in the state are void ab initio unless the commissioner of  
3 general services was provided with the right of first refusal to the  
4 conveyance or the right to arrange for the transfer of the federal  
5 public land to another entity.

6 (ii) The commissioner of general services may seek declaratory and  
7 injunctive relief from a court of competent jurisdiction to contest  
8 conveyances made to any entity unless the requirements of this section  
9 are met.

10 (iii) The commissioner of general services shall formally consider its  
11 right of first refusal or arrange for the transfer of federal public  
12 lands to a third party at a public hearing.

13 (iv) (A) Prior to the conveyance of federal public lands in state, if  
14 the commissioner of general services was provided with the right of  
15 first refusal or the right to arrange for the transfer of the federal  
16 public lands to another entity, the commissioner of general services  
17 shall issue a certificate affirming compliance with this section.

18 (B) The commissioner of general services shall waive its right of  
19 first refusal or the right to arrange for the transfer of the federal  
20 public lands to another entity, and issue a certification of compliance  
21 affirming compliance with this section for a conveyance that is deemed  
22 by the commissioner of general services to be routine. A conveyance  
23 deemed by the commissioner of general services to be routine includes,  
24 but is not limited to, the exchange of lands of equal value between the  
25 federal government and a private entity. The commissioner of general  
26 services may adopt regulations to establish a process and criteria for  
27 determining the types of conveyances it considers to be routine.

28 (v) The commissioner of general services, and the department of envi-  
29 ronmental conversation shall enter into a memorandum of understanding  
30 that establishes a state policy that both agencies shall undertake all  
31 feasible efforts to protect against any future unauthorized conveyance  
32 or any change in federal public land designation, including, but not  
33 limited to, any change in use, classification, or legal status of any  
34 lands designated as federal monuments pursuant to the federal Antiqui-  
35 ties Act of 1906.

36 3. The state shall not be responsible for any costs associated with  
37 conveyed federal public land that the commissioner of general services  
38 did not accept, purchase, or arrange for the transfer of, pursuant to  
39 this section. Costs include, but are not limited to, management costs  
40 and infrastructure development costs.

41 4. The commissioner of general services may establish, through regu-  
42 lations or another appropriate method, a process for engaging with  
43 federal land managers and potential purchasers of federal public lands  
44 early in the conveyance process.

45 5. The commissioner of general services shall ensure, for any conveyed  
46 federal public land the commissioner accepts, purchases, or arranges for  
47 the transfer of, that future management of the conveyed federal public  
48 land is determined in a public process that gives consideration of past  
49 recognized and legal uses of those lands. At a minimum, the public proc-  
50 ess required by this subdivision shall include a noticed and open meet-  
51 ing.

52 6. The commissioner of general services shall waive its right of first  
53 refusal or the right to arrange for the transfer of the federal public  
54 lands to another entity, and issue a certification of compliance affirm-  
55 ing compliance with this section for any of the following:

1 a. The conveyance of federal public lands pursuant to a conservation  
2 plan.

3 b. The renewal of a lease in existence as of the first of January, two  
4 thousand twenty-four.

5 c. The conveyance of federal public lands to a federally recognized  
6 Native American tribe or lands taken into or out of trust for a Native  
7 American tribe or individual Native American.

8 7. The provisions of this section are severable. If any provision of  
9 this section or its application is held invalid, the invalidity shall  
10 not affect other provisions or applications that can be given effect  
11 without the invalid provision or application.

12 8. This section shall not apply to the sale of real property acquired  
13 by a federal agency through a foreclosure proceeding.

14 § 2. The real property law is amended by adding a new section 291-k to  
15 read as follows:

16 § 291-k. Recording of documents regarding federal lands. 1. A person  
17 shall not knowingly present for recording or filing with a county clerk  
18 a deed, instrument, or other document related to a conveyance subject to  
19 section twenty-one-a of the public lands law unless it is accompanied by  
20 a certificate of compliance from the commissioner of general services.  
21 Further, a deed, instrument, or other document related to a conveyance  
22 that is subject to section twenty-one-a of the public lands law shall be  
23 titled "Federal Public Land Deed of Conveyance" and shall not be  
24 recorded without a certificate from the commissioner of general  
25 services. The federal agency wishing to convey federal public lands  
26 shall ensure that the deed, instrument, or other conveyance document is  
27 titled in the manner required by this section.

28 2. A person who presents for recording or filing with a county clerk a  
29 deed, instrument or other document in violation of this section is  
30 liable for a civil penalty not to exceed five thousand dollars.

31 3. Civil penalties collected pursuant to this section shall be depos-  
32 ited into the general fund.

33 § 3. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after  
34 it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amend-  
35 ment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implemen-  
36 tation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and  
37 completed on or before such effective date.