

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES
COMMISSIONER

April 25, 2014

The Honorable Neil Kornze
Director
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW, Rm. 5665
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Kornze:

I am extremely alarmed by recent reports the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) may lay claim to an estimated 90,000 acres of land along a 116 mile stretch of the Red River. The possible federal takeover and ownership of privately-held lands is outrageous. These lands have been the deeded property of Texas landowners for generations. I strongly encourage your agency to immediately cease any attempt to seize these private lands from Texas citizens, as well as clarify BLM intentions for developing the Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, and work to conduct extensive outreach to landowners and stakeholders in the area.

Regarding BLM's intent to conduct a cadastral survey along a 116 mile stretch of the Red River, BLM already has on file numerous cadastral surveys that delineate the Oklahoma-Texas border pursuant to the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Oklahoma v. Texas 260 U.S. 606 (1923). In October 2000, House Joint Resolution 72 was signed into law ratifying the Red River Boundary Compact agreed upon by Texas and Oklahoma, and setting the Red River boundary at the vegetation line on the south bank. These facts bring me to the inescapable conclusion that BLM does not have a legitimate claim to private lands on the Texas side of the border.

Federal confiscation of these lands would have a severe negative economic impact on our state. Using data from the U.S. and State-Level Farm Income and Wealth Statistics prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, our agency calculates the federal acquisition of 90,000 acres of privately-owned agricultural land along the Red River would result in an estimated \$14 million in lost revenue annually with an economic impact of more than \$74 million. Over 20 years, the lost income would total approximately \$420 million with a total economic loss of \$2.2 billion.

Texas has thrived under the faithful stewardship of private landowners. In fact, ninety-five percent of Texas' land is privately-owned, while many western states have a vast majority of their land owned by the federal government. Losing private land to the federal government in such a manner is nothing short of an illegal land seizure that runs contrary to the rule of law and our bedrock respect for private property rights.

Again, I urge BLM to halt any attempt to seize these private lands from Texas citizens, clarify BLM intentions for developing the Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, and work to conduct extensive outreach to landowners and stakeholders in the area.

Sincerely yours,



Todd Staples

TS/SD/nc

