LANDLOCKED

POLICY, TECHNOLOGY AND AMERICA’S INACCESSIBLE PUBLIC LAND

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What’s Ahead

Intro to onX - what do we make and why is it relevant to public land access?

Back in time - where did public land come from and why is some of it inaccessible today?

Landlocked today - what do we know about inaccessible lands now… and what don’t we know yet?

Next steps and opportunities

Q & A
WHERE THE PAVEMENT ENDS
ONX BEGINS
What we make

Digital maps for Android, iOS, web, and chips for Garmin GPS units

All 50 states

Public and private land ownership info available in the field

Hunt unit boundaries, roads, trails, recreation points, current and historic wildfire perimeters, wilderness boundaries, USFS timber cuts, and more
WHERE CAN I GO?
800s: Oregon Compromise, Texas and Mexican Cessions, Gadsden Purchase, Alaska Purchase

Mid-1800’s: Swampland Acts, Placer Act, Timber Culture Act, Desert Lands Act

1862-1872: Railroad Grants- 10 to 40 alternating sections for each mile of track

1850: Senators Jefferson Davis & Stephen A. Douglas devise method to raise value of public land along new railroads.

1803: Louisiana Purchase

1818-19: British and Spanish Cessions

1862: Homestead and Morrill Acts

Land Privatization Acts
Hundreds of updates to Land Ordinance (1785) and Land Law of 1796, and Graduation Act of 1854
Lisa to find example of 1800 era PLSS/ checkerboard map
"Increasingly, enjoyment of the outdoors is being designed for those who can afford to pay a price."

"Despite efforts by both BLM and Forest Service to acquire key tracts and rights-of-way, the battle thus far appears to be losing rather than gaining ground."

"The President...should sponsor a broad program to identify the areas, state-by-state, where access is barred."


1971: Problem of inaccessible public lands widely recognized
“...outdoor recreation is not on an equal footing with other public land uses because of its new popularity and its nonrecognition as a viable public land use.”

“...fragmented ownership, increased outdoor recreation, and the lack of a federal policy addressing public lands have all "set the stage" for public access problems.”

“...federal land use suffers from the public's inability to differentiate public from private lands...the public tends to assume lands are private if not otherwise marked.”

“The BLM and Forest Service should sponsor a broad program identifying areas where public access is barred.”

“...the Department shall, within 30 calendar days...
Encourage, promote, and facilitate greater public access to all Department lands consistent with applicable laws.”

“...The Department of the Interior is entrusted with overseeing Federal lands for the benefit of current and future generations. This includes advancing conservation stewardship and increasing outdoor recreation opportunities...”
"Department shall: in a manner that respects the rights and privacy of the owners of non-public lands, identify lands and waters where access...is currently limited (including areas ... that may be impractical or impossible to access via public roads or trails under current conditions, but where there may be an opportunity to gain access through a voluntary easement, right-of-way, or voluntary acquisition)” ...within 60 days
● How has mobile mapping technology changed the way the public finds public land?

● How much public land is not accessible in the West?
Landlocked

Federally-owned lands that cannot be accessed directly from a public road (direct access) and cannot be accessed via adjoining public land accessed by a public road (indirect access)
Direct Access
Accessed directly from a public road

Indirect Access
Accessed via adjoining public land accessed by a public road
TOTAL # OF ACRES = 4 MILLION
1. Zoomed in on checkerboarding
2. Indicators pop up highlighting parcels
Checkerboarding

Impossible to cross an infinitesimally small point without trespassing

“Not considered a legal form of access”
Montana: 1.52 M total landlocked acres
New Mexico: 554 K total landlocked acres
California: 492 K total landlocked acres
Wyoming: 3.05 M total landlocked acres
Arizona: 243 K total landlocked acres
Colorado: 269 K total landlocked acres
Idaho: 208 K total landlocked acres
Oregon: 443 K total landlocked acres
N. Dakota: 107 K total landlocked acres
S. Dakota: 196 K total landlocked acres
Washington: 121 K total landlocked acres
Utah: 264 K total landlocked acres

9.52 M total
Landlocked Acres by Public Agency

- BLM: 93.2%
- U.S. Forest Service: 4%
- Bureau of Reclamation: 1.1%
- National Park Service: 0.3%
- Other Federal Holdings: 0.3%
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: 1%
OFF LIMITS,
BUT WITHIN REACH
Unlocking the West’s Inaccessible Public Lands
www.unlockingpubliclands.org
A behind-the-scenes look at onX's work to quantify the true scope of the landlocked problem (and the fine print on what was included in this study)

Using its refined data on public lands and roads, onX conducted an analysis to determine the accessibility of every piece of federal public land in the West. This first-of-its-kind, multi-step process produced the total acreage of all landlocked lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, and other federal agencies in thirteen Western states.

The available road data, which was designed to convey information about road type rather than public access, reduced necessary certain assumptions. While unmaintained two-track routes are often found on public lands, rarely do they provide permanent, legal access across private property to what are otherwise isolated tracts of public land. In most instances, these are access routes controlled by the owner of the surrounding property.

Further comprehensive public easement data is not available for federal public lands, so there is presently no broad-scale way of distinguishing between the overwhelming majority of primitive routes that do not offer legal public access in perpetuity and those few that do. Easements can be verified individually by contacting agency land specialists and county surveyors, however, and that step was taken with the largest public parcels in each state for which the available data raised questions about accessibility.

As a result, the overall acreage identified as landlocked represents the most accurate assessment possible, but it is reasonable to assume that a nominal percentage of these lands do, in fact, have legally-binding easements on unmaintained two-track routes across private land.

The analysis was further refined through various means. All local- and state-owned lands factored into the indirect access assessment, unless research revealed a particular type of property as off-limits to the public—for example, most state school trust lands in Colorado are closed to hunting, fishing, and camping. Similarly, the data on lakes, streams, and countries without road access are not legally landlocked, so an effort was made to remove the largest islands from the total acreage calculation.

While this effort relied on the best existing data, the data are not always perfect. In some instances, road right-of-way next to public (and parcels were removed by the data providers, leaving our analysis to miss a connection between road and parcel by mere feet. In other situations, road segments are simply missing from the data or classification errors are incorrect. Furthermore, parcel data is not survey grade at these scales, and can have bad topology, i.e. the real-world property corners might not be shown as corners in the data.

Numerous factors particular to individual parcels could not be included in an analysis of this scope. For example, some landlocked public lands may be accessible by other means—such as by boat or air—but through private property, either because of the landowner’s goodwill or due to special access permits, or with state wildlife programs. Likewise, this report did not take into account physical or logistical barriers that can constrain access to a portion of a public tract. These might include bodies of water, seasonal restrictions on road use, long geographic distances between access points, or extreme topography.
“As much as these findings identify a clear need for expanded access to public lands and waters, they also highlight the need for federal land management agencies to develop standardized datasets for easements, legal rights-of-way, and established corridors across private land to which the public has binding and legal public access.”
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Bureau of Land Management
Land trusts and Conservation org’s
State agencies
How can this data be used?

- Small easement and acquisition projects
How can this data be used?

- Substantial acquisition projects
How to get involved:

- Get to know your local land trust - volunteer or donate
- Contact your representatives and tell them what public land access means to you

Data Managers:
- Digitize it!
- Share your data with other levels of government and non-profit groups in your area
- Form a geospatial coalition
- Standardize data

Agencies, Land Trusts, Conservation Org’s:
- Contact onX!

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