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In April, President Obama issued a memorandum outlining his "21st century strategy for America's great outdoors." It was addressed to the Interior Secretary, the Agriculture Secretary, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency and the chair of the Council on Environmental Quality. The memo calls on the officials to conduct "listening and learning sessions" with the public to "identify the places that mean the most to Americans, and leverage the support of the Federal Government" to "protect" outdoor spaces. Eighteen of 25 planned sessions have already been held. But there's much more to the agenda than simply "reconnecting Americans to nature."

The federal government, as the memo boasted, is the nation's "largest land manager." It already owns roughly one of every three acres in the United States. This is apparently not enough. At a "listening session" in New Hampshire last week, government bureaucrats trained their sights on millions of private forest land throughout the New England region. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack crusaded for "the need for additional attention to the Land and Water Conservation Fund — and the need to promptly support full funding of that fund."

Property owners have every reason to be worried. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a pet project of green radicals, who want the decades-old government slush fund for buying up private lands to be freed from congressional appropriations oversight. It's paid for primarily with receipts from the government's offshore oil and gas leases. Both Senate and House Democrats have included \$900 million in full LWCF funding, not subject to congressional approval, in their energy/BP oil spill legislative packages. The Democrats have also included a provision in these packages that would require the federal government to take over energy permitting in state waters, which provoked an outcry from Texas state officials, who sent a letter of protest to Capitol Hill last month:

"In light of federal failures, it is incomprehensible that the United States Congress is entertaining proposals that expand federal authority over oil and gas drilling in state water and lands long regulated by states... Given the track record, putting the federal government in charge of energy production on state land and waters not only breaks years of successful precedent and threatens the 10th Amendment to the United States Constitution, but it also undermines common sense and threatens the environmental and economy security of our state's citizens."

This power grab, masquerading as a feel-good, all-American recreation program, comes on top of a separate, property-usurping initiative exposed by GOP Rep. Robert Bishop and Sen. Jim DeMint earlier this spring. According to an internal 21-page Obama administration memo, 17 energy-rich areas in 11 states have been targeted as potential federal "monuments." The lives of coyotes, deer and prairie dogs would be elevated above states' needs to generate jobs, tourism business and energy solutions.

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