

Dear Editors,

Your editorial on May 5 ("Utah's Land"), which argues that turning over federal public lands to the state of Utah is a good thing, fails to mention a few critical factors that quickly show that handing federal land to the state would be a disaster for Utah taxpayers and homeowners.

First, Utah taxpayers benefit immensely by sharing the management costs of our 30 million acres of public lands with taxpayers from the other 49 states. An estimated \$300 million is spent per year by the federal government managing our vast public lands; in comparison, the Utah state parks budget was recently cut to a mere \$4 million per year. The biggest loser in state control of public lands would be the Utah taxpayer -- who would become the sole payer for everything from land management to fighting wildfires.

No problem, proponents of state control say in response to the costs associated with managing public lands -- we'll just sell them off.

But the idea of selling off public lands ignores everything that came out of the Vision Dixie process, where Washington County residents overwhelmingly opposed selling off large amounts of public land. The open spaces of our federal public lands is what makes Utah special, and what draws millions of residents and thousands of new residents to our state each year.

Speaking of those new residents -- and current ones -- can you imagine what it would do to your property values (not to mention county revenues) if the state of Utah suddenly flooded the Utah real estate market with millions of acres of public land? Already depressed housing prices would plummet further -- leaving tens of thousands of Utahns owing more on their houses than they would be worth.

When it comes to the costs associated with a state takeover of our public lands, I, like many Utah residents, say: "No thank you. I like our state just as it is."

Christi Nuffer
Citizens for Dixie's Future