

Officials to draft plans to avoid sale of Teton acreage

## Park land impasse discussed

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Grand Teton National Park spokeswoman Jackie Skaggs strolls across land the state of Wyoming owns inside the park on June 24. Wyoming is threatening to auction off the land if the federal government doesn't agree to trade land, minerals or mineral royalties for the property. (AP Photo)

RAWLINS — Wyoming and federal officials expect to draft proposals soon to avoid the auction of two square miles of state land inside Grand Teton National Park.

Wyoming has tried for years to get the federal government to buy or trade mineral rights or royalties for the land. Recently Gov. Dave Freudenthal threatened to auction the land if an agreement can't be reached.

This week, Freudenthal discussed the impasse with Bob Abbey, director of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, during Abbey's first official Wyoming visit as BLM director.

The latest: Freudenthal and Abbey expect state and federal officials to agree to two or three specific proposals within a month. The ideas would then go before Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Congress, the governor and BLM director said in an interview.

"I think everybody recognizes that the logical outcome of this is for there to be some kind of purchase tailored, frankly, by the federal government," Freudenthal said.

He suggested that the federal government could divert additional federal mineral revenues to Wyoming over time — sort of an installment program.

An exchange of mineral holdings also is on the table. "There are several options that could make sense," Abbey said.

Sold on the open market, the property would be worth up to \$125 million. Right now, the state earns \$3,000 a year by leasing the land for cattle grazing.

Wyoming could earn many times that each year by investing \$125 million.

Representatives of the Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments, National Park Service and BLM met in Cheyenne last week to discuss solutions.

"If there was progress, it was hard to discern," said Ed Grant, director of the state lands office. "But hope springs eternal."

He said federal staff will need higher-level support for any of the ideas discussed to move ahead.