

Opinion: The big public land sell-out

By Jonathan Thompson, High Country News

This month, hundreds of corporate representatives will sit down at their computers, log into something called Energynet, and bid, eBay style, for more than 300,000 acres of federal land spread across five Western states. They will pay as little as \$2 per acre for control of parcels in southeastern Utah's canyon country, Wyoming sage grouse territory and Native American ancestral homelands in New Mexico.

Even as public land advocates scoff at the idea of broad transfers of federal land to states and private interests, this less-noticed conveyance continues unabated. It is a slightly less egregious version of the land transfers that state supremacists, Sagebrush Rebels and privatization advocates have pushed for since the 1970s.

It's called oil and gas leasing, conducted under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920.

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