

# FEDERAL PUBLIC LAND AND RESOURCES LAW

FOURTH EDITION

GEORGE CAMERON COGGINS

CHARLES F. WILKINSON

JOHN D. LESHY

UNIVERSITY CASEBOOK SERIES

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# FEDERAL PUBLIC LAND AND RESOURCES LAW

FOURTH EDITION

*by*

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## PREFACE

Public land and resources law has been basically reordered in modern times. Among other developments, discussed more fully in chapter one, doctrines involving resources that traditionally have been treated separately are coalescing, and a variety of concerns reflecting the public interest are being infused into the legal process.

We have attempted to synthesize these developments in this book. It has been customary to treat some public land issues in separate courses, such as water law or mining law; this volume is not an attempt to supercede any of those specialized subjects. Rather, in our view, modern public land law demands a coordinated treatment of the various legal doctrines applicable to all public resources and their interrelationships.

We believe that this book, though a considerable departure, nevertheless is the logical extension of previous casebooks on natural resources. In 1951, Clyde Martz published *CASES ON NATURAL RESOURCES*, the first comprehensive effort to organize and integrate teaching materials on that subject. The Martz casebook was succeeded and updated in 1965 by Professors Trelease, Bloomenthal, and Geraud in the publication of *CASES AND MATERIALS ON NATURAL RESOURCES*. These pioneering casebooks included some public issues, but both were largely devoted to “private law;” that is, they dealt primarily with issues relating to whether a private entity could use or acquire ownership of federal land or resources. In each, heavy emphasis was placed on the fields of water law, mining law, and oil and gas law. That neither work paid much attention to “public law” or “public interest litigation” is not a criticism because, for all practical purposes, such public law issues had not yet surfaced on the public lands. We have made a determined effort to outline the historical context of recent disputes, but the great bulk of cases reprinted in this volume were decided since 1970. The legal doctrines that they represent have supplemented or replaced prior law.

This book’s approach to federal land and resources law is the product of many years’ development. Each of these editors independently concluded that major public resource themes were related and could be grouped around the concept of federal land ownership. Each of us taught courses in 1975 that sought to investigate federal regulation of the federal resources. Those crude efforts gradually evolved through the development of separate classroom materials until several colleagues familiar with our efforts urged us to pool our resources, natural and otherwise. With assistance from the Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation, we did so, making available the first edition of this casebook in 1980.

The more we study this field, the more it becomes apparent that public land law has been fundamentally altered and that changes are accelerating. Even so, there is a commonality in the usual issues that cuts across traditional subject matter lines. Federal vs. state regulatory power, federal reserved rights or interests, multiple use management problems, withdrawals and reservations, judicial review notions—all of these are common threads running through legal consideration of all of the major resources. Recent enactments recognize and further the unification of federal natural resources law.

The first four chapters are devoted to the historical background, the constitutional underpinnings, and the administrative systems governing public land policy. Chapter one is an overview of federal lands and resources; it concludes with several perspectives on the bases of federal land policy. The history of public land law, treated in chapter two, remains a matter of vital interest today because ancient notions, doctrines, and problems refuse to be relegated to molding archives: several sections conclude with recent Supreme Court decisions and another outlines the contemporary “Sagebrush Rebellion,” a movement rooted in history whereby some states have sought to divest federal ownership of lands within their borders. The chapter is lengthy, reflecting our view that history is a fundamental component of modern public land law.

Chapter three follows by analyzing the respective constitutional powers of the federal and state governments over activities on the public lands. Although the federal government usually can preempt state authority, the more difficult question to be investigated is whether, in any particular instance, Congress intended to do so. The fourth chapter introduces the student to several basic problems that permeate all that follows: executive withdrawals and reservations; judicial review of land management agency decisions; and administrative planning mandated by novel statutes, especially the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

The remaining seven chapters take up the law of the seven major federal resources in this order: water, minerals, timber, range, wildlife, recreation, and preservation. Case selection and placement is necessarily arbitrary to some degree, for resource conflicts almost always involve more than one resource or value. Thus, a case in which a timber contract is enjoined because it would alter the wilderness characteristics of an area could as well go into the Timber Resource chapter as the Preservation chapter, and so forth on down the line. The second maxim of ecology, that everything is related to everything else, is both trite and true.

We have strived to make this treatment as readable and enjoyable as we think it is worthwhile. It is, of course, just a casebook and subject to all of the limitations of that art form, so complete success is virtually impossible. But the subject matter itself, from the exciting Gold Rush to the progress of settlement by homesteading, from the great railroad land grabs to the episodic range wars, from the Alaska Pipeline to the Snail Darter, cannot help but interest and delight all but the most jaded of students.

A word about the editing form and style used throughout. We have sought to be rigorous in eliminating irrelevant or tangential matters. Discussions of repetitive procedural defenses, common statements of law (particularly boilerplate recitations on NEPA), and string citations were more often than not axed. Thus, any case or article reproduced below is not necessarily complete—it probably is not—and the researching student is advised to consult the original.

Most original footnotes have also been omitted. Where footnotes are retained, they still bear the court's or author's original number. Footnotes inserted by the editors are preceded by a lower case letter instead of a number. Textual deletions are indicated by “\* \* \*,” but omissions of authorities have not been signalled.

We of course accept full responsibility for the inevitable errors, omissions, and lack of foresight commonly associated with these ventures. We would caution that some selectivity on the part of the instructor is assumed; the materials in these pages are more than is necessary for a normal one-semester course.

Expressing gratitude to those who have assisted an endeavor such as this is a dangerous business, for often one is left out who should be included. With a blanket “thanks” to the many who have contributed, we single out first our research assistants. Debra Arnett, Michael Axline, Kurt Burkholder, Derb Carter, Susan Driver, Parthenia Blessing Evans, and Martin Miller all contributed to the first edition. At that time, we predicted that all would make their own marks on public land law and, six years later, our forecast has proved to be accurate. We give our thanks and our similar high regard to those students who worked on this edition: Alexandra Callam, Jeremy Firestone, Sandy Hoffman, Stephanie Matthews, Doris Nagel, and Matt Selby. The typing was done by Marcea Metzler, Joan Wellman, and Mary Jo Guy. Dean Mike Davis of the University of Kansas has provided us with invaluable support over the years. Dean Chapin Clark of Oregon walked the extra mile to provide us with resources for the first edition. Professor Wilkinson was a visiting professor at the University of Michigan Law School during the preparation of this second edition and both of us extend our appreciation for the inordinately generous assistance provided by Associate Dean Edward H. Cooper and Dean Terrance Sandalow. We are also grateful to the Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation for its support, and the advice of its members, on both the first and second editions. Finally, we appreciate the helpful suggestions of several colleagues, including Gail L. Achterman, Harrison C. Dunning, Kent Frizzell, David H. Getches, Arthur D. Smith, Sally K. Fairfax, H. Michael Anderson, Maryanne Chambers, Cameron LaFollette, and Darius M. Adams.

GEORGE CAMERON COGGINS  
CHARLES F. WILKINSON

October, 1986



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## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

With this edition, the original editors welcome a third editor, John D. Leshy, who has been involved in public lands issues for two decades; almost five years with the Natural Resources Defense Council, three-plus years with the Department of the Interior, and the last dozen with Arizona State University's College of Law. Prior users will find intact the focus and much of the organization of the first two editions. The discussion of editing form and style in the preceding preface is still pertinent. The material has been thoroughly updated and reworked to reflect emerging trends as much as possible; for example, a new section on access has been added at the end of chapter two to capture some of the burgeoning litigation in this area; and a new section on takings has been added at the end of chapter three. We have tried to keep the length manageable (only slightly longer than the second edition) and to maintain the teachable quality of the earlier editions. As always we welcome feedback from users.

Thanks in the preparation of this edition go to Dean Richard Morgan of the A.S.U. College of Law for his support; Donna Larson Bennett, Marianne Alcorn, and Susan Brodsky of the A.S.U. College of Law Library for indefatigable assistance; A.S.U. law student research assistants Michael Brown and Nancy LaPlaca; Carolyn Landry and Fran Kendall for help in preparing the manuscript; Kaid Benfield, Grove Burnett, Joe Feller, Larry McBride, Zygmunt Plater, Deborah Reames and Johanna Wald for some helpful information; and to Helen and Alec for their patience and support.

GEORGE CAMERON COGGINS  
CHARLES F. WILKINSON  
JOHN D. LESHY

June 1992

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## TABLE OF CASES

Principal cases are in bold type. Non-principal cases are in roman type. References are to Pages.

- Aberdeen & Rockfish R. Co. v. Students Challenging Regulatory Agency Procedures (S.C.R.A.P.), 422 U.S. 289, 95 S.Ct. 2336, 45 L.Ed.2d 191 (1975), 983
- Adams v. United States, 3 F.3d 1254 (9th Cir.1993), 337
- Akers v. Baldwin, 736 S.W.2d 294 (Ky.1987), 625
- Alamo Land & Cattle Co., Inc. v. Arizona, 424 U.S. 295, 96 S.Ct. 910, 47 L.Ed.2d 1 (1976), 71
- A.L.A. Schechter Poultry Corporation v. United States, 295 U.S. 495, 55 S.Ct. 837, 79 L.Ed. 1570 (1935), 273
- Alaska, State of v. Ahtna, Inc., 891 F.2d 1401 (9th Cir.1989), 58
- Alaska, State of v. Andrus, 591 F.2d 537 (9th Cir.1979), 974
- Alaska, State of v. Babbitt, 72 F.3d 698 (9th Cir.1995), 58
- Alaska, State of v. Carter, 462 F.Supp. 1155 (D.Alaska 1978), 307
- Alaska, State of v. United States (Ct.Cl.1993), 211
- Alaska, United States v., 521 U.S. 1144, 118 S.Ct. 19, 138 L.Ed.2d 1051 (1997), 58
- Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Ass'n v. Morrison, 67 F.3d 723 (9th Cir. 1995), 660
- Alaska Wildlife Alliance v. Jensen, 108 F.3d 1065 (9th Cir.1997), 964
- Albrecht, United States v., 496 F.2d 906 (8th Cir.1974), 206
- Alford, United States v., 274 U.S. 264, 47 S.Ct. 597, 71 L.Ed. 1040 (1927), 181, 186
- Aluli v. Brown, 437 F.Supp. 602 (D.Hawaii 1977), 1099
- Aluminum Co. of America v. Bonneville Power Admin., 56 F.3d 1075 (9th Cir.1995), 913
- Alves v. United States, 133 F.3d 1454 (Fed. Cir.1998), 763
- Amax Exploration, Inc. v. Mosher, Civ. R-86-162 BRT (D.Nev.1987), 455
- American Horse Protection Ass'n v. United States Dept. of Interior, 551 F.2d 432, 179 U.S.App.D.C. 246 (D.C.Cir.1977), 843
- American Horse Protection Ass'n, Inc. v. Watt**, 694 F.2d 1310, 224 U.S.App.D.C. 335 (D.C.Cir.1982), **836**, 924
- American Motorcyclist Ass'n v. Watt, 543 F.Supp. 789 (C.D.Cal.1982), 1060
- American Motorcyclist Ass'n v. Watt, 534 F.Supp. 923 (C.D.Cal.1981), 809
- American Nuclear Corp. v. Andrus, 434 F.Supp. 1035 (D.Wyo.1977), 534
- American Power & Light Co. v. Securities and Exchange Commission, 329 U.S. 90, 67 S.Ct. 133, 91 L.Ed. 103 (1946), 273
- American Rivers v. National Marine Fisheries Service, 109 F.3d 1484 (9th Cir.1997), 912
- Amoco Production Co. v. Village of Gambell, AK, 480 U.S. 531, 107 S.Ct. 1396, 94 L.Ed.2d 542 (1987), 360, 598, 1000
- Anaconda Copper Co., A Div. of Anconda Co. v. Andrus (D.Alaska 1980), 307
- Andrus v. Allard, 444 U.S. 51, 100 S.Ct. 318, 62 L.Ed.2d 210 (1979), 214, 221, 1099
- Andrus v. Charlestone Stone Products Co., Inc.**, 436 U.S. 604, 98 S.Ct. 2002, 56 L.Ed.2d 570 (1978), **432**, 608
- Andrus v. Shell Oil Co., 446 U.S. 657, 100 S.Ct. 1932, 64 L.Ed.2d 593 (1980), 213, 458, 540
- Andrus v. Sierra Club, 442 U.S. 347, 99 S.Ct. 2335, 60 L.Ed.2d 943 (1979), 371, 373, 869
- Andrus v. Utah**, 446 U.S. 500, 100 S.Ct. 1803, 64 L.Ed.2d 458 (1980), **62**, 69, 85, 91, 288, 603
- Andrus, State ex rel. v. Click, 97 Idaho 791, 554 P.2d 969 (Idaho 1976), 206
- Animal Lovers Volunteer Ass'n, Inc. v. Cheney, 795 F.Supp. 994 (C.D.Cal.1992), 925
- Animal Protection Institute of America v. Hodel, 860 F.2d 920 (9th Cir.1988), 845
- Anthony Grace & Sons, Inc., United States v., 384 U.S. 424, 86 S.Ct. 1539, 16 L.Ed.2d 662 (1966), 261
- Appalachian Power Co. v. United States, 221 Ct.Cl. 398, 607 F.2d 935 (Ct.Cl.1979), 1121
- Application for Water Rights of the United States of America in Dinosaur National Monument, Case No. W 18 (Colo.1985), 402
- Arbo, United States v., 691 F.2d 862 (9th Cir.1982), 186
- Arizona Cattle Growers' Ass'n, v. United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 63 F.Supp.2d 1034 (D.Ariz.1998), 895

- Arizona Center For Law In Public Interest v. Hassell, 172 Ariz. 356, 837 P.2d 158 (Ariz. App. Div. 1 1991), 338
- Arizona, State of v. State of California, 376 U.S. 340, 84 S.Ct. 755, 11 L.Ed.2d 757 (1964), 382
- Arizona, State of v. State of California**, 373 U.S. 546, 83 S.Ct. 1468, 10 L.Ed.2d 542 (1963), 57, 290, **381**, 382, 398, 419
- Arkla Exploration Co. v. Texas Oil & Gas Corp., 734 F.2d 347 (8th Cir.1984), 569
- Arlington Hotel Co. v. Fant, 278 U.S. 439, 49 S.Ct. 227, 73 L.Ed. 447 (1929), 161
- ASARCO Inc. v. Kadish, 490 U.S. 605, 109 S.Ct. 2037, 104 L.Ed.2d 696 (1989), 71
- Atlas Corp. v. United States, 895 F.2d 745 (Fed.Cir.1990), 243
- Attakai v. United States, 746 F.Supp. 1395 (D.Ariz.1990), 1098
- Aulston v. United States, 915 F.2d 584 (10th Cir.1990), 608
- Austin, United States v.**, 902 F.2d 743 (9th Cir.1990), **1091**, 1097
- Ayers v. Espy, 873 F.Supp. 455 (D.Colo.1994), 272, 738
- Babbitt v. Sweet Home Chapter of Communities for a Great Oregon, 515 U.S. 687, 115 S.Ct. 2407, 132 L.Ed.2d 597 (1995), 916
- Baker v. United States, 613 F.2d 224 (9th Cir.1980), 454
- Baldwin v. Fish and Game Commission of Montana, 436 U.S. 371, 98 S.Ct. 1852, 56 L.Ed.2d 354 (1978), 854, 855
- Bales v. Ruch, 522 F.Supp. 150 (E.D.Cal. 1981), 467, 494
- Baltimore Gas and Elec. Co. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., 462 U.S. 87, 103 S.Ct. 2246, 76 L.Ed.2d 437 (1983), 373
- Barcellos and Wolfsen, Inc. v. Westlands Water Dist., 899 F.2d 814 (9th Cir.1990), 110
- Barngrover, United States v., 57 I.D. 533 (1941), 435
- Barrick Goldstrike Mines, Inc. v. Babbitt, No. CV-N-93-550 HDM (PHA) (D.Nev.1994), 484
- Barton v. United States, 609 F.2d 977 (10th Cir.1979), 1087
- Bass Enterprises Production Co. v. United States, 133 F.3d 893 (Fed.Cir.1998), 241
- Beam, United States v., 686 F.2d 252 (5th Cir.1982), 1052
- Beggerly, United States v., 524 U.S. 38, 118 S.Ct. 1862, 141 L.Ed.2d 32 (1998), 214, 272
- Belk v. Meagher, 104 U.S. 279, 14 Otto 279, 26 L.Ed. 735 (1881), 89
- Bell, United States v., 724 P.2d 631 (Colo. 1986), 418
- Belville Min. Co. v. United States, 999 F.2d 989 (6th Cir.1993), 625
- Belville Min. Co., Inc. v. United States, 763 F.Supp. 1411 (S.D.Ohio 1991), 625
- Bennett v. Spear, 520 U.S. 154, 117 S.Ct. 1154, 137 L.Ed.2d 281 (1997), 260
- Bergen, United States ex rel. v. Lawrence, 848 F.2d 1502 (10th Cir.1988), 105, 107, 233, 322
- Berkovitz by Berkovitz v. United States, 486 U.S. 531, 108 S.Ct. 1954, 100 L.Ed.2d 531 (1988), 1075
- Berto v. Wilson, 74 Nev. 128, 324 P.2d 843 (Nev.1958), 462
- Best v. Humboldt Placer Min. Co., 371 U.S. 334, 83 S.Ct. 379, 9 L.Ed.2d 350 (1963), 467
- Bevans, United States v., 16 U.S. 336, 4 L.Ed. 404 (1818), 153
- Big Hole Ranchers Ass'n, Inc. v. United States Forest Service, 686 F.Supp. 256 (D.Mont.1988), 738
- Bijou Irr. Dist. v. Empire Club, 804 P.2d 175 (Colo.1991), 416
- Bilderback v. United States, 558 F.Supp. 903 (D.Or.1982), 1079
- Billie, United States v., 667 F.Supp. 1485 (S.D.Fla.1987), 999
- Black v. Arthur, 201 F.3d 1120 (9th Cir. 2000), 1053
- Black Hills Institute of Geological Research v. South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, 12 F.3d 737 (8th Cir.1993), 1099
- Bleamaster v. Morton, 448 F.2d 1289 (9th Cir.1971), 84
- Block v. North Dakota ex rel. Bd. of University and School Lands, 461 U.S. 273, 103 S.Ct. 1811, 75 L.Ed.2d 840 (1983), 214
- Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project v. Blackwood, 161 F.3d 1208 (9th Cir.1998), 694
- Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project v. Pence, 22 F.Supp.2d 1136 (D.Or.1998), 694
- Bob Marshall Alliance v. Hodel, 852 F.2d 1223 (9th Cir.1988), 298, 585
- Bob Marshall Alliance v. Lujan**, 804 F.Supp. 1292 (D.Mont.1992), 586, **591**
- Boesche v. Udall, 373 U.S. 472, 83 S.Ct. 1373, 10 L.Ed.2d 491 (1963), 530
- Bolt v. United States, 944 F.2d 603 (9th Cir.1991), 463
- Boquillas Land & Cattle Co. v. Curtis, 213 U.S. 339, 29 S.Ct. 493, 53 L.Ed. 822 (1909), 95
- Boscarino v. Gibson, 207 Mont. 112, 672 P.2d 1119 (Mont.1983), 455
- Bowen v. Public Agencies Opposed To Social Sec. Entrapment, 477 U.S. 41, 106 S.Ct. 2390, 91 L.Ed.2d 35 (1986), 550
- Bowers v. Hardwick, 478 U.S. 186, 106 S.Ct. 2841, 92 L.Ed.2d 140 (1986), 233
- Branson School Dist. RE-82 v. Romer, 161 F.3d 619 (10th Cir.1998), 71
- Bresette, United States v., 761 F.Supp. 658 (D.Minn.1991), 999
- Brooks v. Dewar, 313 U.S. 354, 61 S.Ct. 979, 85 L.Ed. 1399 (1941), 756
- Broughton Lumber Co. v. United States, 30 Fed.Cl. 239 (1994), 241
- Brown v. United States Dept. of Interior, 679 F.2d 747 (8th Cir.1982), 431, 1156

- Brown, *United States v.*, 552 F.2d 817 (8th Cir.1977), 187, 205, 853
- Brubaker v. Board of County Com'rs, El Paso County, 652 P.2d 1050 (Colo.1982), 206
- Brunskill, *United States v.*, 792 F.2d 938 (9th Cir.1986), 506, 525
- Bryant v. Yellen, 447 U.S. 352, 100 S.Ct. 2232, 65 L.Ed.2d 184 (1980), 109
- Buffalo River Conservation and Recreation Council v. National Park Service, 558 F.2d 1342 (8th Cir.1977), 114
- Buford v. Houtz, 133 U.S. 320, 10 S.Ct. 305, 33 L.Ed. 618 (1890), 94, 95, 103, 104, 323, 746
- Bunch v. Hodel, 793 F.2d 129 (6th Cir.1986), 983
- Burke v. Southern Pac. R. Co., 234 U.S. 669, 34 S.Ct. 907, 58 L.Ed. 1527 (1914), 603, 604
- Burnham, Scott, 94 I.D. 429 (1987), 497
- Cabinet Mountains Wilderness/Scotchman's Peak Grizzly Bears v. Peterson**, 685 F.2d 678, 222 U.S.App.D.C. 228 (D.C.Cir.1982), 590, 895, **983**, 993, 994
- Califano v. Sanders, 430 U.S. 99, 97 S.Ct. 980, 51 L.Ed.2d 192 (1977), 272
- California v. F.E.R.C., 495 U.S. 490, 110 S.Ct. 2024, 109 L.Ed.2d 474 (1990), 420
- California v. United States**, 438 U.S. 645, 98 S.Ct. 2985, 57 L.Ed.2d 1018 (1978), 14, **378**, 380, 419, 420
- California v. Watkins, No. CV F-87-665 EDP (E.D.Cal.1990/1991), 69
- California By and Through Brown, State of v. Watt, 668 F.2d 1290, 215 U.S.App.D.C. 258 (D.C.Cir.1981), 599
- California Coastal Com'n v. Granite Rock Co.**, 480 U.S. 572, 107 S.Ct. 1419, 94 L.Ed.2d 577 (1987), 191, **196**, 204, 205, 206, 208, 1098
- California ex rel. State Land Com'n, State of v. Yuba Goldfields, Inc., 752 F.2d 393 (9th Cir.1985), 214
- California Fish & Game Com'n v. Hodel, 18 E.L.R. 20141 (E.D.Cal.1987), 961
- California, State of v. Block**, 690 F.2d 753 (9th Cir.1982), 1160, **1180**, 1190, 1191, 1192
- California, State of, *United States v.*, 332 U.S. 19, 67 S.Ct. 1658, 91 L.Ed. 1889 (1947), 58, 596
- Cameron v. *United States*, 252 U.S. 450, 40 S.Ct. 410, 64 L.Ed. 659 (1920), 305, 495
- Camfield v. United States**, 167 U.S. 518, 17 S.Ct. 864, 42 L.Ed. 260 (1897), **91**, 94, 95, 103, 104, 105, 106, 162, 181, 205, 322, 1111
- Cappaert v. United States**, 426 U.S. 128, 96 S.Ct. 2062, 48 L.Ed.2d 523 (1976), **383**, 388, 397, 398, 399, 402, 602, 1111
- Cappaert, *United States v.*, 508 F.2d 313 (9th Cir.1974), 387
- Carlile, *United States v.*, 67 I.D. 417 (1960), 438
- Carlton v. Babbitt, 900 F.Supp. 526 (D.D.C. 1995), 874
- Carson-Truckee Water Conservancy Dist. v. Clark, 741 F.2d 257 (9th Cir.1984), 415
- Castle v. Womble**, 19 L.D. 455 (1894), **450**, 453, 457, 458
- Catron County Bd. of Com'rs, New Mexico v. *United States Fish & Wildlife Service*, 75 F.3d 1429 (10th Cir.1996), 874
- Cerritos Gun Club v. Hall, 96 F.2d 620 (9th Cir.1938), 852
- Chambers v. Harrington, 111 U.S. 350, 4 S.Ct. 428, 28 L.Ed. 452 (1884), 468
- Chevron, U.S.A., Inc. v. *Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837, 104 S.Ct. 2778, 81 L.Ed.2d 694 (1984), 284, 285
- Chicago, R.I. & P. Ry. Co. v. McGlinn, 114 U.S. 542, 5 S.Ct. 1005, 29 L.Ed. 270 (1885), 161
- Christy v. Hodel, 857 F.2d 1324 (9th Cir. 1988), 233, 896, 924
- Chrysler Corp. v. Brown, 441 U.S. 281, 99 S.Ct. 1705, 60 L.Ed.2d 208 (1979), 190
- Citizens Against Toxic Sprays, Inc. v. Bergland, 428 F.Supp. 908 (D.Or.1977), 685
- Citizens and Landowners Against the Miles City/New Underwood Powerline v. Secretary, *United States Dept. of Energy*, 683 F.2d 1171 (8th Cir.1982), 209
- Citizens for Environmental Quality v. *United States*, 731 F.Supp. 970 (D.Colo.1989), 686, 738
- Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, Inc. v. Volpe, 401 U.S. 402, 91 S.Ct. 814, 28 L.Ed.2d 136 (1971), 254, 273, 274
- City and County of (see name of city)**
- City of (see name of city)**
- Clark v. Community for Creative Non-Violence, 468 U.S. 288, 104 S.Ct. 3065, 82 L.Ed.2d 221 (1984), 1053
- Click, State ex rel. Andrus v., 97 Idaho 791, 554 P.2d 969 (Idaho 1976), 206
- Clipper Cruise Line, Inc. v. *United States*, 855 F.Supp. 1 (D.D.C.1994), 1021
- Clouser v. Espy**, 42 F.3d 1522 (9th Cir. 1994), 337, **506**, 1169
- Coalition for Canyon Preservation v. Bowers, 632 F.2d 774 (9th Cir.1980), 262
- Coffee, State v., 97 Idaho 905, 556 P.2d 1185 (Idaho 1976), 999
- Cole v. Ralph, 252 U.S. 286, 40 S.Ct. 321, 64 L.Ed. 567 (1920), 455
- Coleman, United States v.**, 390 U.S. 599, 88 S.Ct. 1327, 20 L.Ed.2d 170 (1968), **451**, 453, 467, 468, 495, 895
- Collins v. Yosemite Park & Curry Co., 304 U.S. 518, 58 S.Ct. 1009, 82 L.Ed. 1502 (1938), 158
- Colorado River Water Conservation Dist. v. *United States*, 424 U.S. 800, 96 S.Ct. 1236, 47 L.Ed.2d 483 (1976), 417, 418
- Colorado, State of v. *United States Dept. of Interior*, 880 F.2d 481, 279 U.S.App.D.C. 158 (D.C.Cir.1989), 867

- Columbia Basin Land Protection Ass'n v. Schlesinger, 643 F.2d 585 (9th Cir.1981), 209
- Columbia River Gorge United-Protecting People and Property v. Yeutter, 960 F.2d 110 (9th Cir.1992), 187
- Committee for Idaho's High Desert, 108 I.B.L.A. 277 (1989), 1220
- Committee of 100 on Federal City v. Hodel, 777 F.2d 711, 250 U.S.App.D.C. 52 (D.C.Cir.1985), 317
- Commonwealth v. \_\_\_\_\_ (see opposing party)**
- Commonwealth Edison Co. v. Montana, 453 U.S. 609, 101 S.Ct. 2946, 69 L.Ed.2d 884 (1981), 196, 212
- Commonwealth of (see name of Commonwealth)**
- Conner v. Burford, 848 F.2d 1441 (9th Cir. 1988), 585
- Connor v. Andrus, 453 F.Supp. 1037 (W.D.Tex.1978), 961
- Conservation Law Foundation of New England, Inc. v. Harper, 587 F.Supp. 357 (D.Mass.1984), 320
- Conservation Law Foundation of New England, Inc. v. Secretary of the Interior**, 864 F.2d 954 (1st Cir.1989), **1067**
- Converse v. Udall, 399 F.2d 616 (9th Cir. 1968), 456
- Copper Valley Mach. Works, Inc. v. Andrus**, 653 F.2d 595, 209 U.S.App.D.C. 340 (D.C.Cir.1981), **571**, 577, 578, 585
- Corbin Farm Service, United States v., 444 F.Supp. 510 (E.D.Cal.1978), 962
- Cosmos Exploration Co. v. Gray Eagle Oil Co., 112 F. 4 (9th Cir.1901), 438
- County Bd. of Arlington County, United States v., 487 F.Supp. 137 (E.D.Va.1979), 1111
- Coupland v. Morton, 5 E.L.R. 20504 (E.D.Va. 1975), 946
- Cox, State ex rel. v. Hibbard, 31 Or.App. 269, 570 P.2d 1190 (Or.App.1977), 206
- Cox, United States v., 190 F.2d 293 (10th Cir.1951), 754
- Coyle v. Smith, 221 U.S. 559, 31 S.Ct. 688, 55 L.Ed. 853 (1911), 56
- Craft v. Hodel, 683 F.Supp. 289 (D.Mass. 1988), 1054
- Cramer v. United States, 261 U.S. 219, 43 S.Ct. 342, 67 L.Ed. 622 (1923), 49
- Crownite Corp. v. Watt, 752 F.2d 1500 (9th Cir.1985), 602
- Crow Tribe of Indians v. Reppis, 866 F.Supp. 520 (D.Wyo.1994), 50
- Curtis-Nevada Mines, Inc., United States v.**, 611 F.2d 1277 (9th Cir.1980), 338, **488**, 494, 495, 1002
- Dabney v. Reagan, 542 F.Supp. 756 (S.D.N.Y. 1982), 1007
- Dahl v. Clark, 600 F.Supp. 585 (D.Nev.1984), 843
- Daingerfield Island Protective Soc. v. Lujan, 920 F.2d 32, 287 U.S.App.D.C. 101 (D.C.Cir.1990), 262
- Dalehite v. United States, 346 U.S. 15, 73 S.Ct. 956, 97 L.Ed. 1427 (1953), 1075
- Dallas v. Fitzsimmons, 137 Colo. 196, 323 P.2d 274 (Colo.1958), 462
- Dames & Moore v. Regan, 453 U.S. 654, 101 S.Ct. 2972, 69 L.Ed.2d 918 (1981), 133
- Dann, United States v., 470 U.S. 39, 105 S.Ct. 1058, 84 L.Ed.2d 28 (1985), 49
- Davis v. Latschar, 202 F.3d 359, 340 U.S.App.D.C. 136 (D.C.Cir.2000), 952
- Day v. Hickel, 481 F.2d 473 (9th Cir.1973), 213
- Deer Valley Unified School Dist. No. 97 of Maricopa County v. Superior Court In and For Maricopa County, 157 Ariz. 537, 760 P.2d 537 (Ariz.1988), 71
- Defenders of Wildlife v. Administrator, E.P.A., 882 F.2d 1294 (8th Cir.1989), 925, 962
- Defenders of Wildlife v. Andrus (Alaska Wolf Kill)**, 627 F.2d 1238, 201 U.S.App. D.C. 252 (D.C.Cir.1980), 918, 964, **975**, 1170, 1218
- Defenders of Wildlife v. Andrus (Alaska Wolf III), 9 E.R.C. 2111 (D.D.C.1977), 974
- Defenders of Wildlife v. Andrus (Ruby Lake Refuge II)**, 455 F.Supp. 446 (D.D.C.1978), **950**, 952
- Defenders of Wildlife v. Andrus (Ruby Lake Refuge I)**, 11 E.R.C. 2098 (D.D.C. 1978), **946**, 952, 1002
- Defenders of Wildlife v. Andrus (Sunrise Hunting), 428 F.Supp. 167 (D.D.C.1977), 869, 961
- Defenders of Wildlife v. Babbitt, 958 F.Supp. 670 (D.D.C.1997), 874
- Defenders of Wildlife, Inc. v. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 566 F.2d 1181 (9th Cir.1977), 974
- Del Norte County v. United States, 732 F.2d 1462 (9th Cir.1984), 1121
- Del-Rio Drilling Programs, Inc. v. United States, 146 F.3d 1358 (Fed.Cir.1998), 50, 241
- Deltona Corp. v. United States, 228 Ct.Cl. 476, 657 F.2d 1184 (Ct.Cl.1981), 222
- Denver, By and Through Bd. of Water Com'rs, City and County of v. Bergland, 695 F.2d 465 (10th Cir.1982), 329
- Denver By and Through Bd. of Water Com'rs, City and County of v. Bergland, 517 F.Supp. 155 (D.Colo.1981), 213
- Denver, By and Through Bd. of Water Com'rs, City and County of, United States v., 656 P.2d 1 (Colo.1982), 399, 400, 404, 410, 602
- Diamond Bar Cattle Co. v. United States, 168 F.3d 1209 (10th Cir.1999), 755
- Diamond Ring Ranch, Inc. v. Morton, 531 F.2d 1397 (10th Cir.1976), 760
- Diaz, United States v., 499 F.2d 113 (9th Cir.1974), 1090, 1097

- Dimmock v. City of New London, 157 Conn. 9, 245 A.2d 569 (Conn.1968), 377
- Dion, United States v., 476 U.S. 734, 106 S.Ct. 2216, 90 L.Ed.2d 767 (1986), 50, 999, 1000
- District Court In and For Eagle County, Colo., United States v., 401 U.S. 520, 91 S.Ct. 998, 28 L.Ed.2d 278 (1971), 417
- Dodge v. Wilkinson, 664 P.2d 157 (Alaska 1983), 443
- Dolan v. City of Tigard, 512 U.S. 374, 114 S.Ct. 2309, 129 L.Ed.2d 304 (1994), 220
- Doremus, United States v.**, 888 F.2d 630 (9th Cir.1989), 501
- Dorman v. Satti, 678 F.Supp. 375 (D.Conn. 1988), 1056
- Douglas County v. Babbitt, 48 F.3d 1495 (9th Cir.1995), 874
- Douglass, Earl, 44 L.D. 325 (1915), 435
- Downer, Craig C., 111 I.B.L.A. 333 (1989), 843
- Downstate Stone Co. v. United States, 712 F.2d 1215 (7th Cir.1983), 624
- Dred Scott v. Sandford, 60 U.S. 393, 19 How. 393, 15 L.Ed. 691 (1856), 57
- Ducey v. United States, 830 F.2d 1071 (9th Cir.1987), 1081
- Ducey v. United States, 713 F.2d 504 (9th Cir.1983), 1079, 1081
- Dugan v. Rank, 372 U.S. 609, 83 S.Ct. 999, 10 L.Ed.2d 15 (1963), 271, 417
- Duncan Energy Co. v. United States Forest Service**, 50 F.3d 584 (8th Cir. 1995), 617, 624
- Dunluce Placer Mine, 30 L.D. 357 (1900), 435
- Earth Sciences, Inc., United States v., 599 F.2d 368 (10th Cir.1979), 526
- 82.46 Acres of Land, More or Less, Situate in Carbon County, Wyo., United States v., 691 F.2d 474 (10th Cir.1982), 114
- Elkhorn Min. Co., United States v., 2 I.B.L.A. 383 (1971), 435
- Elko County Bd. of Sup'rs v. Glickman, 909 F.Supp. 759 (D.Nev.1995), 337
- Energy Transp. Systems, Inc. v. Union Pac. R. Co., 606 F.2d 934 (10th Cir.1979), 105, 242
- Engler, United States v., 806 F.2d 425 (3rd Cir.1986), 962
- Environmental Defense Fund v. Tennessee Val. Authority, 371 F.Supp. 1004 (E.D.Tenn.1973), 856
- Environmental Defense Fund, Inc. v. Andrus, 596 F.2d 848 (9th Cir.1979), 422
- Environmental Protection Agency v. California ex rel. State Water Resources Control Bd., 426 U.S. 200, 96 S.Ct. 2022, 48 L.Ed.2d 578 (1976), 209
- Environment Now! v. Espy, 877 F.Supp. 1397 (E.D.Cal.1994), 739
- Erie R. Co. v. Tompkins, 304 U.S. 64, 58 S.Ct. 817, 82 L.Ed. 1188 (1938), 418
- Ervien v. United States, 251 U.S. 41, 40 S.Ct. 75, 64 L.Ed. 128 (1919), 70
- Etcheverry, United States v., 230 F.2d 193 (10th Cir.1956), 485, 494
- Evans v. Cornman, 398 U.S. 419, 90 S.Ct. 1752, 26 L.Ed.2d 370 (1970), 160
- Everett Plywood Corp. v. United States, 227 Ct.Cl. 415, 651 F.2d 723 (Ct.Cl.1981), 635
- Fall v. United States, 49 F.2d 506 (D.C.Cir. 1931), 567
- Fallini v. Hodel, 963 F.2d 275 (9th Cir.1992), 843
- Fallini v. United States, 56 F.3d 1378 (Fed. Cir.1995), 241
- False Pass, Village of v. Clark, 733 F.2d 605 (9th Cir.1984), 598
- Faulkner v. Watt, 661 F.2d 809 (9th Cir. 1981), 84
- Federal Lands Legal Consortium ex rel. Robert Estate v. United States, 195 F.3d 1190 (10th Cir.1999), 755
- Federal Lands Legal Foundation v. United States Forest Service, 23 E.L.R. 20388 (D.N.M.1992), 272
- Federal Power Commission v. State of Oregon, 349 U.S. 435, 75 S.Ct. 832, 99 L.Ed. 1215 (1955), 381, 420
- Ferry v. Udall, 336 F.2d 706 (9th Cir.1964), 318
- 55.0 Acres of Land, More or Less, Situate in Oregon County, Mo., United States v., 524 F.Supp. 320 (W.D.Mo.1981), 1146
- First English Evangelical Lutheran Church of Glendale v. Los Angeles County, Cal., 482 U.S. 304, 107 S.Ct. 2378, 96 L.Ed.2d 250 (1987), 215
- First Iowa Hydro-Elec. Co-op. v. Federal Power Commission, 328 U.S. 152, 66 S.Ct. 906, 90 L.Ed. 1143 (1946), 152
- Florida Rock Industries, Inc. v. United States, 18 F.3d 1560 (Fed.Cir.1994), 222
- FMC Corp., United States v., 572 F.2d 902 (2nd Cir.1978), 962
- Forbes v. Gracey, 94 U.S. 762, 4 Otto 762, 24 L.Ed. 313 (1876), 471
- Forest Conservation Council v. Espy, 835 F.Supp. 1202 (D.Idaho 1993), 913
- Forest Conservation Council v. Rosboro Lumber Co., 50 F.3d 781 (9th Cir.1995), 739
- Forest Conservation Council v. United States Forest Service, 66 F.3d 1489 (9th Cir. 1995), 210
- Fort Leavenworth R. Co. v. Lowe**, 114 U.S. 525, 5 S.Ct. 995, 29 L.Ed. 264 (1885), 153, 158, 172
- Foster v. Seaton, 271 F.2d 836, 106 U.S.App. D.C. 253 (D.C.Cir.1959), 454, 467
- Foundation for North American Wild Sheep v. United States Dept. of Agr.**, 681 F.2d 1172 (9th Cir.1982), 287, 988, 993
- Free Enterprise Canoe Renters Ass'n of Missouri v. Watt, 549 F.Supp. 252 (E.D.Mo. 1982), 186
- Freeman v. Summers, 52 L.D. 201 (1927), 458



- Fresno County, United States v., 429 U.S. 452, 97 S.Ct. 699, 50 L.Ed.2d 683 (1977), 209
- Friends of Boundary Waters Wilderness v. Robertson, 770 F.Supp. 1385 (D.Minn. 1991), 1160
- Friends of Endangered Species, Inc. v. Jantzen, 760 F.2d 976 (9th Cir.1985), 896
- Friends of Shawangunks, Inc. v. Clark**, 754 F.2d 446 (2nd Cir.1985), 1008, 1012
- Friends of Southeast's Future v. Morrison**, 153 F.3d 1059 (9th Cir.1998), 731
- Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness v. Robertson, 978 F.2d 1484 (8th Cir. 1992), 1074
- Friends of the Earth v. Armstrong, 485 F.2d 1 (10th Cir.1973), 869, 1113
- Friends of the Earth, Inc. v. Brinegar, 518 F.2d 322 (9th Cir.1975), 272
- Friends of Wild Swan, Inc. v. United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 945 F.Supp. 1388 (D.Or.1996), 874
- Frost v. Garrison, 201 F.Supp. 389 (D.Wyo. 1962), 968
- Fuller, United States v.**, 409 U.S. 488, 93 S.Ct. 801, 35 L.Ed.2d 16 (1973), 565, 751, 754, 755
- Fund for Animals v. Babbitt, 89 F.3d 128 (2nd Cir.1996), 952
- Fund for Animals v. Babbitt**, 903 F.Supp. 96 (D.D.C.1995), 877
- Fund For Animals v. Clark, 27 F.Supp.2d 8 (D.D.C.1998), 961, 970
- Fund for Animals, Inc. v. Espy, 814 F.Supp. 142 (D.D.C.1993), 970
- Fund for Animals v. Hodel, No. CV 85-250-BU (D.Mont.1988), 965
- Fund for Animals, Inc. v. Rice, 85 F.3d 535 (11th Cir.1996), 894
- Garcia v. Andrus, 692 F.2d 89 (9th Cir.1982), 758
- Garcia v. San Antonio Metropolitan Transit Authority, 469 U.S. 528, 105 S.Ct. 1005, 83 L.Ed.2d 1016 (1985), 185
- Gardner, United States v.**, 107 F.3d 1314 (9th Cir.1997), 174
- Garren, United States v., 893 F.2d 208 (9th Cir.1989), 1021
- Gates of the Mountains Lakeshore Homes, Inc., United States v., 732 F.2d 1411 (9th Cir.1984), 329
- Gear, United States v., 44 U.S. 120, 3 How. 120, 11 L.Ed. 523 (1845), 85
- Geer v. State of Connecticut, 161 U.S. 519, 16 S.Ct. 600, 40 L.Ed. 793 (1896), 847, 851, 852, 853
- Gemmill, United States v., 535 F.2d 1145 (9th Cir.1976), 244
- General Adjudication of All Rights to Use Water in the Big Horn River System, In re, 753 P.2d 76 (Wyo.1988), 387, 419
- Geomet Exploration, Ltd. v. Lucky Mc Uranium Corp.**, 124 Ariz. 55, 601 P.2d 1339 (Ariz.1979), 438, 441, 442, 443
- Gerber, United States v., 999 F.2d 1112 (7th Cir.1993), 1099
- Gerlach Live Stock Co., United States v., 339 U.S. 725, 70 S.Ct. 955, 94 L.Ed. 1231 (1950), 108, 152
- Getty Oil Co. v. Andrus, 607 F.2d 253 (9th Cir.1979), 602
- Getty Oil Co. v. Clark, 614 F.Supp. 904 (D.Wyo.1985), 578, 1219
- Gettysburg Electric R. Co., United States v.**, 160 U.S. 668, 16 S.Ct. 427, 40 L.Ed. 576 (1896), 112, 157, 1088
- Gibbons v. Ogden, 22 U.S. 1, 6 L.Ed. 23 (1824), 58, 419, 1117
- Gila River System and Source, In re, 195 Ariz. 411, 989 P.2d 739 (Ariz.1999), 388
- Globe Min. Co. v. Anderson, 78 Wyo. 17, 318 P.2d 373 (Wyo.1957), 461
- Goldfield Deep Mines Co. of Nevada, United States v., 644 F.2d 1307 (9th Cir.1981), 506
- Gold, Michael, 115 I.B.L.A. 218 (1990), 591
- Goos v. I.C.C., 911 F.2d 1283 (8th Cir.1990), 1037
- Gotchnik, United States v., 1995 WL 312012 (D.Minn.1995), 50
- Gould v. Greylock Reservation Commission, 350 Mass. 410, 215 N.E.2d 114 (Mass. 1966), 338
- Gratiot, United States v., 39 U.S. 526, 14 Pet. 526, 10 L.Ed. 573 (1840), 85, 162
- Great American Houseboat Co. v. United States, 780 F.2d 741 (9th Cir.1986), 1020
- Greater Yellowstone Coalition v. Babbitt, 952 F.Supp. 1435 (D.Mont.1996), 970
- Great Northern Ry. Co. v. Weeks, 297 U.S. 135, 56 S.Ct. 426, 80 L.Ed. 532 (1936), 564
- Greenpeace USA v. Stone, 924 F.2d 175 (9th Cir.1991), 260
- Gregg, United States v., 290 F.Supp. 706 (W.D.Wash.1968), 1158
- Griffin v. Yuetter, 944 F.2d 908 (9th Cir. 1991), 738
- Grimaud, United States v.**, 220 U.S. 506, 31 S.Ct. 480, 55 L.Ed. 563 (1911), 115, 117, 244, 273, 486, 627, 748, 756, 1044
- Gulf Oil Corp. v. Morton, 493 F.2d 141 (9th Cir.1973), 598
- Gulf Oil Corp. v. Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Com'n, 693 P.2d 227 (Wyo. 1985), 195
- Hage v. United States, 42 Fed.Cl. 249 (Fed. Cl.1998), 241, 414, 755
- Hallenbeck v. Kleppe, 590 F.2d 852 (10th Cir.1979), 453
- Hancock v. Train, 426 U.S. 167, 96 S.Ct. 2006, 48 L.Ed.2d 555 (1976), 209
- Hannifin v. Morton, 444 F.2d 200 (10th Cir. 1971), 541
- Hanten, United States v., 500 F.Supp. 188 (D.Or.1980), 1146
- Headwaters, Inc. v. Bureau of Land Management, Medford Dist.**, 914 F.2d 1174 (9th Cir.1990), 740, 742

- Headwaters, Inc. v. Bureau of Land Management, Medford Dist., 684 F.Supp. 1053 (D.Or.1988), 813
- Heckler v. Chaney, 470 U.S. 821, 105 S.Ct. 1649, 84 L.Ed.2d 714 (1985), 273
- Hells Canyon Guide Service, Inc., United States v., 660 F.2d 735 (9th Cir.1981), 1043, 1051
- Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. United States Forest Service, 883 F.Supp. 534 (D.Or.1995), 1043
- Helsley, United States v., 615 F.2d 784 (9th Cir.1979), 852
- Hibbard, State ex rel. Cox v., 31 Or.App. 269, 570 P.2d 1190 (Or.App.1977), 206
- Hickel v. Oil Shale Corp.**, 400 U.S. 48, 91 S.Ct. 196, 27 L.Ed.2d 193 (1970), 457, **463**
- Hinsdale Livestock Co. v. United States**, 501 F.Supp. 773 (D.Mont.1980), **778**, 785
- Hi-Ridge Lumber Co. v. United States, 443 F.2d 452 (9th Cir.1971), 287
- Historic Green Springs, Inc. v. Bergland, 497 F.Supp. 839 (E.D.Va.1980), 1099
- Hodel v. Indiana, 452 U.S. 314, 101 S.Ct. 2376, 69 L.Ed.2d 40 (1981), 551
- Hodel v. Irving, 481 U.S. 704, 107 S.Ct. 2076, 95 L.Ed.2d 668 (1987), 215
- Hodel v. Virginia Surface Min. and Reclamation Ass'n, Inc., 452 U.S. 264, 101 S.Ct. 2352, 69 L.Ed.2d 1 (1981), 551
- Hoehn v. Donovan, 711 F.2d 899 (9th Cir. 1983), 1112
- Holbrook v. Continental Oil Co., 73 Wyo. 321, 278 P.2d 798 (Wyo.1955), 615
- Holland Livestock Ranch v. United States, 588 F.Supp. 943 (D.Nev.1984), 762
- Holland Livestock Ranch v. United States**, 714 F.2d 90 (9th Cir.1983), 338, **760**
- Holt State Bank, United States v., 270 U.S. 49, 46 S.Ct. 197, 70 L.Ed. 465 (1926), 57
- Hovsons, Inc. v. Secretary of Interior of United States, 519 F.Supp. 434 (D.N.J.1981), 1117
- Hughes v. Florida, 42 L.D. 401 (1913), 435
- Hughes v. Oklahoma, 441 U.S. 322, 99 S.Ct. 1727, 60 L.Ed.2d 250 (1979), 851
- Humane Soc. of United States v. Lujan, 768 F.Supp. 360 (D.D.C.1991), 952
- Hunt v. United States, 278 U.S. 96, 49 S.Ct. 38, 73 L.Ed. 200 (1928), 164, 173, 253, 853, 971, 983
- Hunter v. Morton, 529 F.2d 645 (10th Cir. 1976), 541
- Hunter v. United States, 388 F.2d 148 (9th Cir.1967), 414
- Ickes v. Virginia-Colorado Development Corp., 295 U.S. 639, 55 S.Ct. 888, 79 L.Ed. 1627 (1935), 464
- Idaho v. United States, 134 Idaho 106, 996 P.2d 806 (Idaho 2000), 414
- Idaho Conservation League v. Mumma, 956 F.2d 1508 (9th Cir.1992), 264
- Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game v. National Marine Fisheries Service, 850 F.Supp. 886 (D.Or.1994), 913
- Idaho Sporting Congress v. Thomas, 137 F.3d 1146 (9th Cir.1998), 694
- Idaho Sporting Congress, Inc. v. United States Forest Service, 843 F.Supp. 1373 (D.Idaho 1994), 261, 685
- Idaho, State of v. Hanna Min. Co., 882 F.2d 392 (9th Cir.1989), 526
- Idaho, State of v. Hodel, 814 F.2d 1288 (9th Cir.1987), 1012
- Idaho Watersheds Project v. Hahn**, 187 F.3d 1035 (9th Cir.1999), **805**
- Illinois Cent. R. Co. v. State of Illinois**, 146 U.S. 387, 13 S.Ct. 110, 36 L.Ed. 1018 (1892), **59**, 61, 71, 119, 338
- Independence Min. Co. v. Babbitt**, 885 F.Supp. 1356 (D.Nev.1995), **477**, 484
- Independence Min. Co., Inc. v. Babbitt, 105 F.3d 502 (9th Cir.1997), 484
- Inland Empire Public Lands Council v. Glickman, 911 F.Supp. 431 (D.Mont.1995), 739
- Inland Empire Public Lands Council v. Schultz, 992 F.2d 977 (9th Cir.1993), 738
- In re (see name of party)**
- I.N.S. v. Chadha, 462 U.S. 919, 103 S.Ct. 2764, 77 L.Ed.2d 317 (1983), 300, 301, 302, 304, 318
- Intertribal Bison Co-op. v. Babbitt**, 25 F.Supp.2d 1135 (D.Mont.1998), **965**
- Iron Silver Min. Co. v. Elgin Min. & Smelting Co., 118 U.S. 196, 6 S.Ct. 1177, 30 L.Ed. 98 (1886), 459
- Irwin v. Phillips, 5 Cal. 140 (Cal.1855), 378
- Ivanhoe Irr. Dist. v. McCracken, 357 U.S. 275, 78 S.Ct. 1174, 2 L.Ed.2d 1313 (1958), 109
- Izaak Walton League of America v. St. Clair, 497 F.2d 849 (8th Cir.1974), 261
- Jacobellis v. State of Ohio, 378 U.S. 184, 84 S.Ct. 1676, 12 L.Ed.2d 793 (1964), 937
- James v. Dravo Contracting Co., 302 U.S. 134, 58 S.Ct. 208, 82 L.Ed. 155 (1937), 157, 158
- James Stewart & Co. v. Sadrakula, 309 U.S. 94, 60 S.Ct. 431, 84 L.Ed. 596 (1940), 161
- Jenks, United States v.**, 129 F.3d 1348 (10th Cir.1997), **331**
- Jerke v. State Dept. of Lands, 182 Mont. 294, 597 P.2d 49 (Mont.1979), 338
- Jesse, United States v., 744 P.2d 491 (Colo. 1987), 397
- Johansen, United States v., 93 F.3d 459 (8th Cir.1996), 207
- Johnson v. M'Intosh**, 21 U.S. 543, 5 L.Ed. 681 (1823), **44**, 48, 49
- Johnson v. United States, Dept. of Interior**, 949 F.2d 332 (10th Cir.1991), **1082**
- Justice Mining Co. v. Barclay, 82 F. 554 (C.C.D.Nev.1897), 463



- Kanab Uranium Corp. v. Consolidated Uranium Mines, 227 F.2d 434 (10th Cir.1955), 602
- Kansas, State of v. State of Colorado, 206 U.S. 46, 27 S.Ct. 655, 51 L.Ed. 956 (1907), 108
- Kentucky Heartwood, Inc. v. United States Forest Service, 906 F.Supp. 410 (E.D.Ky. 1995), 739
- Kentucky Heartwood, Inc. v. Worthington, 20 F.Supp.2d 1076 (E.D.Ky.1998), 270
- Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp. v. United States Dept. of Interior, 709 F.2d 597 (9th Cir. 1983), 1171
- Kerr-McGee Corp. v. Hodel, 840 F.2d 68, 268 U.S.App.D.C. 188 (D.C.Cir.1988), 538
- Kerr-McGee Corp. v. Hodel, 630 F.Supp. 621 (D.D.C.1986), 538, 545
- Keystone Bituminous Coal Ass'n v. DeBenedictis, 480 U.S. 470, 107 S.Ct. 1232, 94 L.Ed.2d 472 (1987), 215, 242
- Kiernat v. Chisago County, 564 F.Supp. 1089 (D.Minn.1983), 1146
- Kimball v. Callahan, 493 F.2d 564 (9th Cir. 1974), 999
- Kinney-Coastal Oil Co. v. Kieffer, 277 U.S. 488, 48 S.Ct. 580, 72 L.Ed. 961 (1928), 615
- Kirby Forest Industries, Inc. v. United States, 467 U.S. 1, 104 S.Ct. 2187, 81 L.Ed.2d 1 (1984), 114
- Klamath Falls, Or., City of v. Babbitt, 947 F.Supp. 1 (D.D.C.1996), 1121
- Klamath Water Users Protective Ass'n v. Patterson, 204 F.3d 1206 (9th Cir.1999), 912
- Klein, United States v., 80 U.S. 128, 20 L.Ed. 519 (1871), 916
- Kleppe v. New Mexico**, 426 U.S. 529, 96 S.Ct. 2285, 49 L.Ed.2d 34 (1976), **164**, 172, 173, 180, 181, 186, 187, 190, 191, 205, 233, 835, 836, 848, 853, 924, 1100
- Kleppe v. Sierra Club**, 427 U.S. 390, 96 S.Ct. 2718, 49 L.Ed.2d 576 (1976), 272, **350**, 532, 1178, 1189
- Koby, Daniel B., 139 I.B.L.A. 131 (1997), 467
- Kootenai Environmental Alliance, Inc. v. State Bd. of Land Com'rs, 105 Idaho 622, 671 P.2d 1085 (Idaho 1983), 339
- Kosanke Sand Corp., United States v., 80 I.D. 538 (1973), 454
- Kotzebue, City of, 26 I.B.L.A. 264 (1976), 293
- Krichbaum v. Kelley, 844 F.Supp. 1107 (W.D.Va.1994), 738
- Krueger v. Morton, 539 F.2d 235, 176 U.S.App.D.C. 233 (D.C.Cir.1976), 532
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- Leo Sheep Co. v. United States, 570 F.2d 881 (10th Cir.1977), 104
- Lewis v. Udall, 374 F.2d 180 (9th Cir.1967), 318
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