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BLM Targets Western Shoshone for "Illegally" Using Their Lands

On February 19th, 1998 the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) served notice to the Western Shoshone National Council, the Western Shoshone Dann family and the Western Shoshone Defense Project of their "unauthorized use" and "trespass" on lands disputed by the Western Shoshone and the BLM.

In October, 1997 the BLM ordered the Western Shoshone who graze cattle in the South Fork, Odgers Ranch, and Wells area to remove all livestock not authorized by the BLM. Yesterday, the Crescent Valley Western Shoshone were served notice to do the same within 5 days—"failure to comply with this unauthorized use notice and order to remove may result in impoundment of the unauthorized livestock."

On February 19th, the BLM also issued a notice of trespass against the "unauthorized" occupation of a spiritual and cultural encampment established in 1991 by the Western Shoshone National Council and the Western Shoshone Defense Project on disputed lands in Crescent Valley. Ceremonies and gatherings are held at this encampment throughout the year.

The Western Shoshone National Council's response to the BLM is to pose the same question they have asked for years: How did the US acquire title **by legal means** to Western Shoshone lands? The BLM and the US government claims jurisdiction over Western Shoshone territory, yet they have never provided any documentation on how the land was acquired. The Western Shoshone, however, point to the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley, the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, the Territorial Act of Nevada, the 1847 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and international human rights laws that all uphold Western Shoshone rights and responsibilities to their lands.

The Traditional Western Shoshone Cattle Grazers state that they will not pay the BLM for grazing animals on Western Shoshone territory until the United States presents documentation on how the US acquired Western Shoshone lands.

BLM harassment against the Western Shoshone has persisted for decades. To this day, the Western Shoshone have remained open to participating in honest, meaningful dialogue with the proper representatives of the United States government—this has been to no avail. The Western Shoshone have a pending international human rights complaint against the United States, as well as an Intervention in the 9th Circuit Court (US v Nye County) and an Injunction against the BLM in US District Court. Until these cases are resolved, the BLM should end their threats, harassment and intimidation tactics.