

Title 43: Public Lands: Interior

Subpart 2540—Color-of-Title: Authority and Definitions

§ 2540.0-3 Authority.

(a) *Act of December 22, 1928.* The Act of December 22, 1928 (45 Stat. 1069), as amended by the Act of July 28, 1953 (67 Stat. 227; 43 U.S.C. 1068, 1068a), authorizes the issuance of patent for not to exceed 160 acres of public lands held under claim or color of title of either of the two classes described in §2540.0–5(b) upon payment of the sale price of the land.

(b) *Act of February 23, 1932.* The Act of February 23, 1932 (47 Stat. 53; 43 U.S.C. 178), authorizes the Secretary of the Interior in his discretion to issue patents, upon the payment of \$1.25 per acre, for not more than 160 acres of public land, where such land is contiguous to a Spanish or Mexican land grant, and where such land has been held in good faith and in peaceful, adverse possession by a citizen of the United States, his ancestors or grantors, for more than 20 years under claim or color of title and where valuable improvements have been placed on such land, or some part thereof has been reduced to cultivation. The act further provides that where the land is in excess of 160 acres, the Secretary may determine the 160 acres to be patented under the Act. Under the said act the coal and all other minerals in the land are reserved to the United States and shall be subject to sale or disposal under applicable leasing and mineral land laws of the United States.

(c) *Act of September 21, 1922.* The Act of September 21, 1922 (42 Stat. 992; 43 U.S.C. 992), authorizes the Secretary of the Interior in his judgment and discretion to sell at an appraised price, any of those public lands situated in Arkansas, which were originally erroneously meandered and shown upon the official plats as water-covered areas, and which are not lawfully appropriated by a qualified settler or entryman claiming under the public land laws, to any citizen who in good faith under color of title or claiming as a riparian owner, has prior to September 21, 1922, placed valuable improvements on such land or reduced some part thereof to cultivation.

(d) *Act of February 19, 1925.* The Act of February 19, 1925 (43 Stat. 951; 43 U.S.C. 993), authorizes the Secretary of the Interior in his judgment and discretion to sell at an appraised price, any of those public lands situated in Louisiana, which were originally erroneously meandered and shown upon the official plats as water-covered areas and which are not lawfully appropriated by a qualified settler or entryman claiming under the public land laws, to any citizen who or whose ancestors in title in good faith under color of title or claiming as a riparian owner, has prior to February 19, 1925, placed valuable improvements upon or reduced to cultivation any of such lands. The coal, oil, gas, and other minerals in such lands are reserved to the United States.

(e) *Act of August 24, 1954.* The Act of August 24, 1954 (68 Stat. 789), directs the Secretary of the Interior to issue patents for public lands which lie between the meander line of an inland lake or river in Wisconsin as originally surveyed and the meander line of that lake or river as subsequently resurveyed, under certain terms and conditions. The Act of February 27, 1925 (43 Stat. 1013 43 U.S.C. 994), authorized the Secretary of the Interior to sell such public lands under certain other terms and conditions. These Acts are cited as *the Act of 1954* and *the Act of 1925*, respectively, in §§2545.1 to 2545.4.

(f) *Act of May 31, 1962.* (1) The Act of May 31, 1962 (76 Stat. 89), hereafter referred to as *the Act*, authorizes the Secretary of the Interior, in his discretion, to sell at not less than their fair market value any of those lands in the State of Idaho, in the vicinity of the Snake River or any of its tributaries, which have been, or may be, found upon survey to be omitted public lands of the United States, and which are not within the boundaries of a national forest or other Federal reservation and are not lawfully appropriated by a qualified settler or entryman claiming under the public land laws, or are not used and occupied by Indians claiming by reason of aboriginal rights or are not used and occupied by Indians who are eligible for an allotment under the laws pertaining to allotments on the public domain.

(2) The Act provides that in all patents issued under the Act, The Secretary of the Interior (i) shall include a reservation to the United States of all the coal, oil, gas, oil shale, phosphate, potash, sodium, native asphalt, solid and semisolid bitumen, and bitumen rock (including oil-impregnated rock or sands from which oil is

recoverable only by special treatment after the deposit is mined or quarried), together with the right to prospect for, mine, and remove the same; and (ii) may reserve the right of access to the public through the lands and such other reservations as he may deem appropriate and consonant with the public interest in preserving public recreational values in the lands.

(3) The Act further provides that the Secretary of the Interior shall determine the fair market value of the lands by appraisal, taking into consideration any reservations specified pursuant to paragraph (f)(2) of this section and excluding, when sales are made to preference-right claimants under section 2 of the Act, any increased values resulting from the development or improvement thereof for agricultural or other purposes by the claimant or his predecessors in interest.

(4) The Act grants a preference right to purchase lands which are offered by the Secretary of the Interior for sale under the Act to any citizen of the United States (which term includes corporations, partnerships, firms, and other legal entities having authority to hold title to lands in the State of Idaho) who, in good faith under color of title or claiming as a riparian owner has, prior to March 30, 1961, placed valuable improvements upon, reduced to cultivation or occupied any of the lands so offered for sale, or whose ancestors or predecessors in title have taken such action.

(g) The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

(1) Section 211 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1721), authorizes the Secretary of the Interior in his discretion to sell at not less than fair market value to the occupant thereof any omitted lands which, after survey, are found to have been occupied and developed for a 5-year period prior to January 1, 1975.

(2) The Act provides that all such conveyances under the Act must be in the public interest and will serve objectives which outweigh all public objectives and values served by retaining such lands in Federal ownership.

(3) Section 208 of the Act (43 U.S.C. 1718) further provides that the Secretary of the Interior shall issue patents subject to such terms, covenants, conditions, and reservations as deemed necessary to insure proper land use and protection of the public interest.

(4) Section 209 of the Act (43 U.S.C. 1719) provides that all patents issued under the Act shall reserve to the United States all minerals in the lands, together with the right to prospect for, mine, and remove the minerals under applicable law and such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, except as provided by section 209(b) of the Act.

[35 FR 9591, June 13, 1970, as amended at 44 FR 41793, July 18, 1979]

§ 2540.0-5 Definition.

(a) *The act*, when used in this section means the Act of December 22, 1928 (45 Stat. 1069; 43 U.S.C. 1068, 1068a), as amended by the Act of July 28, 1953 (67 Stat. 227, 43 U.S.C. 1068a).

(b) The claims recognized by the Act will be referred to in this part as claims of class 1, and claim of class 2. A claim of class 1 is one which has been held in good faith and in peaceful adverse possession by a claimant, his ancestors or grantors, under claim or color of title for more than 20 years, on which valuable improvements have been placed, or on which some part of the land has been reduced to cultivation. A claim of class 2 is one which has been held in good faith and in peaceful, adverse possession by a claimant, his ancestors or grantors, under claim or color of title for the period commencing not later than January 1, 1901, to the date of application, during which time they have paid taxes levied on the land by State and local governmental units. A claim is not held in good faith where held with knowledge that the land is owned by the United States. A claim is not held in peaceful, adverse possession where it was initiated while the land was withdrawn or reserved for Federal purposes.

[35 FR 9592, June 13, 1970]

Subpart 2541—Color-of-Title Act

Source: 35 FR 9592, June 13, 1970, unless otherwise noted.

§ 2541.1 Who may apply.

Any individual, group, or corporation authorized to hold title to land in the State and who believes he has a valid claim under color of title may make application.

§ 2541.2 Procedures.

(a) *Application.* (1) An application for a claim of class 1 or of class 2 must be filed in duplicate on a form approved by the Director. It must be filed in accordance with the provisions of §1821.2 of this chapter.

(2) Every application must be accompanied by a filing fee of \$10, which will be nonreturnable.

(3) The application must be in typewritten form, or in legible handwriting, and it must be completely executed and signed by the applicant.

(4) Every applicant must furnish information required in the application form concerning improvements, cultivation, conveyances of title, taxes, and related matters.

(b) *Description of lands applied for.* Application under the act may be made for surveyed or unsurveyed lands. If unsurveyed, the description must be sufficiently complete to identify the location, boundary, and area of the land and, if possible, the approximate description or location of the land by section, township, and range. If unsurveyed land is claimed, final action will be suspended until the plat of survey has been officially filed.

(c) *Presentation and verification of factual statements.* (1) Information relating to all record and nonrecord conveyances, or to nonrecord claims of title, affecting the land shall be itemized on a form approved by the Director. The statements of record conveyances must be certified by the proper county official or by an abstractor. The applicant may be called upon to submit documentary or other evidence relating to conveyances or claims. Abstracts of title or other documents which are so requested will be returned to the applicant.

(2) Applicants for claims of class 2 must itemize all information relating to tax levies and payments on the land on a form approved by the Director which must be certified by the proper county official or by an abstractor.

§ 2541.3 Patents.

(a) Any applicant who satisfied all requirements for a claim of class 1 or class 2 commencing not later than January 1, 1901, to the date of application and who so requests in the application will receive a patent conveying title to all other minerals except:

(1) Any minerals which, at the time of approval of the application, are embraced by an outstanding mineral lease or

(2) Any minerals for which the lands have been placed in a mineral withdrawal.

All other patents will reserve all minerals to the United States.

(b) All mineral reservations will include the right to prospect for, mine, and remove the same in accordance with applicable law.

(c) The maximum area for which patent may be issued for any claim under the act is 160 acres. Where an area held under a claim or color of title is in excess of 160 acres, the Secretary has authority under the act to determine what particular subdivisions not exceeding 160 acres, may be patented.

§ 2541.4 Price of land; payment.

(a) *Price of land.* The land applied for will be appraised on the basis of its fair market value at the time of appraisal. However, in determination of the price payable by the applicant, value resulting from improvements or development by the applicant or his predecessors in interest will be deducted from the appraised price, and consideration will be given to the equities of the applicant. In no case will the land be sold for less than \$1.25 per acre.

(b) *Payment.* Applicant will be required to make payment of the sale price of the land within the time stated in the request for payment.

§ 2541.5 Publication; protests.

(a) The applicant will be required to publish once a week for four consecutive weeks in accordance with §1824.3 of this chapter, at his expense, in a designated newspaper and in a designated form, a notice allowing all persons claiming the land adversely to file in the office specified in §2541.1–2(a) their objections to the issuance of patent under the application. A protestant must serve on the applicant a copy of the objections and furnish evidence of such service.

(b) The applicant must file a statement of the publisher, accompanied by a copy of the notice published, showing that publication has been had for the required time.