RESIDENTIAL | COMMERCIAL | LAND | DEVELOPMENT

Eagle Foothills...

Who should control the land? October 2026

As Valnova expands into the Eagle foothills, nearly 2,000 acres of federal land could eventually come under City of Eagle ownership— raising important questions about recreation, public access, development and the future of shooting in the foothills.

The foothills north of Eagle have long represented the transition between the rapidly growing Treasure Valley and Idaho's vast public lands. But as development continues northward, deciding who manages that transition is becoming increasingly important.

At the center of the discussion is **Valnova**, the approximately 6,000-acre master-planned community being developed in the Eagle foothills. The community is approved for as many as 7,100 homes over a buildout expected to span decades.

Adjacent to that development are thousands of acres of federal land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Now, two potential land transactions could significantly reshape ownership of that landscape.

The First Proposal: BLM Land Could Become Eagle Public Land

The City of Eagle is exploring the acquisition of approximately **1,918 acres of BLM land adjacent to Valnova** through the federal Recreation and Public Purposes Act.

The program allows local governments to acquire qualifying federal property for recreation and other public purposes.

If ultimately approved, the acreage would not simply become additional residential development. Instead, municipal ownership could allow Eagle to plan the property as a large public recreation and open-space area.

Potential uses discussed for the foothills over the years have included hiking, mountain biking, equestrian trails, wildlife habitat, open space and shooting-related recreation.

City ownership could also allow Eagle to integrate the property with the trail networks and open spaces being established within Valnova.

However, acquiring the land is only the beginning.

Nearly 1,918 acres—roughly three square miles—would bring significant long-term responsibilities involving wildfire mitigation, weeds, trails, parking, law enforcement, habitat management and general maintenance.

The question therefore isn't simply whether Eagle can acquire the property.

It's also what Eagle intends to do with it—and how those uses would be funded and protected over the long term.

A Separate Federal Land Exchange

A second potential transaction involves Valnova developer Clyde Capital Group and the BLM.

Under that concept, approximately **2,400 acres of federal land near Valnova could move into private ownership**, while roughly **2,600 acres of private land northeast of Avimor and east of Highway 55 could become federal property**.

Although BLM would potentially receive more acreage than it relinquishes, acreage alone doesn't determine whether a land exchange benefits the public.

Other factors matter considerably: appraised value, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, development potential, accessibility, water resources and whether the property connects with other public lands.

That makes this transaction fundamentally different from Eagle's proposed acquisition.

One could place federal property into **municipal public ownership**.

The other could exchange **federal land for privately owned land elsewhere**.

Understanding that distinction is essential when discussing the future of the Eagle foothills.

The Shooting Question

Perhaps no issue illustrates the changing character of the foothills better than recreational shooting.

For decades, undeveloped public land surrounding the Treasure Valley has provided opportunities for recreational target shooting.

BLM generally allows recreational shooting on public lands where it hasn't otherwise been restricted, provided shooters comply with applicable laws and follow appropriate safety practices.

But the landscape around Valnova is changing.

Areas that historically felt remote are increasingly close to neighborhoods, construction crews, roads, trails and future recreational areas.

Reports of gunfire and projectiles near the development have heightened concerns about whether unrestricted shooting remains compatible with thousands of new homes.

Eagle's municipal code adds an unusual wrinkle.

Firearm discharge is generally restricted within Eagle city limits, but BLM property has historically received different treatment under the city's ordinance. Consequently, federal ownership can affect what Eagle itself can regulate.

Municipal ownership could give the city considerably more control over where recreational shooting occurs.

For nearby residents, that could provide an important additional layer of

safety.

For recreational shooters, however, the issue looks different.

Did Shooting Move Toward Homes—or Did Homes Move Toward Shooting?

This may be the most difficult question surrounding the debate.

The foothills weren't historically residential neighborhoods. People have used portions of these public lands for shooting and other recreation long before communities such as Valnova existed.

From that perspective, development has moved toward an existing recreational use—not the other way around.

Restricting shooting as homes approach can therefore feel like the gradual loss of another traditional public-land activity.

Eagle has previously considered designated shooting areas and a shooting sports park as potential solutions.

A professionally designed shooting facility located away from neighborhoods could potentially preserve recreational shooting while reducing conflicts with residential development, trails and other recreational users.

Until a practical alternative exists, however, the debate is unlikely to disappear.

The Case for City Ownership

Municipal ownership could give Eagle something increasingly valuable as the Treasure Valley grows: **local control over a large portion of its foothills interface.**

Rather than having residential neighborhoods immediately transition into federally managed property governed under a different set of rules, Eagle could create a coordinated recreation and conservation plan.

Trails could connect with surrounding communities.

Wildlife corridors could potentially be preserved.

Recreation could be separated into compatible uses.

Shooting could potentially be directed toward appropriately designed areas rather than occurring throughout undeveloped land.

And perhaps most importantly, approximately 1,918 acres could remain public open space alongside one of the largest planned developments in the Treasure Valley.

The Case for Caution

Public ownership does not automatically guarantee good land management.

Eagle residents would ultimately need to understand what acquiring and maintaining the property will cost.

There are also legitimate questions surrounding how much influence a neighboring developer should have in facilitating public-land transactions that could directly affect the development surrounding it.

Any federal land moving into private ownership deserves particular scrutiny.

The public should be able to clearly understand what land is being exchanged, its appraised value, what development rights accompany it, what recreational opportunities could be lost and what environmental or recreational benefits the public receives in return.

Those questions don't necessarily make a land exchange inappropriate.

They make transparency important.

A Much Larger Open-Space Opportunity

There is another side to the Valnova story that can easily get overlooked.

Although Valnova encompasses approximately 6,000 acres, the developer has stated that nearly half of the property is intended to remain native open space or become recreational areas.

Combine that acreage with potentially 1,918 acres of Eagle-owned foothills and surrounding state and federal lands, and northern Eagle could eventually have an extensive interconnected network of protected foothills and recreation areas.

Done carefully, growth and open-space preservation don't necessarily have

to be opposing ideas.

Development can sometimes provide the mechanism for assembling trails, protecting corridors and creating public access that didn't previously exist.

The details of those protections, however, matter.

So, Who Should Control the Eagle Foothills?

There may not be one simple answer.

BLM ownership preserves federal public land and traditional recreational opportunities but can make local management more complicated as residential development approaches.

City of Eagle ownership could provide greater local control, recreation planning and protection of open space—but would also transfer significant management responsibilities and costs to the city.

Private ownership through a federal land exchange could consolidate land surrounding Valnova while adding different acreage to the federal estate—but requires careful examination of value, access, development potential and what the public gains or loses.

And recreational shooting represents the broader challenge facing many growing western communities:

How do we preserve traditional uses of public lands while recognizing that the communities surrounding those lands are changing?

The Eagle foothills are no longer simply the edge of the Treasure Valley.

Increasingly, they're becoming part of it.

The decisions being made now about ownership, recreation, development and conservation could determine what this landscape looks like decades from today.

Disclaimer: *This article is provided for informational and educational purposes only and is based on publicly available information, news reporting, government records, and project information available as of the date of publication. Proposed land acquisitions, exchanges, development plans, public-land uses, and regulations are subject to change, further review, public input, and governmental approval. Nothing in this article should be interpreted as legal advice or as an endorsement of or opposition to any proposed land transaction, development, governmental action, or recreational use. Readers are encouraged to consult the City of Eagle, Bureau of Land Management, Ada County, project representatives, and other applicable agencies for the most current official information.*