

INFORMATION ABOUT:



Desert Land Entries

U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

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What Are They?

A desert land entry (DLE) is a means by which a person can acquire public land by “proving it up,” making it agriculturally productive. Irrigation is the key word.

Desert land entries are made on as much as 320 acres of arid land which will not support farming in its natural state. The “entryman” provides irrigation and hard work to make the land agriculturally valuable.

Why?

Let’s take a quote from federal regulations on the subject:

“It is the purpose of the statutes governing desert land entries to encourage and promote the reclamation, by irrigation, of the arid and semiarid public lands of the western states through individual effort and private capital, it being assumed that settlement and occupation will naturally follow when the lands have thus been rendered more productive and habitable.”

A Point to Consider

The regulations mention “sincerity and good faith.” The Congress did not intend that the DLE law should provide for pasture or summer home sites. In his application, his annual proof and in making his final proof, the entryman must make clear that he seriously intends to irrigate and farm the land, and can do so.

The Chances?

The public land has been “picked over” for years, of course, and not much land is left for such development. Still, irrigation technology has advanced during the 100 years since the law was passed, and entries are still possible . . . by a knowledgeable farmer, on the right land, with sufficient capital to pay for development, machinery and initial seeding.

How to Get Started

(The full legal requirement is too detailed to include here. Entrymen should obtain a copy of federal regulations on the subject — 43 CFR Part 2520 — from a BLM office.)

Generally, the law requires that the applicant find the public land he wants to irrigate and cultivate, and apply for entry rights to the BLM state office in Cheyenne.

In addition to the completed application form the entryman must submit two other documents: proof of his right to sufficient water for all irrigable land in the proposed entry; and a detailed plan showing how he will transport the water and use it. Further, if the land is not classified as suitable for development, he must petition to have it studied and so classified.

Who Can Enter?

Entrymen (or women) must be 21. They must either be citizens or have declared their intention to become so, and must be citizens at the time they file their final proof. A husband and wife can each enter 320 acres. Entrymen must be residents of the state.

How Much?

A filing fee of \$15 and initial payment of 25 cents an acre are paid with the application. When final proof is made, an additional \$1 an acre is due.

Unsuitable Land

Among other things, the land must not be already reserved for other public purposes, be valuable mineral land (except for some leasable minerals such as oil and gas), be forest land, or be valuable for agricultural development without irrigation.

What Land, Then, Is Suitable?

Land suitable for such entry must be capable of development by irrigation with the potential of being more valuable as irrigated cropland than for the other multiple-uses, for which public land is retained in federal ownership. The applicant's description of the land and his development plan are used by BLM scientists in their on-the-ground study of the land's suitability.

Annual Proof

After entry is allowed, the applicant has four years in which to "prove up." He must invest a total of \$3 an acre on development of the irrigation system and other preparatory improvements. When making final proof, the entryman must have cultivated at least an eighth of the land and show that with his irrigation system he will eventually be able to cultivate all the irrigable land.