



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2016 PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION (d.b.a. CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF PUBLIC LANDS)**

### **Background**

The Public Lands Foundation (PLF), founded in 1987, is a non-profit, tax-exempt private organization incorporated in the State of Virginia as an educational and scientific group dedicated to the proper use, protection, and professional management of the federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) of the U.S. Department of the Interior. As a national, non-profit organization with more than 700 members, comprised principally of retired employees of the BLM who are still dedicated to the causes, the PLF has a unique body of experience, expertise and knowledge of public land management.<sup>1</sup>

Our successful efforts would not have been possible without the financial support of our members and donors.<sup>2</sup>

### **Vision of the PLF**

Being an effective voice and force in promoting the proper use and conservation of BLM-administered lands; to provide a sustained flow of products and services to benefit the U.S. economy.

### **PLF's Mission**

The PLF's mission is to advocate and work for the retention of America's National System of Public Lands in public hands, professionally and sustainably managed for responsible common use and enjoyment.

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<sup>1</sup> The BLM manages the most diverse landscapes in the Nation's portfolio; providing stewardship to more than 245 million acres of land and 700 million acres of mineral estate from the north slope of Alaska to Jupiter Inlet in Florida, and from tundra, to old growth forests, to desert landscapes. These lands contain an abundance of renewable and non-renewable natural resources and produce more than \$1.4 billion dollars annually in revenues to the U.S. Treasury. These lands are referred to as the National System of Public Lands (NSPL). This landmass, comprising about eleven percent (11%) of the entire country is increasingly the battleground where wars over issues such as federal management of public lands, biodiversity, timber harvesting, wilderness protection, mining, oil and gas development, rangeland, and riparian protection are fought.

<sup>2</sup> The PLF has adopted a doing-business-as (d.b.a) name of "Conservation and Protection of Public Lands" for the Combined Federal Campaign and State Employee Charity Campaigns only in that it more clearly describes the role of the PLF to potential donors.

## **PLF's Goals**

The goals of the PLF are to:

- Keep the NSPL in public ownership and open to responsible use by the public.
- Support multiple use management of these lands under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).
- Inform the BLM of concerns the PLF may have on the way that lands are being managed no matter what the issues may be, and to make recommendations to mitigate those concerns.
- Encourage professionalism by BLM employees and recognize achievements of professionals and stakeholders.
- Increase the public's understanding of and support for the proper management of the NSPL.
- Encourage contact, communication and coordination among NSPL users and interest groups.
- Facilitate contact and communication among BLM retirees.
- Retain records of BLM's history and its employees.

## **PLF Priorities and Action Plans**

- Keep the NSPL in national public ownership and open to public use.
- Support the implementation of FLPMA.
- Encourage utilization of career employees throughout the BLM, including in top management positions.
- Sponsor awards programs to recognize outstanding performance of BLM employees and outstanding PLF volunteers.
- Take actions to influence and promote the responsible multiple use management of the ecosystems and natural resources on the BLM lands, including:
  - PLF advocacy efforts on public land issues by such actions as testimony before congressional committees, and writing opinion editorials and letters to the editor.
  - Speak out for BLM.
  - Prepare and publicize PLF Position Statements on public land issues.
  - Participate in BLM Legacy Program activities.
  - Participate in BLM land use planning efforts and other projects.
  - Help BLM lead National Public Lands Day events.
- Lead in educational and scientific endeavors applicable to effective management of the public lands, including:
  - Holding panel discussions on current public land issues at PLF Annual and Chapter Meetings.
  - Helping sponsor seminars, workshops and meetings on public land issues.
  - Publishing educational materials about both the history of land management in the United States and current events regarding the NSPL.
  - Promoting and facilitating contacts, communications and cooperation with public land users and interest groups, and between BLM retirees.
- Publish "The Public Lands Monitor" quarterly.

- Publish the "Register of BLM Retirees" biennially.
- Maintain the PLF's <http://www.publicland.org> website to provide information about the PLF and public land issues and to facilitate contacts and communications.
- Hold PLF annual meetings in major cities in the West with themes that focus on current land management issues.
- Maintain a presence on social media, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.
- Maintain and operate the "Remembering BLM" group Facebook page.
- Record land management history and recognize accomplishments.
- Continue to expand the PLF Archives, and increase its use by the public.
- Sponsor an awards program including:
  - Lifetime Service Awards,
  - Outstanding Managerial/Administrative and Operational/Technical Awards, and
  - Landscape Stewardship Awards.
- Increase Youth and Student Engagement with PLF and the BLM.
- Participate in the BLM/PLF Partnership project "The Past and the Future."
- Award scholarships to college students pursuing a natural resource or public land policy curriculum, with an interest in public land management.
- Hold the Biennial Student Congress.
- Increase the financial and membership base of the PLF.
- Implement a comprehensive fundraising program to support PLF programs and activities, particularly the biennial Student Congress and the two annual George Lea Founders Scholarship awards.
- Encourage federal employees and retired members to support PLF through the Combined Federal Campaign.
- Obtain the names and addresses of recent BLM retirees to keep the Register of BLM Retirees current and offer new retirees a complimentary one-year membership.
- Give complimentary one-year memberships to people who participate in PLF meetings and events.
- Encourage the public to become PLF members.
- Expand the PLF organization to have at least one PLF Chapter in each Western state.

In addition to the above, PLF volunteers take an active part in developing local public land use plans, construction of facilities and projects within the NSPL and making presentations in various public forums, including executive, legislative, professional conservation and other gatherings. The PLF also conducts and sponsors studies and workshops needed to analyze public land issues and informs the public of the results.

It is the role of the PLF to survey BLM management activities and to insist that they are carried out in an environmentally sound manner. Additionally, key members are national issue or program leaders.

## **Major PLF Activities for 2016**

### **Annual Meeting**

The 29th annual meeting was held in Las Cruces, New Mexico and was attended by more than 60 PLF members and the public under the theme of "Keeping Public Lands in Public Hands." The program included a full day of 16 speakers, including Jim Caswell, former BLM Director.

### **Third Biennial Student Congress**

The third biennial Student Congress was held in Las Cruces, New Mexico just prior to the 2016 annual meeting. Twenty college students from across the country attended the Congress. The focus of this Student Congress was on the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) in concert with FLPMA's 40th Anniversary. The Student Congress was co-sponsored by the BLM New Mexico State Office and the PLF and convened to discuss a "national land ethic" as it relates to FLPMA and the current management processes of our national public land system. Garrey Carruthers gave the opening address and talked about what it was like being the Assistant Secretary under James Watt. The Student Congress asked that current and future national public lands administration, as well as congressional leadership, consider using FLPMA legislation as a framework for a national land ethic that benefits all users of public lands. Recommendations from the Student Congress were provided to the Secretary of the Interior and the BLM Director.

### **Scholarship Awards**

The PLF awarded George Lea Founder's Scholarships in the amount of \$5,000 each to Morgan Cardiel of New Mexico State University and Sydney White of West Virginia University.

### **National Public Lands Day**

National Public Lands Day (NPLD) is the nation's largest, single-day volunteer effort for public lands. The PLF's involvement helps in ways to make this day a memorable experience for those who volunteer and to provide the BLM with resources that are not easily obtainable. In 2016, PLF contributed \$2,500 of its own money for NPLD projects to supplement \$2,500 each from the BLM and the National Environmental Education Foundation, for a total of \$7,500.<sup>3</sup> A total of 29 requests for reimbursement were received from 12 states. Some projects were cancelled, and the result is 19 projects received reimbursement for 2016.

### **The Past and the Future Project**

This project that is organized by the Arizona Chapter of the PLF connects new BLM employees attending the BLM Pathways course at the BLM National Training Center together with BLM retirees for interviews and to develop relationships that can benefit both participants. To date, 77 interviews have been completed. Plans are underway to get the interviews transcribed. The interviews of the Pathways participants will be used

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<sup>3</sup> A balance of \$1,824 from 2015 increased the total dollars available for 2016 to \$9,324.

to help the PLF and the BLM learn more about new employees; including their goals and interests; and, the challenges facing them. The interviews of the retirees will be retained as a historical record.

## **Advocacy Activities**

- **BLM Funding.** In our written testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior the PLF supported:
  - Congressional charter of a national BLM Foundation;
  - Proposed legislation to provide oil and gas inspection fees, and an abandoned mine land fee for new hard rock mines;
  - Funding requests for on the ground treatment to protect sage-grouse habitat from wildfire and invasive species; continued funding of collaborative management of ecosystems; land use planning and managing the National Conservation Lands;
  - Hiring initiatives to make it easier for BLM to fill jobs with young people who have participated in activities under the “Engaging the Next Generation” program; and
  - The Department of the Interior’s Wildland Fire proposal to change the way large fires are funded to provide more flexibility to the agencies in funding suppression and land treatment projects.

PLF opposed cuts to the Wild Horse and Burro and Oregon and California (O&C) lands programs, and elimination of the Challenge Cost Share program.

**Issues Management.** 2016 was another busy year for the PLF. The PLF monitored events during the year and issued letters, provided testimony and policy materials on multiple issues. These included:

- Cliven Bundy and Family: PLF and the National Association of Forest Service Retirees issued a joint letter to Attorney General Loretta Lynch expressing concerns about the lack of progress being made to resolve a serious long-standing law enforcement and safety issue impacting Federal land managers across the West.
- PLF joined with 24 other Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) members in sending a February 2, 2016 letter to U. S. Senate leaders in support of proposed legislation that would improve development of wind, solar and geothermal energy on public lands.
- PLF joined with 12 other members of the National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition in sending a March 23, 2016 letter to the House Appropriation Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies and other members of Congress urging them to address the increasing problem of too many wild horses and burros on our valuable rangelands by directing the BLM to remove horses at a rate substantial enough to produce impactful results and protect our resources.
- PLF president Ed Shepard provided testimony on BLM’s Fiscal Year 2017 Budget to the House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related

Agencies.

- Letter approved by the PLF, along with 11 other member organizations of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, sent to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Natural Resources opposing H.R. 4739, the Greater Sage Grouse Protection and Recovery Act of 2016.
- Letter from the PLF to BLM Director regarding Public Lands Foundation comments on BLM's Planning 2.0 initiative and draft.
- Letter from the PLF to BLM Director Neil Kornze and BLM California State Director Jerry Perez regarding Proposed Rules for Shooting on Public Lands Managed by the BLM's Hollister Field Office in California.
- National Horse & Burro Rangeland Management Coalition (NHBRMC) Testimony submitted for oversight hearing entitled "Challenges and Potential Solutions for BLM's Wild Horse & Burro Program."
- A Position Statement on the BLM's Abandoned Mine Lands Program.
- PLF president Ed Shepard and BLM Assistant Director Mike Nedd made a presentation to the Government Accountability Office on public lands. The GAO asked for the presentation after seeing the PLF publication "*America's Public Lands: origin, history, future*" and the occupation of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge in January.
- PLF issued a letter to Senator Lisa Murkowski, Chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in support of BLM Foundation legislation.
- American Wildlife Conservation Partners-Fire Funding, etc. The PLF, along with other members of American Wildlife Conservation Partners, sent a letter to Chairmen Murkowski, Upton and Bishop, and Ranking Members Cantwell, Pallone and Grijalva in support of a comprehensive fix to the issue of fire borrowing, as well as bipartisan measures aimed at speeding the pace of restoration for habitat, water supply and quality, and access for recreation.
- At the request of the BLM Director, PLF prepared briefing papers on "Five Topics for the Next Administration." Topics include: (1) Federal vs. State Management of the NSPL; (2) Establishment of a BLM Foundation; (3) Wild Horses and Burros; (4) Youth Engagement; and, (5) Leadership Development. Plans are for the PLF to present the papers to the incoming Trump Administration as soon as practicable.

**Administrative Activities.** PLF administrative activities in 2016 included:

- PLF and BLM signed an MOU to establish a framework for cooperation between the BLM and the PLF to achieve mutual goals.
- Conducting quarterly conference calls between the PLF BOD and the BLM Director's Office and other leaders.
- Approved a Charter for the PLF Conservation Lands Committee.
- Distributed the tenth edition of PLF's Register of BLM Retirees.
- Relocation of our archives within the BLM National Training Center.
- Redesign of our website at [www.publicland.org](http://www.publicland.org).
- Maintaining and updating the Memorial Wall on our website.
- Initiation of using E-Mail (e-blast) alerts to PLF members concerning PLF

news and public lands issues in between quarterly editions of the Monitor.

### **Recognizing Leadership and Performance**

PLF combined with the BLM in 2016 to recognize the outstanding performance of employees. This was our 29th annual "Hall of Fame" recognition of actions by professional public land managers and technicians that constituted special achievement and courage.

*Lifetime Service Awards:* Lifetime Service Awards were presented to Henri Bisson, Judy Nelson, and Mike Pool at the PLF's Awards Banquet.

In addition, the PLF recognized outside people and organizations for exceptional landscape stewardship activities. Awardees were:

*Landscape Stewardship Award:* PLF's 2016 Landscape Stewardship Award was presented to the Crawford Area Gunnison Sage-Grouse Working Group for its work in helping to improve sage-grouse habitat and reverse the long-term decline in the Crawford sage-grouse population in southwestern Colorado.

*Landscape Stewardship Certificates of Appreciation:* PLF's 2016 Landscape Stewardship Certificates of Appreciation were presented to Jason and Maureen Oedekoven and family; Idaho Sage-grouse Action Team; Johnson County Natural Resource Habitat Restoration Team; and the Working Group Members for the BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council's Tres Rios Master Leasing Plan Area of Interest.

### **Financial Report**

The PLF, with approximately 580 members, and \$103,000 in expenditures in 2016, continues to expand its Youth Initiatives and other educational outreach efforts. Two \$5,000 scholarships are awarded each year to students in natural resources/environmental management fields of study. Approximately \$7,500 in small grants is awarded to organizations holding National Public Lands Day events. PLF sponsors and hosts a biennial Student Congress which brings together approximately 25 graduate students to examine and develop recommendations for future management of the public lands.

The PLF has authored, printed and distributed tens of thousands of copies of *America's Public Lands: origin, history, future*. A major overhaul of the PLF's public website was completed in 2016 and the quarterly *Public Lands Monitor* newsletter was published.

Approximately 90.4% of the 2016 expenses were for educational programs; 7.2% for administration, including insurance, tax preparation and audit; and 2.4% for fundraising.

### **2016 Board of Directors**

All PLF Board of Directors members are elected annually by the membership and serve for a one-year term. All Board of Directors members serve as volunteers without compensation. The Foundation's principal Officers are the President, Vice President, Vice President for Operations, Vice President for D.C. Affairs, Secretary, and Treasurer.

For 2016, officers of the PLF were: Ed Shepard, President; Jesse Juen, Vice President; Beau McClure, Vice President for Operations; Elena Daly, Vice President for DC Affairs; Glen Collins, Secretary; and Dwight Hempel, Treasurer.

Directors at Large were: Tom Allen; Dean Bibles; Jim Currivan; Mike Ferguson; Eric Janes; John Kwiatkowski; Van Manning; Dave Mari; Don Meares; Mat Millenbach; Tim O'Brien; Ed Spang; Anna Steele; George Stone; Rosemary Thomas; Rich Whitley; and Elaine Zielinski.

Two Past Presidents also served on the Board in honorary capacities: Henri Bisson and George Lea.

State Representatives were: Sharon Wilson, Alaska; Beau McClure, Arizona; John Fields, California; David Stout, Colorado; Deane Zeller, Idaho; Kemp Conn, Montana; Ev (Butch) Hayes, Nevada; Curt Jones, New Mexico; Dick Prather, Oregon; Bill Lamb, Utah; Geoff Middaugh, Washington; Bill LeBarron, Wyoming; and Bob Anderson, Midwest and Eastern States.

The PLF Board of Directors held a meeting the day before and the morning after the 2016 PLF annual meeting in Las Cruces, New Mexico to discuss pertinent internal issues, administrative matters, make plans, and approve the PLF budget for 2017.

### **Looking to 2017**

The results of the 2016 election are in and 2017 looks to be a busy year for the PLF to educate and inform the new Administration and Members of Congress about public lands history, context and issues. The PLF is concerned about Executive Branch and legislative initiatives to remove parts of the NSPL from federal government management. The national Republican Party platform for 2016 calls for the Congress to immediately pass universal legislation providing for a timely and orderly mechanism requiring the federal government to convey certain federally controlled public lands to states. The PLF will monitor implementation of this initiative carefully and pursue opportunities to provide knowledge and expertise as to why the NSPL is best managed at the federal level.

### **Further Information**

For further information about the PLF visit [www.publicland.org](http://www.publicland.org), email us at [info@publicland.org](mailto:info@publicland.org) or contact us toll free at 866-985-9636 or 703-935-0916 in the DC metro area.