

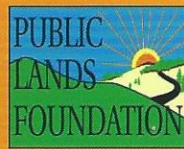
# THE NATION POSSESSED

## The Conflicting Claims on America's Public Lands and the Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Founding of the General Land Office

September 11-14, 2012 at the University of Colorado Boulder

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In September 2012, the Public Lands Foundation and the Center of the American West at the University of Colorado cosponsored "The Nation Possessed" conference commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the General Land Office and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the Homestead Act. The conference featured an array of talks and panel presentations, a student congress, and a roundtable discussion among leading stakeholders. The purpose of these events was to explore the history of the public lands of the United States, to examine past uses and the emerging needs and desires for the public lands, and to consider how the public lands can best continue to meet the needs of the American public well into the future.

The conference opened with a keynote address from Walter Echo-Hawk, a Native American attorney who provided a tribal perspective on the public lands, followed by six panel sessions that covered the history, current uses, and future trends for the use and management of the public lands. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar provided the conference with an invigorating keynote address on the second day.

For the Student Congress, twenty-two students from universities throughout the United States were invited to come together to address the future value, use, and management of the public lands. They were asked to provide a vision of the public lands for the next fifty years from a perspective of the next generation of users and managers. This Student Congress produced a number of recommendations that are highlighted on the second page of this document.

For the roundtable discussion, fourteen prominent stakeholders – representing ranchers, tribal members, outdoor recreation advocates, conservation activists, energy producers, local elected officials, state officeholders, federal policymakers, agency leaders, past administration officials, and scholars – were invited to share their perspective on the public lands, their use, and their management. The ensuing conversation aimed to produce joint recommendations and a shared vision for the public lands for the next fifty years. The roundtable produced ten recommendations, which are highlighted on page three.

Finally, the Public Lands Foundation assessed the recommendations presented by the Student Congress and roundtable and are presenting seven recommendations for the future management and use of the public lands of the United States. These recommendations are intended to assure that the public lands will continue to meet a diverse set of needs and interests for the current generations while maintaining their tradition of accommodating emerging uses and changing values for generations to come. These recommendations are featured on the back page of this document.

A full report on the conference, featuring synopses of panel sessions and keynote addresses as well as more information about the recommendations featured in this document is available online at [www.centerwest.org/thenationpossessed](http://www.centerwest.org/thenationpossessed).



# NEXT-GENERATION PRIORITIES FOR THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

## Student Congress Recommendations

We, the members of the Student Congress at the General Land Office Bicentennial Conference in Boulder, Colorado, representing the next generation of public lands supporters and hailing from diverse regions and backgrounds, will bring innovative ideas, new perspectives, and optimistic energy to discussions about the future of public lands.

Public lands management is an opportunity for the expression of public values - past, present, and future. Science alone should not determine what is right or wrong. Public values should be identified and fundamental to land managers.

In hopes of learning important lessons from the past and in the spirit of stewardship for the next generation, we make the following recommendations to guide the next fifty years of the Bureau of Land Management:

**Section A.** The BLM should strengthen its commitment to partnering with public lands stakeholders.

- The BLM should build capacity for early outreach using multiple venues including new social media to incorporate stakeholders and the public in all stages of decisionmaking. The BLM should aim to engage responsibly, working to provide structure, transparency and leadership in an adaptive management framework.

**Section B.** The BLM should adopt a land ethic that ensures resilience of its lands.

- Resilience is the capacity of a social-ecological system to respond to a disturbance by resisting damage and recovery quickly;
- As public lands are the national inheritance of the people, land users should moderate their impact, through mitigation, reclamation, and/or restoration.

**Section C.** The BLM should focus its uses of new social media and technology toward four goals:

- Increase public awareness of the BLM's contributions to public health, safety, and sustainability across local, state, federal, and even international boundaries.
- Build community and stronger bonds between people and the public lands to support cooperative stewardship.
- Foster public discourse, including gathering input on decisions and plans, collecting data (e.g. mobile apps for citizen science), and developing participation initiatives.
- Enhance training and collaboration opportunities within the BLM and other federal agencies.

**Section D.** Our time as members of the Student Congress has been short and there are many vital issues and opportunities that we believe should be addressed in future discussions by the BLM and public lands stakeholders (including other students and young people):

- Native American and Alaska Native cultures, lifestyles, and traditional lands
- Renewable energy development
- More opportunities for young people
- Interconnection with urban areas
- New opportunities presented by climate change

This is an abridged version of the document produced by the Student Congress. The full text is available online at [www.centerwest.org/thenationpossessed](http://www.centerwest.org/thenationpossessed).



The Nation Possessed: Student Congress  
September 14, 2012 at University of Colorado Boulder

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## The Nation Possessed: Roundtable Conversation

Turning Hindsight into Foresight: The Past & Future of America's Public Lands  
September 14, 2012 at University of Colorado Boulder

# FINDING COMMON GROUND ON THE PUBLIC LANDS

## Roundtable Recommendations for the Future of America's Public Lands

- Promote collaborative decision-making processes that effectively engage stakeholders.** Public lands management decisions are made at busy intersections of conflicting values, uncertain science, and impending legal mandates. To navigate these intersections sensibly, decisionmakers should follow inclusive and participatory processes.
- Federal public land agencies should engage local and tribal governments when making public land decisions, and vice versa.** Meaningful and enduring engagement of federal agencies with local and tribal governments infuses public land management with innovative ideas and legitimacy.
- Federal public land agencies need to collaborate with each other as well.** Today's natural resource issues require federal agencies to work across jurisdictional lines. Agencies must pursue integration so that they can effectively respond to challenges that transcend institutional boundaries.
- Recognize and respect the interconnections among the wellbeing of public lands, rural economies, and private lands.** Most social, economic, and natural resources issues span or transcend our dichotomous "public" and "private" land categories. Land managers should take into account this blurring of boundaries during policy development in order to promote thriving lands, communities, and economies.
- Public land stewardship should be built from an ethic that emphasizes resilience.** To operate in a world of heightened unpredictability and shifting environmental baselines, public land management agencies should employ strategies that foster adaptability and hardiness – in social and ecological systems alike.
- Embrace the next generation and the communication technologies they use.** Boosting young people's awareness of the importance of the public lands requires connecting with those young people in ways that suit their technological predilections. Deft deployment of social media and mobile technologies by public land managers will be critical to this effort.
- Decisionmakers should keep their eyes trained on the future, as well as the past.** Thinking in longer units of time than the next election cycle or the next land use plan takes more than a customary amount of concentration, but doing so can provide critical perspective for decisionmakers attempting to navigate a dynamic present and an unknown future.
- Encourage scientific processes that engage stakeholders.** For science to serve policymakers, it must be relevant, credible, clearly communicated, and often modest in its claims to certainty. Public lands agencies should encourage scientists, stakeholders, and decisionmakers to collaborate in ways that generate this type of science. Decisionmakers should also recognize that scientific data will not answer questions of values.
- Decisionmakers should work to defend funding for environmental monitoring in the face of shrinking budgets.** Environmental monitoring is key to today's adaptive management strategies, which aim to evolve alongside changing ecological, economic, and social conditions. The better the data inputs into the management process, the better the management.
- People are as important as process.** The federal lands agencies should be adequately staffed to carry out their important responsibilities. Increasing bureau personnel would ease and enhance the generational changing-of-the-guard expected to occur in the next decade. New hires should strengthen interagency and stakeholder collaboration and push innovation and efficiency.

A fuller discussion of these recommendations can be found online at [www.centerwest.org/thenationpossessed](http://www.centerwest.org/thenationpossessed).

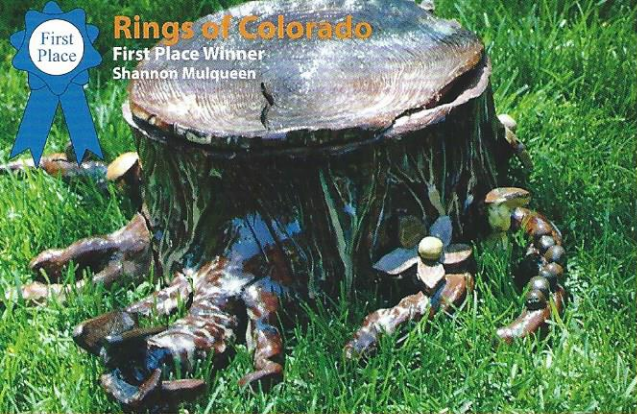
## PARTICIPANTS

- Patty Limerick (Moderator)**, Chair of the Board and Faculty Director, Center of the American West
- Bob Abbey**, Former Director of the BLM
- Steve Allred**, Former Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals
- Bob Bennett**, Former Senator from Utah
- Michele (Mike) Bloom**, Colorado State Land Commissioner
- Dale Bosworth**, Former Chief of the U.S. Forest Service
- Jim Caswell**, Former Director of BLM
- Adam Cramer**, General Counsel for Outdoor Alliance
- Art Goodtimes**, San Miguel County Commissioner
- Lois Herbst**, Wyoming Rancher and Former President of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association
- Luther Propst**, Executive Director of The Sonoran Institute
- Lynn Scarlett**, Former Deputy Secretary of the Interior
- Barbara A. Sutteer**, Former Superintendent of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument
- Johanna Wald**, Senior Attorney at Natural Resources Defense Council
- Duane Zavadil**, Senior Vice President of Government and Regulatory Affairs at Bill Barrett Corporation

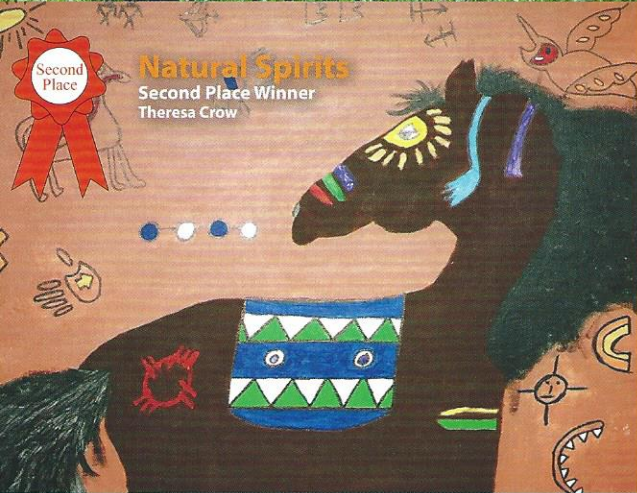
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For more information visit us on the web at [www.centerwest.org/thenationpossessed](http://www.centerwest.org/thenationpossessed)

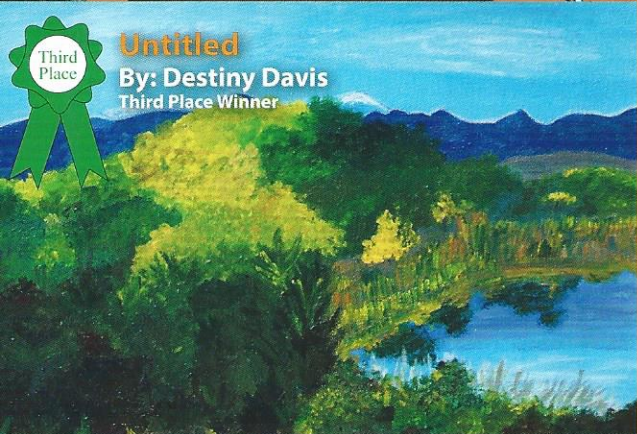




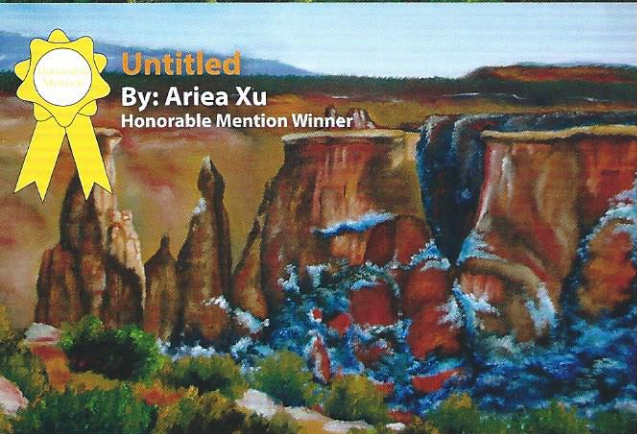
**Rings of Colorado**  
First Place Winner  
Shannon Mulqueen



**Natural Spirits**  
Second Place Winner  
Theresa Crow



**Untitled**  
By: Destiny Davis  
Third Place Winner



**Untitled**  
By: Aria Xu  
Honorable Mention Winner

2012 Statewide Student Art Contest Winners

# PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF THE PUBLIC LANDS AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

Policy Recommendations Prepared by the Public Lands Foundation

Based on the events and discussions at The Nation Possessed conference, particularly the recommendations offered by the Student Congress and the roundtable participants, the Public Lands Foundation has developed seven policy recommendations for the future management and use of the public lands of the United States. The Public Lands Foundation is a nonprofit tax exempt organization that advocates the management, protection, development and enhancement of the National System of Public Lands, which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management within the U.S. Department of the Interior. These recommendations are intended to assure that the public lands remain public and continue to serve the American public for generations to come.

1. **The BLM Director and President of the Public Lands Foundation should work with the Secretary of the Interior to charter a Blue Ribbon Panel that will develop and recommend a land ethic to guide future management of the diverse public lands.** The Blue Ribbon Panel, which should include federal policymakers, state and local officials, tribal leaders, youth, futurists, and stakeholders, will be charged with formulating an updated land ethic for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that encourages engaged citizenship by recognizing humans' coexistence within a broad ecological community as well as a diverse global society. The land ethic recommended by the panel should guide and be incorporated into policy or appropriate legislation.
2. **The BLM and Public Lands Foundation should sponsor a biennial Student Congress to provide regular assessments of the future of public land management.** The success of the Student Congress at The Nation Possessed conference demonstrated the thoughtfulness of the next generation of users and managers and brought a perspective that only they can provide. The Congress should focus on emerging issues and solutions best addressed by the best and brightest of the next generation and provide recommendations to the BLM.
3. **Public lands should remain in public ownership to meet the current and future needs and desires of the American public.** The public lands are the only federal estate that can effectively fill this role. The value of the public lands – as articulated in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 – must be recognized, reaffirmed, and maintained for all time.
4. **Land management agencies should use current and emerging technologies to reach all sectors of public land stakeholders in soliciting input on land management issues and policy decisions.** Recent trends in technology have demonstrated that traditional methods of connecting with stakeholders become outdated in a very short time span. As was recommended by the Student Congress and the roundtable participants, agencies must stay up to date with the general public in communication methods in order to manage the public lands effectively.
5. **Land management agencies need to use all available methods to consider potential future uses (including protection) of our nation's natural resources.** This includes considerations of the changing demographics of our population. The change agents that will influence how public lands are managed will continue to change. As was recommended by the Student Congress and the roundtable participants, shifts in uses and attitudes need to be recognized and accommodated in future legislation, policy, and practice to effectively guide public land management for the next century.
6. **The BLM should publicize and support successful outcome-based management initiatives with permittees,** particularly in situations where discussions and negotiations revolve around the future condition of the landscape after the activity is concluded. The activity might be oil and gas leasing, off-highway vehicle use, or a large outdoor festival. An example of this approach is the Burning Man Festival held in the Black Rock Desert each year, which is guided by – and successfully applies – the principle of “leave no trace.”
7. **Congress and the Secretary of the Interior should continue to ensure that the National Landscape Conservation System remains an integral part of the BLM's mission.** The NLCS provides a new emphasis on conservation within the BLM's approach to land management. Units included in the NLCS can be managed in a more flexible manner than similar units managed by other federal agencies and therefore often are more acceptable to state and local governments.

To learn more about the 2012 Statewide Student Art Contest visit [www.centerwest.org](http://www.centerwest.org)



For more info on the Public Lands Foundation: [www.publicland.org](http://www.publicland.org)



For more info on the Center of the American West: [www.centerwest.org](http://www.centerwest.org)



For more info on the CU Boulder: [www.colorado.edu](http://www.colorado.edu)