



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2017 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 public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior.<sup>1</sup> 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.

Our successful efforts would not be possible without the generous 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 Public Lands

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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. 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 in that it more clearly describes the PLF's role to potential donors.

in public hands, professionally and sustainably managed for responsible common use and enjoyment.

### **PLF's Goals**

The goals of the PLF are to:

- Keep the BLM-administered lands 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 of 1976 (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 public lands.
- Encourage contact, communication and coordination among public lands 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 public lands 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-administered lands, including:
  - PLF advocacy efforts on public land issues by such actions as testimony before Congressional committees, writing opinion editorials and letters to the editor, through our website, blog and social media.
  - Speak out for the 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.
  - Promoting and facilitating contacts, communications and cooperation with public land users and interest groups, and between BLM retirees.
- Publish "The Public Lands Monitor" quarterly and post it to our website.
- Publish the "Register of BLM Retirees" biennially and distribute it to those PLF members who have a BLM affiliation.
- 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, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.
- Maintain and operate the private "Remembering BLM" group Facebook page.
- Record land management history and recognize accomplishments.
- Continue to expand the PLF Archives and facilitate 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 "The Past and the Future" partnership project.
- 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 Founder's 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 PLF 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 BLM-managed lands 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 PLF members are national issue or program leaders.

## **Major PLF Activities for 2017**

### **Recognizing PLF's 30<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary**

2017 marked our thirtieth-year anniversary as an organization. We added the 30 Year Logo seen on page one of this report to our website, social media pages, and mailings of the Monitor to commemorate the occasion.

### **Annual Meeting**

The 30th annual meeting was held in Salt Lake City, Utah and was attended by more than 70 PLF members, BLM employees and members of the public. The theme of the meeting was "Urban Interface with Public Lands." The meeting included a field trip conducted by the BLM's Utah West Desert District Office and Salt Lake Field Office, and a general session with seven speakers. In addition, PLF held its traditional banquet dinner and awards ceremony. The Board of Directors also conducted its business meeting during the week.

### **Planning for the Fourth Biennial Student Congress**

The PLF initiated planning and coordination with the BLM's Oregon and headquarters office to sponsor the fourth Biennial Student Congress on Public Land Management. In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the National Trails Act, the Student Congress will be held in Baker City, Oregon from August 22-25, 2018.

### **Scholarship Awards**

The PLF awarded George Lea Founder's Scholarships in the amount of \$5,000 each to Katelyn Gille, a junior from Michigan State University, studying Environmental Studies and Sustainability and Kaitlyn Williams, a graduate student at Sul Ross University studying Range and Wildlife Management.

### **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 2017, PLF helped to fund 24 events and projects that occurred on National Public Lands. A total of \$9,095 was budgeted to purchase food, supplies and materials to support NPLD activities in nine States.

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

This project is organized by the Arizona Chapter of the PLF and 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. The interviews of the Pathways participants will be used 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. During 2017, the PLF was able to match 17 BLM employees and retirees for interviews.

## **Advocacy Activities**

- **BLM Funding.** PLF president Jesse Juen submitted written testimony on the proposed BLM FY 2018 budget to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies. PLF supported:
  - The President's proposal to fund wildland fire suppression at the full ten-year average.
  - Funding requests to provide vital energy needs from traditional energy sources and renewable energy sources, including oil and gas inspection and enforcement activities.
  - Continuation of challenge cost share funding for partnership projects.
  - Infrastructure maintenance funding for the BLM and public lands.
  - Efforts to get youth involved in the outdoors and to gain an appreciation for the resources the nation offers.
  - More immediate action to address the population problem of wild horses and burros.
  - Establishment of the BLM Foundation which may help bring additional funding to collaborative projects.

The PLF raised concerns about the President's proposed cuts to Interior Department funding and reductions of employees.

- **Issues Management.** 2017 was another active year for PLF advocacy. The PLF monitored events during the year and issued letters, testified, provided written testimony and policy materials on multiple issues. These included:
  - Letter to Congress in support of Ryan Zinke's nomination to become Secretary of the Interior.
  - Letter to the House Rules Committee opposing the language in House Resolution 5 which undervalues public lands during conveyances and the revival of the Holman Rule, which politicizes the federal civil service workforce.
  - Op-Ed in the Hill urging then Secretary-nominee Zinke to support the recently-issued "Planning 2.0" rule which was facing review under the Congressional Review Act. The PLF's Arizona Chapter also sent a letter to Arizona Senators McCain and Flake on this topic.
  - Letter to Secretary Zinke urging selection of a BLM Director who has extensive knowledge, background and experience in public lands management.
  - Letter to Congress cosigned by four other federal land management retiree

- organizations opposing H.R. 622, a bill to terminate the law enforcement functions of the U. S. Forest Service and the BLM.
- Letter to Secretary Zinke urging quick review and continuation of numerous advisory boards and councils which benefit the BLM.
  - Letter to Secretary Zinke expressing PLF's concerns over the Presidential Executive Order on the Review of Designations Under the Antiquities Act.
  - Letter to Congressional appropriators supporting the removal of restrictions on BLM regarding the sale of excess wild horses and burros.
  - Letter to Secretary Zinke conveying PLF's thoughts on departmental and BLM reorganization and opposing proposals aimed at relocating BLM's headquarters to the West.
  - Letter to the Secretary from PLF's Arizona Chapter supporting maintaining existing designations for four national monuments located in Arizona.
  - Letter to Secretary Zinke on improving land use planning efficiencies.
  - The PLF joined two other federal retiree groups in a letter to Secretary Zinke criticizing his disparaging remarks about Departmental employees.
  - Letter to the Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies regarding the proposed FY 2018 BLM budget in which PLF opposed the Administration's requested cuts.
  - PLF testified before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources and sent a letter to the full committee Chairman opposing the ONSHORE Act bill.
  - Testimony to the House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on proposed Interior Department reorganization.
  - Collaboration with the Public Lands Working Group, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and introductory meetings with incoming officials and staff in Interior and BLM offices.
  - PLF participated in the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Northwest Outdoor Writers Association Conference in Sandpoint, Idaho and sat on a panel discussion entitled "For Sale: Public Lands." The PLF also joined the association.
  - PLF Wyoming representatives conducted outreach efforts with state and congressional officials on a wide range of issues including the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative, sage grouse management plans, the BLM's Planning 2.0 rule, national monument review and the Antiquities Act, and wild horses and burros.

**Administrative Activities.** PLF administrative activities in 2017 included:

- Conducting quarterly conference calls between the PLF BOD and the BLM Director's Office and other leaders.
- Maintaining and updating our website, including the Memorial Wall, and our social media pages.
- Initiating a discussion on PLF member perspectives and experiences on past Interior/BLM reorganizations on our website's blog.
- Shifted management of PLF's Archives located in Phoenix, Arizona from Glen Collins to Connie Stone.

- The PLF's Grants Team and Fundraising Committee stepped up efforts to secure financial resources for PLF activities. Specifically, PLF sought grants and donations targeted to support the 4<sup>th</sup> Student Congress to be held in 2018 and to award the two George Lea Founder's Scholarships. The PLF also continued fundraising through "Give at Work" campaigns including the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and three State Employee Charity Campaigns. PLF notified retired federal employees through our website and social media that they are now eligible to give through the CFC.
- The PLF established a Grazing Regulations Committee to monitor any proposed changes to BLM's grazing regulations and update our position statement on grazing.

### **Recognizing Leadership, Performance and Volunteers**

PLF recognized the outstanding performance of present and past BLM employees and a PLF volunteer. This was our 30th 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 recent BLM retirees Ray Brady and Jeff Holdren at the PLF's Awards Banquet.

*Outstanding Public Land Professional Award – Managerial/Administrative Category:* PLF presented its 2016 award to Gera Ashton, the Deputy State Director for Business and Support Services in the BLM Arizona State Office. The award was presented in April at BLM's Washington Office.

*Outstanding Public Land Professional Award – Technical/Operational Category:* The PLF presented its 2016 award to Shari Ketcham, a Wildlife Biologist in BLM's Lake Havasu Field Office. The award was presented in April during the BLM Pathways course held in Phoenix.

*PLF Volunteer of the Year Award -* PLF's Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Geoff Middaugh for his willingness to assume the duties of Secretary for the organization.

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

*Landscape Stewardship Award:* PLF's 2017 Landscape Stewardship Award was presented to Sandy and Geoff Freethey. The Freetheys, who were nominated by the BLM Moab Field Office, have devoted untold time and effort towards managing responsible recreation on BLM-administered lands in the Moab area.

*Landscape Stewardship Certificate of Appreciation:* PLF's 2017 Landscape Stewardship Certificate of Appreciation was presented to the Soda Fire Partners, which was nominated by the BLM Idaho State Office. The Soda Fire Partners is a

coalition of Federal, state, and local agencies and private land owners who have developed and implemented stabilization, rehabilitation, and fuels projects across the landscape of southwestern Idaho and southeastern Oregon.

### **Financial Report**

The PLF is financially sound with total assets of \$386,000 as of 12/31/2017. Membership dues totaling \$11,600 were received in 2017 from 587 paid members. Direct donations to PLF totaled \$18,800 and \$7,000 was received from Give at Work campaigns. On the expenditure side, the top five expenditure categories for 2017 were scholarship grants, National Public Lands Day Small Grants, annual meeting, printing, and travel. For 2017, 82% of income was directed to program activities and 18% was used for general management and fundraising. The PLF's external accountant completed its review of our finances for 2016. No material defects were identified.

### **2017 Board of Directors**

The PLF Board of Directors amended our bylaws to provide that PLF presidents will be elected to serve a two-year term. All other 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 2017, PLF officers were: Jesse Juen, President; Don Simpson, Vice President; Beau McClure, Vice President for Operations; Elena Daly, Vice President for DC Affairs; Geoff Middaugh, Secretary; and Dwight Hempel, Treasurer.

Directors at Large were: Tom Allen; Dean Bibles; Mackenzie Case; Glen Collins; Jim Currivan; John Fend; Mike Ferguson; Eric Janes; John Kwiatkowski; Van Manning; Dave Mari; Don Meares; Mat Millenbach; Tim O'Brien; Linda Rundell; Ed Spang; George Stone; Rich Whitley; Maggie Wyatt; and Elaine Zielinski.

Three Past Presidents also served on the Board in honorary capacities: Henri Bisson, George Lea, and Ed Shepard.

State Representatives were: Sharon Wilson, Alaska; Beau McClure, Arizona; John Fields, California; David Stout, Colorado; Anna Steele, Idaho; Jim Binando, Montana; Ev (Butch) Hayes, Nevada; Rosemary Thomas, New Mexico; Dick Prather, Oregon; Bill Lamb, Utah; Geoff Middaugh, Washington; Bill LeBarron, Wyoming; and Bob Anderson, Midwest and Eastern States.

### **Looking to 2018**

Advocacy will once again be a primary focus for the PLF in 2018. As of this writing, the Trump Administration has yet to nominate a candidate for the BLM Director position. Secretary Zinke has announced his intent to reorganize the Interior Department including establishing regional centers for Interior agency offices (and, perhaps, with outside agencies). There also have been rumblings of Administration support for

relocating the BLM headquarters (the Washington Office) to a location in a Western State and there are pending Congressional bills to do so. Funding for the remainder of FY 2018 has not been addressed by Congress, and the fate of the Administration's proposed funding cuts and reduction of Interior Department and BLM employees is not known. The BLM Foundation established by Congress has yet to be formally established by Secretary Zinke. Work will soon begin on the FY 2019 budget requests for Interior and BLM. These variables remain major focuses of the PLF. The PLF will continue to seek opportunities to support the Administration and Congress where it can by communicating recommendations reflecting our combined knowledge, expertise and experience. Where PLF disagrees, it will communicate and explain our position and rationale for it.

In addition, public land management and underlying laws, regulations and policies will likely face continued scrutiny by the Administration and Congress. These are most likely on controversial topics such as the Antiquities Act, National Monument designations, sage grouse habitat, wild horses and burros, renewable and non-renewable energy development and initiatives aimed at shifting management responsibilities of the public lands away from the Federal government. Of course, there are always surprises that develop. The PLF, along with its partners, will continue to monitor activities related to these land management issues and weigh in when and where it can.

2018 will also be an active year for the PLF in that it will partner with the BLM to hold the 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Student Congress. Both our Annual Meeting and Board of Directors meeting will be held in Montana between September 11-14. The theme for the meeting and city location will be announced in 2018. The Board of Directors decided at its 2017 meeting to focus on strategic planning for the PLF during its 2018 meeting.

### **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.