



PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

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.¹ As a national, non-profit organization with 578 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. The PLF is an “all-volunteer” organization. No officers or members of the Board of Directors are paid.

Our Vision

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.

Our Mission

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

Our 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).

¹ 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.

- 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.

Major PLF Activities During 2018

Annual Meeting

The PLF held its 2018 annual meeting in Billings, Montana between September 11-14. Over 60 people attended. The theme of the meeting was "Access to Public Lands." The theme was timely in that the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (of which the PLF is a partner) had recently issued a report on this topic. The general meeting had excellent speakers offering their diverse perspectives on public land access and the extent to which it is or is not a problem. Our field tour included visits to the Yellowstone River where William Clark made his return trip towards St. Louis in 1806, 4 Dances Natural Area, Yellowstone Wildlife Management Area, and Pompeys Pillar National Monument. In addition, the Board of Directors held a one-and-a-half-day meeting with a major focus on strategic planning.

Fourth Biennial Student Congress

The PLF and its partners held the fourth student congress in Baker City, Oregon. The theme for the Student Congress was the 50th Anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers and National Trails Acts. Twenty-eight students participated from twelve states and Canada. Some 65 students had applied to participate.

National Association of Forest Service Retirees

PLF President Ed Shepard attended the Association's Board meeting. The forum provided both organizations opportunities to learn how each operates, what they do, and how they are governed. Future collaboration and partnership opportunities were discussed including co-sponsoring the next Student Congress.

Scholarship Awards

The PLF awarded two George Lea Founder's Scholarships in the amount of \$5,000 each to students from Salish Kootenai College and Montana State University. Twenty students had applied.

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. The BLM did not make its normal \$2,500 grant to the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), the primary sponsor and coordinator for NPLD. Consequently, the NEEF did not add its \$2,500 grant to BLM's grant, providing \$5,000 to PLF for distribution. In recent years the PLF has been adding an additional \$2,500 to the BLM/NEEF grant, for a total of \$7,500 for the NPLD Small Grants Program. Without the BLM seed money, the other funds did not materialize and only leftover funds from prior years were used to fund 2018 NPLD activities. In 2018, PLF helped to fund eight events in six states and provided \$1,850 to support over 200 volunteers. States that participated are Arizona (Safford); California (Susanville, Palm Springs); Colorado (Tres Rios Field Office, Gunnison); Nevada (Elko); Eastern States; and Washington (Spokane).

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, such as mentoring, that can benefit both participants. The interviews of the Pathways participants are used to help the PLF and the BLM learn more about new employees including their goals and interests and the challenges facing them in today's BLM. The interviews of the retirees are retained as a historical record. During 2018, the PLF was able to match eleven BLM employees and retirees for interviews.

Western Regional Strategy Committee Meeting (Wildland Fire)

PLF participated in a three-day committee meeting in Salt Lake City on wildland fire coordination. The meeting was hosted by the BLM and Utah Department of Natural Resources and included presentations on Utah's several fire programs and partnerships. A field trip was included to multiple sites, including Dugway Proving Grounds. In addition, the committee held discussions on ways to further the cause of the National Cohesive Wildfire Strategy.

Advocacy Activities

The PLF partnered with like-minded groups on issues such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund reauthorization, fire management, Wild Horse and Burro Management, and access to public lands. In addition, the PLF closely monitored former Secretary Zinke's departmental reorganization plan and proposed moves of the BLM's headquarters to the west.

Letters and Other Statements

The PLF issued the following letters and statements during 2018:

- Bundy court case follow-up actions letter to Secretary Zinke.
- Renewable Energy Program Support letter to the BLM Acting Director.
- BLM Law Enforcement Program support and recommendations on program changes
 - Letter to the BLM Acting Director.
 - Statement to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining.
- Comments to the Council on Environmental Quality on potential revisions to NEPA regulations (in partnership with the NAFSR).

Position Statements

The PLF released position statements on Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Management and on Wilderness Study Areas.

BLM History Publication

PLF members contributed content to a new BLM publication about the BLM's history entitled "Our Heritage, Our Future – The BLM and America's Public Lands."

Administrative Activities

PLF administrative activities in 2018 included:

- Publishing quarterly editions of our newsletter, the Public Lands Monitor.
- Conducting quarterly conference calls between the PLF Board of Directors and the BLM Director's Office and other leaders.
- Maintaining and updating our website, including the Memorial Wall, and our social media pages.

Awards and Recognition

PLF recognized the outstanding performance of present and past BLM employees and a PLF volunteer.

Lifetime Service Awards were presented to Tom Allen and Pete Culp at the PLF's Awards Banquet.

Special recognition was given to Vice President for Operations Beau McClure for the countless hours of work he volunteers to keep the PLF running smoothly.

The PLF Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Vice-President Don Simpson.

Outstanding Public Land Professional Award – Managerial/Administrative Category was presented to Glen Guenther, Upper Snake Assistant Field Manager.

Outstanding Public Land Professional Award – Technical/Operational Category was presented to Cindy Frits, Supervisory Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Specialist, Boise District Office.

Landscape Stewardship Awards were presented to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Colorado Canyons Association, and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks.

Financial Summary

The PLF is financially sound with total assets of \$307,000 as of the end of 2018. Membership dues totaling \$13,000 were received from 578 paying members. Direct donations to the PLF totaled \$31,100, and \$7,300 was received from Give at Work campaigns. On the expenditure side, the top five expenditure categories for 2018 were the 4th Student Congress, scholarship grants, annual meeting, the Public Lands Monitor newsletter, and postage/mailing. For 2018, 85% of income was directed to program activities and 15% was used for general management and fundraising.

2018 Officers and Board of Directors Members

The PLF's principal Officers are the President, Vice President, Vice President for Operations, Vice President for D.C. Affairs, Secretary, and Treasurer. For 2018, PLF officers were: Ed Shepard, 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; Ray Brady; Mackenzie Case (Student Congress representative); Glen Collins; Jim Currivan; John Fend; Mike Ferguson; Eric Janes; John Kwiatkowski; Van Manning; Dave Mari; Mat Millenbach; Tim O'Brien; Ed Spang; George Stone; Rosemary Thomas; Rich Whitley; Maggie Wyatt; and Elaine Zielinski.

Three PLF Past Presidents also served on the Board in honorary capacities: George Lea (PLF Founder), Henri Bisson, and Jesse Juen.

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; Jesse Juen, New Mexico; Dick Prather, Oregon; Bill Lamb, Utah; Geoff Middaugh, Washington; Bill LeBarron, Wyoming; and Bob Anderson, Midwest and Eastern States.

Looking to 2019

As this annual report is being written:

- The 2018-2019 partial government shutdown over funding for a southwest border wall is still underway and significantly affecting the Department of the Interior and the BLM with many employees in furlough status.
- The 116th Congress just began with the Democrats assuming leadership of the House of Representatives.
- The Trump Administration continues to be in turmoil as reflected by high turnover in Cabinet-level positions, White House staff, and multiple investigations.
- Secretary Zinke resigned at the end of 2018, and President Trump has not yet nominated a replacement.
- President Trump still has not nominated a candidate for BLM Director.

Given the above, it's difficult (if not impossible) to project what issues will develop where the PLF can and should be involved. For example, the status of former Secretary Zinke's reorganization plan for the Interior Department and proposed move of the BLM's headquarters to a western state is uncertain.

PLF President Ed Shepard has recently issued statements in support of ending the partial government shutdown and expressing PLF's concerns about the shutdown's impacts to furloughed employees and their families and a request to all PLF members to show support to furloughed BLM employees however they can.

Internally, the PLF will continue to focus on its strategic planning efforts, including more detailed workplans, reviewing its Board of Directors size and composition, and committee structure. Membership development in terms of size and involvement/volunteering will also be a major focus of the Board.

Our 2019 annual meeting is scheduled for September 10-13 in Reno, Nevada.

Further Information

For further information about the PLF visit www.publicland.org, follow us on social media, email us at info@publicland.org, or contact us toll free at 866-985-9636 or 703-935-0916 in the Washington, DC Metro area.