

# ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

*Public Lands Foundation*



*The Wave*



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# Why Advocacy?

Every year, local, regional and national decisions are made by Congress and Federal Agencies that affect the future of the Public Lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. These decisions impact many different publics. As a member of the PLF your help is needed to reach out and be an effective voice in promoting the BLM-administered public lands to ensure that they are utilized in a combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people.

The PLF's mission is to advocate and work for the retention of the BLM-administered public lands in federal ownership, unless as a result of the land use planning procedure provided for in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), it is determined that disposal of a particular parcel will serve the national interest. These lands are to be managed professionally and sustainably for responsible common use and enjoyment by the American people. However, we depend on help to advance the issues that directly impact our public lands across the country. The PLF partners with like-minded groups on issues such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund reauthorization, fire management, Wild Horse and Burro Management, opposition to relocate BLM headquarters and access to public lands. In addition, the PLF closely monitors actions taken in the Department of the Interior that beneficially or negatively impact the BLM and its administration of the public lands. Assistance from our members and supporters to help us carry out this mission is very important.

Policymakers want to hear from constituents. In advocacy, there is truly strength in numbers and we need advocates from all PLF members like you.

## **Become an Advocate**

As a PLF member, you are the ideal advocate for our public lands. You are uniquely suited to convey to your members of Congress how essential your public lands are in your community. You have the power to educate members about the economic and social impacts that these lands bring to your community throughout the year. Without your help, your member of Congress may not realize the ability of public lands to support jobs, improve health, provide a sanctuary for our natural and cultural resources, and engage our future generations in the great outdoors. We want to make it easy for you to take action to build relationships with your representatives' offices and help preserve America's legacy for future generations.

It may sound daunting but becoming an advocate is easy. It's as simple as making a phone call, writing a letter, sending an email or tweeting a short message to your congressional delegate. We've put together some resources that will walk you through the advocacy process. Listed below are ways to get in touch with your Members of Congress.

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# Step 1: Contact Information

## House of Representatives

*Locate your representative:*

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

*Contact Information:*

<https://www.house.gov/representatives>

## Senate

*Locate your state senator:*

[https://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm)

*Search by state and click on the link for contact information*



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# Step 2: Get in Touch

## 1. Make a Phone Call

Calling your senator or representative's office in Washington, D.C. is the most effective way to ensure that your voice is heard. Don't be surprised when your Senator or Representative does not personally answer the phone— they rely on their staff to field calls and talk to constituents. They'll pass along your message.

If you don't know your representative's or senator's D.C. phone number, call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121, and ask to be connected. Contacting local offices is also an option.

Here are some tips to keep in mind before you make the call:

1. Introduce yourself and include where you are from.
2. Make the phone call personal and mention your experience as a former BLM employee and PLF member.
3. Express your concern or issue and ask your Member of Congress to take action.
4. Be polite, honest, professional and non-political.
5. Thank the person you are speaking to for their time.



## **2. Write a Letter**

Personal messages from constituents can be a very effective way of communicating with your legislators. Since you can always use information you have found through various sources, you should write your letter in your own words.

A few tips:

1. Identify yourself as a PLF member and clarify your expertise as a former BLM employee.
2. Be clear and concise about the action you would like to be taken.
3. Stick to one topic.
4. Be persistent and follow-up after submission.
5. Do not use form letters.
6. Always include your name and address to make it clear that you live in the relevant district or state.
7. Always be courteous

## **3. Send an Email**

Although House and Senate offices receive hundreds or thousands of calls, emails or letters on a topic, each one is counted and has the potential to make a difference.

When a Member of Congress is undecided, the number of

communications his/her office receives for or against an issue often contributes to how he/she ultimately votes.

Once you've identified your elected officials, visit their individual websites for an email address. When drafting your email, keep the following tips in mind:

1. Include your name and address at the top of the email.
2. Make sure your message is personal. Mention your experience working in BLM and as a PLF member.
3. Be clear about your position and what you'd like to happen.
4. Be honest, polite, professional and non-political.
5. Avoid email attachments.
6. Proofread your e-mail before sending.

#### **4. Use Social Media**

Social media is not very effective and generally ignored by the staff since they receive large volumes of social media each day. However, when you comment on your legislator's Facebook page or send a tweet, other constituents can read your message. This may spark a dialogue. It could also help increase



awareness about the issue you're raising and build support for your cause. Twitter is a particularly effective tool to reach out to your elected representatives. Nearly every Member of Congress has a Twitter account, and they use it frequently to keep in touch with their constituents and follow the day's trending stories.

Here are a few tips:

1. Make sure your message is clear and concise.
2. Make sure to use relevant hashtags, e.g., #PublicLandsinPublicHands.
3. Remember to tweet at your Member of Congress using their Twitter handle. Use the @ symbol, then follow with their Twitter handle (often their first and last name, as in @SherrodBrown). You can find your legislators' Twitter handles by checking these lists at the sites below:

### **House of Representatives**

<https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/members-of-congress/members?lang=en>

### **Senate**

<https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/senators/members?lang=en>

## About the PLF

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. As a national, non-profit organization with about 600 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.

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. 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.

## **Appendix**

### **Talking Points**

When you have concerns about how the public lands are managed or actions taken that would negatively or positively impact these lands you should express your concern in a clear and forceful way. When PLF has an issue that needs to be brought before the congressional delegations, a letter will be sent to the members on talking points or actions that are felt needed to protect the public lands. These talking points can provide the dialog that can be used to contact your Representative or Senator. However, these talking points are suggestions that you can eliminate or expand as you feel appropriate.

# Sample Scripts for Advocacy

## Phone Call

“Good morning. My name is [Ann Smith] and I’m a constituent who lives in [Billings, Montana]. Please let [Senator Brown] know that I’m a supporter/not supporter of the (issue of concern) and would like the [Senator/Representative] to support/not support or vote to reauthorize/not reauthorize (the issue of concern). I am a member of the Public Land Foundation to Protect America's public lands and a retired (state position) who has worked at (BLM Office), then explain your concern.

Thank you for your time.

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## Letter/Email

Your Name

Your Address

Your Phone Number

Dear [Senator Brown],

My name is [Ann Smith] and I live in [Billings, Montana]. I am writing today to express my support/opposition/review, etc for the (issue of concern) and urge you to vote to (support, oppose, review, etc)

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Your

Name

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## Tweets

-- Congress must (#Issue of Concern). [#ProtectOurPublicLands](#)

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# Contact Us

You can also find more information about the Public Land Foundation at:

Washington DC Area: 703-935-0916

Toll Free: 866-985-9636

FAX: 888-204-9814

P.O. Box 7226, Arlington, VA 22207-0226

Email: [info@publicland.org](mailto:info@publicland.org)