



THE DISMANTLING OF THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM) - A THREAT TO YOUR PUBLIC LANDS -

- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) that manages 243 million acres of public land, primarily in the west.
- DOI submitted a reorganization plan to Congress that will dismantle the BLM Headquarters in Washington, D.C. The BLM Director and Assistant Directors will move to Grand Junction, CO and some 250 policy specialists and senior managers will move to 11 western locations. A skeletal staff will be all that remains in Washington, DC.
- This is an organizational plan designed to fail. It will: (1) create a weak and ineffective BLM management structure; (2) essentially eliminate interdisciplinary collaboration and coordination in development and implementation of national policies; (3) reduce national level coordination with other federal land and resource management agencies; (4) create a land management organization that will be driven by *local interests* rather than *national interests*; (5) constrain the ability to work with national constituency groups; and, (6) weaken the BLM's influence in national public land policies in the Nation's Capitol.
- The Public Lands Foundation (PLF) and other public interest organizations oppose the plan. In addition to the reorganization plan, the BLM still has no permanent Director nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate.
- Together, these actions will sufficiently weaken the BLM's ability to influence the long-term management of the public lands for all Americans. Every citizen, as an owner of the public lands, will have fewer opportunities to be engaged in the national policy discussions regarding the management of these lands.

Let's address some myths that supporters of Interior's plans are using as a basis for their actions.

Myth: *All decisions regarding the use and management of the public lands are made in Washington, D.C.*

Fact: **Approximately 97% of the BLM workforce is currently located on-the-ground in Field, District and State Offices through out the west.** The BLM State Directors and Field Managers have the delegated authority to make land-use decisions, leasing and permitting decisions, conduct monitoring and compliance activities, provide public land user assistance, and facilitate coordination with State, tribal and local government. Only 3% of the workforce is located in Washington, D.C. and is focused on policy, oversight, and coordination at the national level with other federal agencies, Congress, and national public interest groups. A consequence of the reorganization plan will be that more public land use decisions will be made by politically appointed officials within the Department of the Interior without the benefit of input and advice from experienced BLM resource professionals and managers in Washington, D.C.

Myth: *Moving the BLM Headquarters and employees to the west will make the agency more responsive to the need of western constituents.*

Fact: **The BLM workforce currently located in the west is located in 11 State Offices and some 160 District and Field Offices.** These offices currently work with local communities and western constituents on a daily basis and make the day-to-day decisions on management and use of the public lands. The reorganization will not enhance the current organizational structure.

(over)



Myth: *The public lands would be better managed if transferred to the States.*

Fact: The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 requires that the public lands be retained in long-term Federal ownership unless it is determined that disposal of a specific parcel will serve the national interest. The public lands are owned by all Americans and ensure access for future generations to our nation's natural, scenic, recreational, and cultural resources.

Myth: *The public lands are only managed for mineral development.*

Fact: The BLM is a multiple-use agency that provides for the balanced and sustainable use of a wide variety of resources on the public lands, including diverse outdoor recreation opportunities. The BLM's experienced and professional multi-disciplinary staff of resource specialists and managers is involved in the management of these resources for all Americans.

Myth: *Moving the BLM Washington office to the west will provide more boots on-the-ground.*

Fact: The senior resource specialists that would be moved across the west would continue to provide program guidance, oversight, and technical advice to the BLM Director and Assistant Directors. They would provide this function from several western locations, however they would not be doing boots on-the-ground permitting or other work. If the intent is to place more boots-on-the-ground it would be more effective to hire additional field staff.

Myth: *Moving the BLM Headquarters to Grand Junction will make it easier for western constituents and stakeholders to meet with BLM Headquarters officials and cut costs.*

Fact: Anyone in the west visiting the Headquarters office in Grand Junction, CO will still be traveling. Accessing many western towns is at least as time consuming and costly for travelers than Washington, D.C., if not more so. There is no guarantee that travel to a western location would be nonstop from other western cities and currently there are no nonstop flights between Grand Junction, CO and Washington, DC. This plan will also increase agency costs, as each employee moved will incur some \$100,000 in move expenses and will also require additional work related travel back to Washington, D.C. and to the various office locations in the west to coordinate and collaborate with other relocated Headquarters staff.

Myth: *Moving the BLM Headquarters to Grand Junction, CO and dispersing Washington Office employees throughout the west is beneficial in that it will increase the western culture of the BLM.*

Fact: The BLM has a significant western culture with 97% of its employees living and working daily in towns throughout the west. The BLM has a long history of career development among its senior employees. Most begin their careers in the west and the Washington Office benefits from their field and program operations knowledge. At the same time, they learn about work at the Department, OMB and Congress. They often return to the field organization, often as new managers, and benefit the field organization. The reorganization plan would eliminate this development path. It is also anticipated that a large number of experienced senior resource specialists will leave the BLM as a result of this move of the Washington Office to the west and that there will be a significant loss of expertise in the agency for many years.

Myth: *The Headquarters move will improve communications, services, and efficiency.*

Fact: An agency that does not have its Directorate and senior policy specialists located in Washington, D.C. will be out of touch with national policy makers and other federal land and resource management agencies and will quickly become inefficient and ultimately irrelevant. There are no efficiencies with the Directorate and senior policy specialists working in different time zones and a travel day away from Washington, D.C.