



# PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

## **Background**

The Public Lands Foundation (PLF), founded in 1987, is a non-profit, tax-exempt private organization incorporated in 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).<sup>1</sup> As a national, non-profit organization with 630 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.

## **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.

## **2019: One Busy Year!**

Last year was an exceptionally challenging year for the PLF, its members and partnering organizations. In addition to pursuing our regular programs and activities, we found ourselves spending the bulk of the second half of the year focused on a single issue with multiple ramifications: the BLM reorganization and headquarters relocation. Our 2019 Annual Report highlights our advocacy, programs and activities, awards and recognition, and administrative and financial accomplishments. We also include a listing of officers and board members who served as volunteers during all or part of the year and a brief look into 2020.

## **Major PLF Activities During 2019**

### **Advocacy**

#### ***BLM Reorganization and Headquarters Relocation***

The PLF’s primary advocacy focus in 2019 was on Interior Secretary Bernhardt’s plans and actions to reorganize the BLM. Under Secretary Bernhardt’s plan, the BLM headquarters will be relocated from Washington, DC to Grand Junction, Colorado. All but 60 Washington Office employees will be dispersed to the State Offices with the expectations that they would continue to perform Washington Office work. The PLF’s position is that this plan will dismantle the BLM and cripple its ability to effectively carry out its multiple-use mission.

PLF took these actions to advance its opposition to Secretary Bernhardt’s plan:

- PLF officers and board members met with BLM, the Interior Department, Senators, Representatives, Congressional

### 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).
- 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.

and Committee staffs to explain our position and provide critical information and perspective about the plan's impacts to the BLM and probable loss of headquarters employees.

- PLF President Ed Shepard testified at the House Natural Resources Committee's September 10<sup>th</sup> hearing on the BLM reorganization.
- Collaborated with House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Grijalva and National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee Chairwoman Haaland to host a media event where former BLM Director Robert Abbey and former Deputy Director and past PLF President Henry Bisson spoke before the press.
- Partnered with peer organizations in sending multiple letters to Congress opposing the reorganization plan and in organizing the "Save the BLM" campaign. The campaign included placing a full-page ad in POLITICO with a link to our website.



### CONGRESS: STOP SECRETARY BERNHARDT FROM DISMANTLING THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The BLM cares for 245 million acres of public land, more than any other federal agency. And it's one of the few agencies that raises more money than it spends. Recently, political appointees in the Department of the Interior have taken steps to dismantle the agency by sending its top leaders and senior specialists to scattered locations in the West, with no public or employee input. This plan only weakens the BLM and its ability to manage the public lands for all Americans. Without a seat at the table in Washington, DC, public lands will be on the menu.

The Public Lands Foundation joins a long list of public land stakeholders who oppose the plan to dismantle the BLM. This land is yours, let's keep it that way.



- Received a grant from the Western Conservation Foundation to help fund our POLITICO advertisement and to fund travel costs to bring PLF Board members and other speakers to Washington, DC, and in-kind support of a public relations firm to refine and deliver our messaging.
- Activating a broad social media campaign enabling our members and the public to communicate their thoughts about the reorganization to Congress.
- Developed a PLF Members Advocacy Toolkit and provided it to our members.
- Held a targeted fundraising campaign to our members to support expenses associated with the “Save the BLM” campaign. Members responded by contributing over \$10,000.

Our objective was to ask Congress to block the use of unspent monies on the reorganization and employee moves. Unfortunately, while the Congress did not appropriate any additional funds in support of the reorganization for FY 2020, it did not adopt the language we were seeking to add. Congress did include a requirement for the Secretary to brief appropriators on the status of the reorganization on a monthly basis.

The PLF will continue to monitor the impacts of the reorganization, the headquarters move, and the likely loss of headquarters employees in 2020.

### ***Letters and Testimony***

- BLM FY 2020 Budget – Testimony of PLF President Ed Shepard before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies dated February 26, 2019
- Small Miner Fee Waiver – Letter to BLM Acting Director dated March 8, 2019
- BLM Reorganization – Opposition Letter to Congress from multiple organizations including PLF dated July 31, 2019
- PLF Letter Requesting Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee to Hold a Hearing on the BLM Reorganization, August 20, 2019
- Letter to Senate Appropriations Committee Calling for Halt to BLM HQ Move & Reorganization, Sept. 25, 2019
- BLM Reorganization – Testimony of PLF President Ed Shepard before the House Natural Resource Committee on September 10, 2019

### ***Position Statements***

The PLF released a position statement on Maintaining the Bureau of Land Management Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

## **Programs and Activities**

### ***Annual Meeting***

The PLF held its 2019 annual meeting in Reno, Nevada between September 10-13. More than 70 people attended. This year's program centered on Sustainable Energy and Minerals Management. Our field trip was to the Coeur Rochester gold and silver mine where we got to witness a blast as part of mining operations. The general session was comprised of speakers from local, state and Federal government, conservation groups and the University of Nevada-Reno making presentations on the role of energy and minerals in Nevada. The Board of Directors held its one-and-a-half-day meeting.

### ***International Assistance***

The BLM and the Departments of State and Commerce contacted the PLF for assistance in identifying a retired BLM geologist or minerals specialist who could participate in an international technical assistance program and uranium mining workshop in Lima, Peru for the Government of Peru. The PLF was able to reach out to its members and Roger Haskins, retired BLM geologist was able to travel and deliver a presentation to the workshop.

### ***National Public Lands Day***

National Public Lands Day (NPLD) is the nation's largest, single-day volunteer effort for public lands. The PLF's roles are to help publicize the event on our website and social media pages, and to match revenue provided by the BLM and National Environmental Education Foundation for NPLD events. In 2018, BLM did not allocate funding for the grant; therefore, PLF used carryover funding to cover the agency's deficit. In 2019, BLM again did not allocate funding; therefore, PLF did not allocate additional funding.

### ***The Past and Future Mentoring 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 mentoring. In 2019, while 19 BLM employees signed up to be mentored, PLF Board members encountered difficulties in finding volunteers in the employee's local areas to serve as mentors. Moreover, the BLM decided to change its Pathways history presentation by replacing the PLF's involvement in the course. As a result, the PLF Board decided to develop a list of PLF members interested in serving as mentors and make it available to the BLM as needed. This effectively closes out the Past and Future Mentoring Project.

### ***Member's Survey***

The PLF conducted an online survey of its members on four themes: (1) our advocacy activities; (2) communicating with Board members; (3) our communication tools; and (4) membership matters. About 40% of our members took part in the survey. The most significant theme among the survey results is that members want the PLF to not only continue the activities it's already

doing but to do even more. The survey also showed that only a handful of members are willing to volunteer. As an “all-volunteer” organization, this is a problem.

### ***Member’s Forum***

The PLF launched a Member’s Forum accessible on its website to all members. The forum facilitates communications among members on current issues concerning the BLM, public lands management, the PLF and other topics of general interest. A Member’s Directory is included.

### ***National Association of Forest Service Retirees***

PLF President Ed Shepard along with Beau McClure (VP-Operations) and Mike Ferguson (Director at Large) attended the NAFSR’s Board meeting in Phoenix in February. The PLF is considered to be an ad hoc member of the NAFSR’s Board. At its 2019 meeting, the PLF’s Board of Directors decided to include the NAFSR as an ad hoc member of its Board.

### ***Scholarship Awards***

The PLF awarded two George Lea Founder’s Scholarships in the amount of \$5,000 each to students from Western Colorado University and the University of Arizona.

## **Awards and Recognition**

PLF recognized the outstanding performance of present and past BLM employees and two PLF volunteers.

- *Lifetime Service Awards* were presented to Mike Ferguson and Wayne Elmore at the PLF’s Awards Banquet. Wayne was not able to attend the meeting and his award was presented to him later.
- *PLF Volunteer of the Year Awards* were presented to Ray Brady and George Stone.
- *Outstanding Public Land Professional Award – Technical/Operational Category* was presented to Paul Summers, hydrogeologist at the BLM National Operations Center in Denver, CO.
- *Landscape Stewardship Award* to the Oregon Forest Pathologists.
- *Landscape Stewardship Certificate of Appreciation* was presented to Devon Energy Corporation.

## **Financial Summary**

The PLF is financially sound with total assets of more than \$351,500 as of the end of 2019. Membership dues totaling \$12,000 were received from 590 paying members. Direct donations to the PLF totaled \$26,300, and \$5,100 was received from Give at Work campaigns. On the expenditure side, the top five expenditure categories for 2019 were: communications, including web site - \$20,300; printing, educational information publication - \$17,500; annual meeting - \$12,500; scholarship grants - \$10,000.00; Public Lands Monitor newsletter, printing and postage

- \$6,900. For 2019, 91% of income was directed to program activities and 9% was used for general management and fundraising.

## **Communication and Outreach Activities**

PLF communication and outreach activities in 2019 included:

- Publishing, posting and mailing quarterly editions of our newsletter, the Public Lands Monitor. PLF mails copies of the Monitor not only to its members, but to 250 partner organizations and offices within the Interior Department and the BLM.
- Maintaining and updating our website, including the Memorial Wall, and our social media pages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.
  - In 2019, our website had 21,227 users, 25,596 sessions and 54,728 pageviews.
  - PLF had over 1,200 Facebook followers and 900 Twitter followers.
- Conducting our first Member's Survey which was done online.
- Carrying out an online Member's Volunteer Survey.
- Holding its 2020 Board of Directors elections primarily through online voting.

## **2019 Officers and Board of Directors Members**

The PLF's Officers are the President, Vice President, Vice President for Operations, Vice President for D.C. Affairs, Secretary, and Treasurer. For 2019, PLF officers were: Ed Shepard, President; Don Simpson, Vice President; Beau McClure, Vice President for Operations; Elena Daly, Vice President for DC Affairs succeeded by Ray Brady; Geoff Middaugh, Secretary, succeeded by Ray Brady; and Dwight Hempel, Treasurer.

Directors at Large were: Tom Allen; Dean Bibles; Ray Brady; AnnaFaith Jorgensen (Student Congress representative); Glen Collins; Jim Currivan; John Fend; Mike Ferguson; Walt George; Eric Janes; John Kwiatkowski; Van Manning; Dave Mari; Mat Millenbach; Tim O'Brien; George Stone; Rosemary Thomas; Rich Whitley; Maggie Wyatt; and Elaine Zielinski.

State Representatives were: Sharon Wilson, Alaska; Beau McClure, Arizona; Nancy Haug, succeeded by Zachary Pratt, California; David Stout, succeeded by Bob Moore, Colorado; Anna Steele, Idaho; Richard Hopkins, Montana; Ev (Butch) Hayes, Nevada; Jesse Juen, New Mexico; Jerry Magee, Oregon; Bill Lamb, Utah; Geoff Middaugh, Washington; Bill LeBarron, Wyoming; and Bob Anderson, Midwest and Eastern States.

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

## **Further Information**

For further information about the PLF visit [www.publicland.org](http://www.publicland.org), follow us on social media, 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 Washington, DC Metro area.