



For America's Heritage

THE PUBLIC LANDS Monitor

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2025 PLF ANNUAL MEETING

BOISE, IDAHO

OCTOBER 7TH AND 8TH, 2025

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This year's Annual PLF Meeting was held on October 7th and 8th in Boise, Idaho. The General Meeting was held on Tuesday, October 7th. The theme for this year's meeting was "Wildland Fire and Fuels Management." The PLF had planned on a tour of the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, but the tour had to be cancelled due to the ongoing government funding shutdown. The BLM was also not able to participate in the Annual Meeting this year. The Board of Directors meeting was held on Wednesday, October 8th, followed with an evening barbecue at John and Amy Ruhs' Ranch.



2025 PLF Annual Meeting, Boise, ID

GENERAL MEETING

Mary Jo Rugwell (PLF President) and John Ruhs (PLF Idaho) opened the General Meeting session of the Annual Meeting on October 7TH. Mary Jo thanked everyone who assisted in organizing and setting up the meeting, including Beau McClure who was not able to attend this year but did a lot of the up-front planning. The focus of the discussions in the General Meeting session were on the Wildland Fire program on public lands.

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John Ruhs & Mary Jo Rugwell

The Public Lands Foundation advocates and works for the retention of America's Public Lands in public hands professionally and sustainably managed for responsible common use and enjoyment.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Mary Jo Rugwell

Fall brings with it crisp air, colorful leaves, and the PLF Annual Meeting. This year's event was held in Boise, Idaho, on October 7-8, at the Oxford Suites Boise. I want to acknowledge the magnificent work of the planning team consisting of Beau McClure, Nancy Haug, and John Ruhs. The venue was perfect for our needs and the staff there was amazing. I also want to

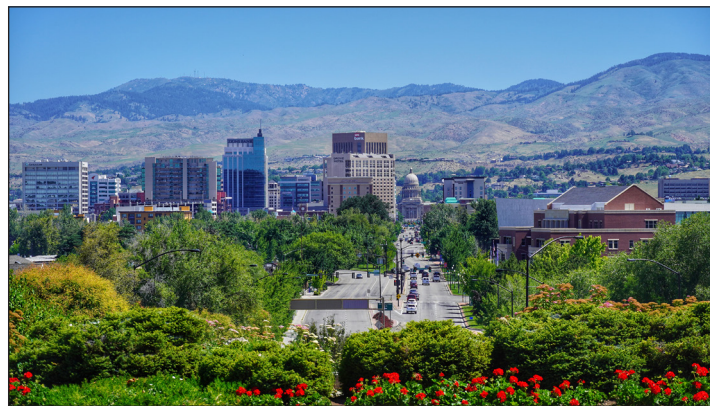
thank Pam Johansen for

her help with registration and set-up, Mark Davis for ensuring that the PowerPoints were available for presenters, Margaret Lliteras for taking notes and collecting the money from the Silent Auction, Maggie Wyatt for handling the auction for us, Bill Disbrow for taking photos of the events, and John and Amy Ruhs for hosting a barbeque on Wednesday evening at their lovely home. Also, I appreciate Ray Brady providing "Keep Public Lands in Public Hands" stickers for distribution at the meeting. Additional details about the meeting can be found in a separate article in this edition of the Monitor, but I want to mention a few highlights of the meeting here.

Our plans for the General Meeting on October 7th were radically changed by the lapse in appropriations for the Federal government. Despite that, meeting presenters and PLF members were flexible and ensured we had a worthwhile day. We had two excellent presentations. The first was from Dustin

Miller, Director, Idaho State Department of Lands. Dustin spoke about all the responsibilities that his department has and the challenges it is currently facing. We then had an opportunity to hear from John Gale, former BLM Executive and now the Federal Affairs Director of a company called PANO. This company is installing AI-enabled cameras which can detect wildland fires sooner. We finished the afternoon by discussing how PLF can better prepare our members with some talking points on the new proposed fire organization. Ed Shepard is leading a small team to craft these talking points. We had the banquet, "Remembering BLM" talk by John Ruhs, awards ceremony, and Silent Auction at the end of the first day.

At the Board Meeting on October 8th, we started with an update from the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) by Board Chair and former BLM Deputy Director for Operations Steve Ellis. Steve shared all the initiatives that NAFSR is currently working on to benefit both current and retired Forest Service employees. We were then provided a timely update from Tomer Hasson, former BLM employee and now the Senior Program Officer for the Foundation for America's Public Lands. Tomer gave us information on the grants that have been provided by the Foundation and plans to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of our country next year. Marwa Mahmoud presented the 2024 Student Congress Recommendations and Mike Ferguson and Jenna Whitlock discussed plans for the Student Congress for the next two years. Rene Berkhoudt made a presentation of the Little Green Light system and the need to improve our membership database definitions and functionality. Rene will be working with Bob Casias and Deb Rawhouser



Downtown Boise, Idaho

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN *(continued)*

to make recommendations to the PLF Executive Committee on this effort. Mark Davis did his usual amazing job with the Treasurer's Report and Proposed 2026 Budget presentation. Maggie Wyatt and Jim Currihan discussed the work of their Awards committees. We will follow up with all Awards committees next spring to discuss possible changes to the program.

I led discussions on Board and membership recruitment/retention, fundraising, the All-Member Zoom calls, PLF promotional "Keep Public Lands in Public Hands" merchandise, and 2026 meetings. Ed Shepard will lead a small team to investigate recruiting new members and new Board members, and to encourage members to run for office in the organization. Please let me know (mrugwell@publicland.org) if you want to assist Ed. The PLF is still looking for a member willing to take over the splendid work started by Henri Bisson

related to fundraising. Those present agreed that the All-Member Zoom calls are worthwhile, that one or two per year is a good frequency, and that the call would be most beneficial if used to get member feedback on one or two options to resolve a specific issue or problem. Everyone supported the idea of PLF promotional merchandise if we can find a willing party to partner with in this effort. The 2026 Annual Meeting will be held in Phoenix, Arizona, during the third or fourth week of September. We will provide the actual dates soon so that you can mark your calendars and join us!

Lastly, thank you to all members who spent the time and resources to join us this year. Additionally, a big thank you to all of those who donated items for the Silent Auction, all those who purchased items, and all those who donated money in lieu of bidding on an item. It was a good meeting, and I appreciate you all! Take care and talk to you again soon.

PLF ANNUAL MEETING *(continued)*

John Ruhs introduced **Dustin Miller** (Director, Idaho State Department of Lands) who set the stage for the robust discussion of challenges with wild-



Dustin Miller
Idaho State Department of Lands

land fire and fuels management on not only Federal lands but also State lands in the West. The Idaho State Department of Lands is the State endowment funds manager for all State lands, with the primary focus on revenue generation for beneficiaries in Idaho. The challenge is to dispose of non earning lands and reinvesting in profitable lands. It was noted that the management of public

lands, including wildland fire management, is a big focus in Idaho as 95 percent of State land borders Federal land.

Dustin Miller led a more in-depth discussion of wildland fire and fuels management challenges in Idaho. The rate of decline in the health of forests in Idaho is greater than the rate of growth and it

has been very difficult to manage the impacts of invasive species fire cycles. The wildland and urban interface continues to be a challenge as more people are moving to Idaho, who want their own slice of paradise, and the carelessness of people has only exacerbated the problem. There has also been a priority placed on protecting industrial and private timber resources in the State. The State and Federal fire organizations have had to evolve as the workload has increased over time. State and Federal partnership efforts with "boots on the ground" are critical to success, as well as support from ranchers until the fire organizations can respond. The Governor convened a Wildfire Roundtable that completed a report in 2023 in response to lessons learned from the California wildfires. A new Fire Strategic Plan is needed that would strengthen the capacity to build-out fire teams quickly, increase capabilities with local fire services, foster interagency cooperation and coordination, enhance fire technologies and emerging AI equipment, and address fire insurance and power and utility company responsibilities. More resources are needed with people and funding, especially if the State Department of Lands is directed to fight fires when federal resources are not available. There are also proposals to leverage State capability for timber production and forest management under Good Neighbor policies, but restoration projects on public lands would still be an important part of long-term management. There have also been proposals to establish a State

PLF ANNUAL MEETING *(continued)*

Department of Natural Resources that would consolidate functions of State agencies for Lands, Water, Parks and Recreation, and Fish and Game.

John Gale was introduced to discuss advancements in AI-powered wildfire detection technology.



John Gale
PANO Technologies

John is a former BLM Program Executive for Intergovernmental and External Affairs and currently working for PANO Technologies in the advanced wildfire technology field. The White House issued a Wildfire Executive Order on June 12, 2025 to consolidate Department of the Interior and Agriculture wildfire programs. PANO Technologies is focused on empowering commonsense wildfire prevention and response through enhanced technology partnership efforts with Federal, State and local governments, utilities, landowners and resort managers in wildfire management. AI-powered wildfire detection technology involves the placement of remote cameras the size of a basketball, rotating 360 degrees every minute, which can send a text or e-mail alert and also a camera feed from a detection of a potential wildfire start. There are more than 500 fire agencies that are currently using PANO technologies and more than 2,000 users served by PANO. John provided a video presentation of the use of this technology.

Steve Ellis (National Association of Forest Service Retirees) discussed concerns of NAFSR over the White House Wildfire Executive Order and the subsequent Secretary Order 3443 of September 10, 2025 that would establish a unified U.S. Wildland Fire Service within the Department of the Interior. He expressed concerns over a lack of understanding in Congress on wildland fire, fuels management, and interagency coordination responsibilities. There have even been suggestions by some members of Congress that the Forest Service should be transferred to the Department of the Interior through legislation. *(In fact, it has been*

reported that Senator Lee (UT) has drafted legislation to transfer the Forest Service to Interior.) There is a need for continued engagement in this issue and preparation of briefing papers and position statements by NAFSR and PLF on wildland fire management and reorganization proposals.

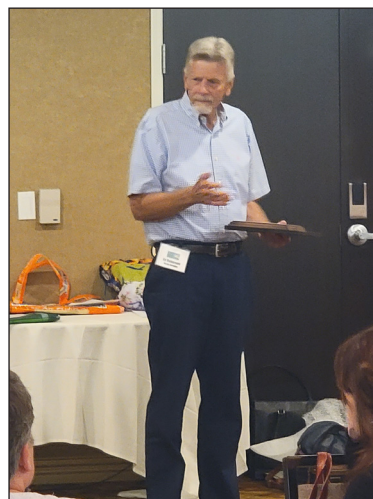
After further discussions, it was decided to prepare a set of PLF Talking Points on wildland fire and fuels management, including the establishment of the unified U.S. Wildland Fire Service within the Department of the Interior. The Talking Points paper should identify the positive aspects of the reorganization plans, as well as the negative aspects, and what is trying to be fixed. **Ed Shepard** (PLF Oregon) was selected to lead a team effort in preparation of the Talking Points paper. The team will also include **Rosemary Thomas** (PLF New Mexico), **Roy Johnson** (PLF Idaho), and **John Gale** (PANO Technologies).

The General Meeting concluded with a PLF Banquet on the evening of October 7th and **John Ruhs** provided the keynote "Remembering BLM" address to the gathered PLF members, spouses, and invited guests. Mary Jo Rugwell presented the PLF Volunteer of the Year Award to **Ed Roberson** for his leadership in coordinating the update of PLF Position Papers this year.

A PLF Lifetime Service Award was presented to **Paul Makela** during the banquet for his work on sage-grouse and a posthumous PLF Lifetime Service Award was presented in recognition of **Kit Muller**.



John Ruhs
Remembering BLM



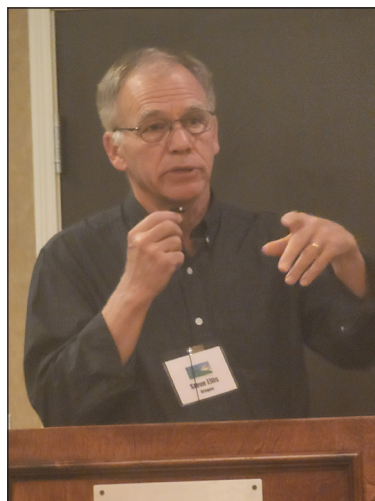
Ed Roberson
Volunteer of the Year Award

Mary Jo Rugwell also read a thank you note from Kit's wife for the recognition provided by the PLF. The award citations are included in this edition of the Monitor. Other PLF awards were announced during the evening banquet, but will be presented to the individual awardees at future presentation ceremonies. Those awards included a Landscape Stewardship Award to the **Canyonlands Natural History Association** (Utah), a Landscape Stewardship Award to **Stephen Shultz** (BLM Utah), and the Outstanding Public Lands Professional Employee Award to **James "Todd" Forbes** (BLM Oregon). The evening banquet ended with a silent auction and raffle which raised a total of \$1,251 to support the George Lea Founder's Scholarship Fund.

Board of Directors Meeting

Mary Jo Rugwell opened the Board of Directors Meeting on October 8th. The PLF 2025 Scholarship recipients were not able to attend this year's Annual Meeting, but Marwa Mahmoud (Student Congress representative and University of Washington graduate) was introduced and later in the meeting made a presentation to the Board on the recommendations from the 2024 session of the Student Congress.

Steve Ellis (Chair, National Association of Forest Service Retirees) provided an update on NAFSR activities for the year. The NAFSR continues outreach efforts with Congress and keeps NAFSR members informed and updated through Zoom calls and one in person meeting during the year. The Association has been fully engaged in support for current Forest Service employees through "We've Got Your Back" advocacy.



Steve Ellis
National Association of
Forest Service Retirees

The NAFSR expects to participate in a Congressional Panel discussion on Wildland Fire on

December 10, 2025 to educate Congressional staffers on wildland fire and fuels management challenges and impacts of the U.S. Wildland Fire

Service reorganization. Forest Service budget proposals for FY 2026 would eliminate a lot of forest grant programs, eliminate timber research, and reduce funding and staffing by one third; while at the same time proposing to increase timber sales and harvests by some 25 percent. There are also proposals to eliminate Forest Service Regional Offices and downsize the agency. There continue to be proposals for the disposal of public lands, including Forest lands, that NAFSR and the PLF need to continue to be engaged with and support other public land user organizations.

Tomer Hasson (former BLM policy advisor and currently Senior Program Officer for the Foundation for America's Public Lands) provided an update on the activities of the Foundation. The Foundation was chartered by Congress in 2017 and has experienced some growing pains since the launch of the Foundation in 2022, the selection of I Ling Thompson as CEO of the Foundation, and the appointment by the Secretary of the Interior of the initial members of the Board of Directors of the Foundation.



Tomer Hasson
Foundation for
America's Public Lands

The Foundation currently has 14 employees that support the mandate to provide additional resources and assistance to BLM in the management of the public lands. The challenges facing BLM are great and the need for ecological restoration and stewardship on the public lands is more urgent than ever. Some 73 percent of BLM managed rivers and streams require restoration, 90 million acres of rangelands are invaded by invasive species that increase wildfire risk, visitation on public lands has increased by 40% in the last 10 years, 80 million acres require fuels management treatment, and there is an ever-increasing energy demand and mineral need in the nation. The Foundation provided a total of \$2.5 million in grants in 2024 to support public land projects and has provided \$3.99 million (totaling some \$10 million with matching funds) in grants for 2025 for public land projects. The Foundation supported some

115 community events that involved over 8,000 volunteers participating in National Public Lands Day this year. The Foundation will need to focus on the Reauthorization process with Congress over the next year and is seeking to increase the number of Board seats from 9 members to 18 members and request an annual Appropriation of \$10 million. The Foundation is working on several projects in support of the America 250 celebrations in 2026 and has identified a tag-line of “America’s Hardest Working Lands Need Our Help” to highlight the importance and value of our public lands.

Marwa Mahmoud (Student Congress representative) provided a briefing for the Board on the recommendations from the Student Congress session held on October 7-10, 2024 in Las Vegas, Nevada. The theme of the 2024 Student Congress session was “Transition to Renewable Energy on Public Lands”. Marwa indicated that participation in the Student Congress was an awesome experience and she enjoyed the opportunity to meet with inspired leaders of BLM and interacting with PLF members.



Marwa Mahmoud
2024 Student Congress

The students identified an over-arching Vision for development of their policy recommendations to 1) expand shareholders to include local communities, 2) support conservation of public lands for future generations, 3) ensure sustainable and equitable renewable energy development, 4) facilitate improved renewable energy review and permitting procedures, and 5) minimize ecosystem degradation. The policy recommendations included the following proposals:

- Increase the visibility of renewable energy installations at Federal buildings and facilities.
- Improve public relations, educational outreach, and general public literacy campaigns.

- Support bills that allocate funds for renewable energy projects.
- Implement bonding reforms.
- Improve Federal interagency collaboration for renewable energy transmission projects.
- Allocate a share of renewable energy generation to local communities.
- Engage local communities in a transparent review and approval process for projects.
- Support agency reforms for employee recruitment and career ladder opportunities.

However, new challenges and obstacles have arisen to constrain the development of renewable energy projects on the public lands since the 2024 Student Congress session. The Interior Department and BLM budget proposals for FY 2026 have allocated no funds for the renewable energy program. However, renewable energy development can in one way or another help meet our rising energy demands.

Mike Ferguson and **Jenna Whitlock** provided an update on the Student Congress program supported by the PLF, NAFSR, BLM, Forest Service, and the Andrus Center at Boise State University. Several staff from the Andrus Center also attended this session of the Board meeting. They included Emily Wakild (Endowed Chair), Lindsay Virgin (staff support), and Andy Brunelle (Chair, Andrus Center Board of Directors). There have been six Student Congress sessions held since 2012. The partnership with NAFSR and the Andrus Center has been very productive. Plans are to change the schedule for future sessions of the Student Congress to odd years starting in 2027. A virtual participation “Retrospective 2026” session is planned for next year to solicit feedback and updates from students that have attended prior sessions of the Student Congress. A total of 131 students have attended prior sessions of the Student Congress and the PLF has contact information on 87 of those students. Of those students, 76 are working or engaged in natural resources related fields, including work with the Federal government, State government, non-governmental organizations, private consulting, and academia or continuing education. Funding for the Student Congress may be a challenge for the next few years as it is anticipated that grants from BLM and the Forest Service will be limited or not be available. We will be looking for more public

funding and corporate funding opportunities to support the program.

Rene Berkhoudt provided an update on the review of the PLF membership database in our Little Green Light management application system. There are significant concerns over the accuracy of our membership database and efforts are needed to develop some consistent Business Process Management (BPM) guidelines moving forward to improve the accuracy of our membership database. Rene provided several examples of inconsistencies in our current reporting systems and membership numbers. Rene was asked to make some recommendations on BPM guidelines for our membership database and Bob Casias and Deb Rawhouser volunteered to assist in this effort.

Mary Jo Rugwell led a discussion of PLF membership recruitment, membership retention, and fundraising challenges. The PLF needs to continue to be a relevant organization to support our advocacy efforts for the public lands, but we are not the only nonprofit organization that is having problems with retaining members. We have been reaching out to some of the “Friends” organizations that support BLM in the management of public land special management areas for assistance in a PLF marketing campaign. The PLF will be looking for opportunities for other promotional merchandise ideas, including further discussions with Stephanie Connolly (PLF Colorado). We also need to restart our Corporate Fundraising efforts that were previously led by Henri Bisson and we are looking for volunteers to take on this initiative.

We need to maintain a good working relationship with the Public Lands Caucus in Congress, respectful contacts with administration officials, and open dialogues with the Interior Department and BLM points of contact. The PLF needs to be trusted as a source of experience and knowledge in public lands management and we cannot be successful without these continued good faith relationships.

Mary Jo distributed a Public Lands Foundation Membership Benefits handout that had been prepared with the assistance of Nancy Haug, which can be used in our outreach efforts to attract new members. We will also post this handout on the PLF website. The handout includes the following statements:

- PLF provides former BLM employees and public land advocates with a lifelong connection to the agency and its mission.
- PLF is a place and space where those with a commitment and calling to natural resource and public land management can make a difference.

We also need to focus on a strategy to identify our next level and generation of PLF leaders for the organization. There is a perception that the organization is only for retired SES managers of BLM. This perception needs to change and the Board decided to establish a Search Committee for succession planning and a broader background of PLF Board members. The Search Committee will be led by Ed Shepard. The partnership effort established with the Interior Federal Credit Union in 2024 that allows new Credit Union members to join the PLF is one example of the types of membership drives that can benefit the PLF. The Interior Federal Credit Union also provides an annual donation to the PLF Scholarship Fund. The PLF will also be reaching out to previous Student Congress attendees and Scholarship recipients regarding interest in PLF membership. Scott MacPherson (PLF Colorado) has prepared some thoughts and ideas on a Membership strategy.

There was support from the Board for a continuation of All-Member Zoom calls to keep our membership up to date on the activities of the PLF, hold focused discussions of specific topics of interest, and to solicit feedback from members on issues and concerns. It was suggested that these All-Member calls be held once or twice a year. Quarterly Board Zoom calls will continue.

Mark Davis (PLF Treasurer) presented a Treasurer’s Report and proposed 2026 Budget to the Board. The Treasurer’s Report indicates the PLF is financially sound, with total assets of \$475,678 as of the end of September 2025, including \$433,124 in a long-term investment accounts. This is an increase of almost \$40,000 from last year. Our operational expenses currently are \$3,958 below actual revenue for the year, but donations typically peak at the end of the year. Membership fees alone do not cover our annual operational expenses and corporate contributions have not materialized. Covering shortfalls with transfers from our investment accounts remains an option, but this approach is not sustainable in the

long-term. The proposed 2026 Budget includes a planned operating budget of \$69,800, an increase of \$5,050 from the 2025 planned budget. We are not planning for an in-person Student Congress session in 2026 and therefore no funding is included in the proposed budget for this event. Audit and accounting fees are our single largest expense and the Board has been unsuccessful in finding more cost-effective options. To cover expenditures in 2026, a transfer of \$14,800 from our investment accounts is planned to supplement \$55,000 in planned revenue. The proposed 2026 Budget was reviewed and approved by the Board.

Mary Jo Rugwell thanked **Dave Mari**, **Maggie Wyatt**, **Jim Currivan**, and **David Stout** for their leadership of the PLF Award Committees. We are continuing to look for ways to improve the Awards programs and seeking ideas on receiving more nominees for the Awards. Volunteers are also needed to support the Award Committees. Maggie had several suggestions for changing the criteria for the

Lifetime Service Award and these ideas will be further explored by the Board. There was also a suggestion that the PLF pay expenses of the recipients of each of the Awards to attend the PLF Annual Meeting each year for presentation of the Award. The Board will review this suggestion and consider the costs prior to next year's Annual Meeting.

Mary Jo Rugwell closed out the Board meeting with a discussion of Goals and Objectives for 2026. Priority issues identified by the Board included membership initiatives, recruitment of Board members and Officers, and fund raising and donation drives. The Board supported planning for an Annual Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona in 2026. The target dates would be September 15-17, 2026. Several topics were discussed for the focus of the Annual Meeting. One possible theme was "Urban Interface and Public Lands Management".

The Annual Meeting adjourned and an evening barbeque was held at the **John and Amy Ruhs** ranch.

PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION GOALS

- Keep lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in public ownership and open to use by the public.
- Support the long-term protection, conservation, and restoration of units of the National Landscape Conservation System, as distinctly unique among the public lands managed by BLM.
- Support multiple use management under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.
- Encourage professionalism by BLM employees.
- Increase the public's understanding of and support for the proper management of the public lands.

LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD

PAUL MAKELA

The Public Lands Foundation grants to Paul Makela its Lifetime Service Award for excellence in public land management. The PLF provides this award to deserving Bureau of Land Management employees who have perpetuated and enhanced the proud traditions of public service.

Paul began his career with BLM in 1979 with the Worland District in Wyoming as a GS-04 Range Aid, fresh out of the University of Michigan. Next, he worked with the BLM Kingman Resource Area in Arizona as a biological technician and later as a wildlife biologist. Paul diversified his career by serving on a six-man helitack crew conducting initial attack in Arizona, Utah, and Nevada.

Paul took a break from BLM and served in the U.S. Air Force as a medical laboratory specialist, then returned to graduate school, eventually working as a wildlife biologist in Michigan for the Forest Service. In 2004, Paul returned to Idaho where he would spend the next 20 years pursuing his passion for sage-grouse conservation. He was the lead author and editor on the Idaho Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan and served as the wildlife program lead in the BLM Idaho State Office. He later helped spearhead a 10 year research project to study the effects of spring livestock grazing on greater sage-grouse. The results of this effort include several publications and contributed greatly to the management of sage-grouse in its western range.

In the interest of sage-grouse conservation, Paul was one of the original members of the first sage-grouse local working group, contributed to conservation plans, and led development of a model to map habitat management areas. Beyond planning and coordination for sage-grouse, Paul made substantial management implementation contributions. Throughout his career he demonstrated commitment to leadership and teamwork, developing a course at the BLM National Training Center and contributing to policies related to migratory birds, sage-grouse, and big game habitat conservation.

He was honored with the BLM Linda Seibert Career Achievement Award and the Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society's Charles E. Harris Professional Wildlifer Award. Paul concluded his 40 year career of Federal service, 35 of which were with BLM, in 2024.

The Public Lands Foundation is honored to recognize Paul Makela with this Lifetime Service Award, presented at the PLF 2025 Annual Meeting in Boise, Idaho



Paul Makela, PLF Lifetime Service Award

LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD

CHRISTOPHER “KIT” MULLER

The Public Lands Foundation grants to Christopher “Kit” Muller its Lifetime Service Award for excellence in public land management. The PLF provides this award to deserving Bureau of Land Management employees who have perpetuated and enhanced the proud tradition of public service.

Kit was born and raised in Eastern Montana and graduated with honors from Harvard University in 1972. After working briefly for Senator Lee Metcalf in Washington, D.C., he then worked for several years lobbying and creating partnerships dealing with coal and utilities management.

After completing a Master of Public Policy degree from the University of California, Berkeley, Kit began his 38 year career with BLM. While Kit’s career spanned almost four decades in Washington, D.C., his heart and soul were always committed to the people on the ground, in the Field Offices, and the local communities dependent on healthy public lands.

His accomplishments are many in his service as the International Affairs Division Chief and as Strategic Planner. He was instrumental in the creation and success of numerous BLM initiatives including BLM’s Blueprint for the Future, the 1994 BLM Summit, the Assessment Inventory and Monitoring effort, the National Conservation Lands System, Budget Re-engineering, and Leadership Succession Planning. Up until his retirement in 2018, Kit used his unique understanding of the need to integrate science and management to push BLM leadership to set a vision for future resource management and desired land health conditions. Kit Muller truly made a difference.



Kit Muller, PLF Lifetime Service Award

Kit passed away on December 6, 2024, in Washington, D.C. The Public Lands Foundation was honored to posthumously recognize Kit Muller with this Lifetime Service Award at the PLF 2025 Annual Meeting in Boise, Idaho.

LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP AWARD

CANYONLANDS NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

The Public Lands Foundation presents the Canyonlands Natural History Association (CNHA) with its 2025 Landscape Stewardship Award. The PLF grants this recognition to honor private citizens and organizations that work to advance and sustain community-based stewardship on landscapes that include, in whole or in part, public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

The CNHA demonstrates exceptional efforts to assist the BLM Canyon Country District, Moab and Monticello field offices, and the interagency Henry Mountain Field Station to manage world class scenery and recreation destinations and opportunities. For over three decades, through the distribution and sales of interpretive materials, CNHA has provided financial aid and valuable assistance to BLM. This partnership and aid facilitate unique and creative solutions that include coordinating with local communities and providing outreach and education to increase awareness of public lands.

The Executive Director, its volunteer Board, and its dedicated volunteers encourage and support BLM and federal partners to seek and develop creative solutions to management challenges. For example, they provided funding to BLM and the Utah Department of Transportation to conduct a corridor vision study for State Route 128 - a designated Utah Scenic Byway. A recent focus is to improve physical access to recreation opportunities for people of all abilities. The CNHA manages the interagency Moab Information Center which serves more than 200,000 people annually. It hosts the annual interagency National Public Lands Days event, supports the Artist in Residence Program, and supports an annual outfitter workshop.

In 2024, CNHA provided \$158,000 to BLM for the design and purchase of interpretive, informational and directional signs. In 2025 the CNHA has committed \$339,410 for signs, kiosks, materials, supplies, cultural surveys, accessibility assessments and interns, all of which will facilitate natural resource and visitor management. Of note, the availability and affordability of housing has been a challenging issue for the federal agencies in their quest to hire seasonal and career employees. The CNHA purchased housing that is available to federal employees in Grand County at a relatively affordable rate and lower than typical rent and home purchase values within the community.

The BLM and CNHA share a goal of providing the highest quality visitor services and educational opportunities while managing renewable and non-renewable resources on public lands. There are a myriad of challenges that result from the approximately three million visitors annually to lands managed by the Moab, Monticello, and Henry Mountain Field Offices. The BLM and CNHA work diligently each day to promote a common goal of raising visitor awareness about public land agencies. Additionally, fostering stewardship and educating visitors about desert etiquette and personal responsibilities is invaluable for both visitors and the managing agencies.

The Public Lands Foundation is pleased to present the Canyonlands Natural History Association with its 2025 Landscape Stewardship Award for invaluable contributions to the stewardship of America's public landscapes.

LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP AWARD

STEPHEN SHULTZ

The Public Lands Foundation presents Stephen Shultz with its 2025 Landscape Stewardship Award. The PLF grants this recognition to honor private citizens and organizations that work to advance and sustain community-based stewardship on landscapes that include, in whole or in part, public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

Stephen has demonstrated an unwavering commitment of time and effort toward BLM's landscape programs, particularly as an invaluable partner and advocate for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. For more than a decade he has taken a leading role in improving equestrian opportunities in the BLM Canyon Country District, Utah and has provided countless hours each year toward planning and constructing equestrian trails, corrals, and kiosks.

Stephen has exhibited exceptional leadership, fostering community involvement and awareness regarding public lands. His participation in the layout and construction of critical infrastructure has motivated others to engage actively in stewardship efforts alongside BLM. He has applied the vision of the national Backcountry Horsemen organization to actualize equestrian opportunities on BLM lands in the Canyon Country District.

He has taken the initiative to enhance stewardship of public resources through his involvement in the GPS mapping of routes for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail Mobile Map. In addition, he has worked through the Grand County Non-motorized Trail Committee to promote responsible equestrian recreation and to enhance opportunities for these users.

He has been instrumental in the approval and construction of all of the designated equestrian trails. His work on the Hollywood Westerns Trailhead serves as a vital access point for these trails, exemplifying an effective response to emerging public resource management challenges on a landscape scale.

Stephen's contributions have resulted in greater trust, commitment, and shared stewardship responsibility among the community and institutions related to BLM. His 15 years of service to the Grand County's non-motorized trail advisory committee underscores his dedication to collaborative efforts and sustainable land management.

In summary, Stephen Schultz exemplifies the values embodied by the PLF Landscape Stewardship Award through his tireless commitment to public land conservation and management. His impactful work, leadership, and dedication to fostering community engagement make him an exceptional candidate for this esteemed recognition.

The Public Lands Foundation is pleased to present Stephen Shultz with its 2025 Landscape Stewardship Award for invaluable contributions to the stewardship of America's public landscapes.

**OUTSTANDING PUBLIC LANDS PROFESSIONAL
EMPLOYEE AWARD
MANAGERIAL/ADMINISTRATIVE CATEGORY**

JAMES “TODD” FORBES

The Public Lands Foundation is proud to present the 2025 Outstanding Public Lands Professional Employee Award in the Managerial/ Administrative Category to James “Todd” Forbes.

A wildlife biologist at heart, Mr. Forbes is a seasoned leader and land use practitioner, having served both the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service. Todd joined BLM in January 2000 serving as Wildlife Biologist, Assistant Field Manager, and Field Manager in the Lakeview District, Oregon, prior to accepting his current role as District Manager in 2018. Before coming to the BLM, Todd was a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Forest Service in central Oregon. He attended Oregon State University and holds a degree in wildlife science.

Each day, Mr. Forbes brings experience and passion to his job as the Lakeview District Manager in administering approximately 3.5 million acres of public land in Lake, Klamath, and Harney counties in south-central and southeastern Oregon, varying from the mixed conifer forests on the east slope of the Cascade Mountains to the beautiful high desert country of Oregon’s Outback. Todd has spent his career devoted to serving the American people and being a steward of public lands. His work will leave a lasting legacy.

Bringing partners to the table and resources effectively to the ground in a well-informed and reasoned manner are best practices by which Mr. Forbes lives daily. His many years of field experience, commitment to working with partners, and immense love for the region make him an exemplary leader and collaborator. He is responsible for programs of foundational importance to BLM and communities in south-central Oregon, including forest and rangeland health, fire suppression, wild horses and burros, habitat and associated fish and wildlife species, and recreation, to name a few. Mr. Forbes’ collaboration with local leaders in prioritizing and planning restoration projects and stewarding restoration activities across the landscape is significant and a model for others across BLM.

Mr. Forbes never shies from complexity or controversy, consistently demonstrating outstanding leadership with employees and collaborative partners to successfully implement the BLM mission. For his demonstrated leadership as a professional administrator, manager, and leader; his commitment to collaboratively implementing FLPMA; his development of future leaders; and his proven ability to make a sustained difference time and time again, the Public Lands Foundation recognizes James “Todd” Forbes with its Outstanding Public Lands Professional Award in the Managerial/ Administrative category for 2025.

DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT CONTACT INFORMATION?

**Please help us keep our records current and ensure we have your current e-mail address on file.
Message us at info@publicland.org**

PUBLIC LANDS DISPOSAL

There continues to be considerable debate regarding proposals for the disposal of Federal lands, including legislative efforts by Congress and proposals for the disposal of Federal lands for affordable housing in many western communities. In response to these proposals, Secretary Burgum on March 17, 2025 announced the establishment of a Joint Task Force on Federal Land for Housing between the Department of the Interior and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to study the use of Federal land to increase supply and decrease costs for affordable housing. Under the Interior and HUD agreement, HUD will identify where housing needs are most pressing and guide the process by working with state and local leaders at the community level. Interior will identify locations that can support housing, while also considering environmental impact and land use restrictions. Although BLM has identified some public lands near western communities that may potentially be available for community expansion, many of these lands may be valued by local communities for their open space or may not be consistent with local community development and zoning plans.



Several members of Congress launched a bipartisan Public Lands Caucus in the House to stop legislative actions for the disposal of public lands. The PLF has encouraged the Senate to form a similar Public Lands Caucus. The Public Lands Caucus pushed back against a House Natural Resources Committee proposed amendment in the House FY 2026 Budget

Reconciliation package that would have placed some 450,000 acres of public land in Nevada and Utah up for sale. That amendment language was removed from the House Budget Reconciliation package and proposed revised language was also removed from the Senate Budget bill. The Western Governors' Association has also expressed concerns over the inclusion of language in Appropriations bills regarding the disposal of public lands in the western States. There has also been bipartisan legislation introduced in this session of Congress, the "Public Lands in Public Hands Act" (H.R.718), that would place limitations on the disposal of public lands.

GEORGE LEA FOUNDER'S SCHOLARSHIP



One of the most important advocacy programs the PLF engages in each year is the awarding of two \$5,000 scholarships to students who are pursuing a course of study in the natural resources field. The PLF continues to request donations to support the George Lea Founder's Scholarship Fund. We hope our members and other supporters of the PLF will respond to the call for donations to help the PLF continue this important program. Donations in any amount would be greatly appreciated and can be made either online or by check. Please ensure that you earmark your donation for the Scholarship Fund and thank you in advance for your consideration!

FRIENDS ORGANIZATIONS

Editor: *There are over 80 local place-based “Friends” organizations supporting the work of BLM on the public lands. This concept, like the National Landscape Conservation System, was part of then Secretary Bruce Babbitt’s vision in 1996 for a successful system of protected BLM lands for the next century. In this edition of the Monitor we are highlighting the Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument and the Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, both in New Mexico. The Friends organizations support BLM in the management of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument located in the northern Rio Grande valley area of New Mexico and the Organ Mountains-Desert*

Peaks National Monument located in southern New Mexico. The Rio Grande del Norte National Monument was designated by Presidential Proclamation in March 2013. More than 300,000 people visited the 242,500 acre National Monument in 2024 and the National Monument has over 70 active Special Recreation Permits authorizing commercial outfitting and recreational activities. The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument was designated by Presidential Proclamation in May 2014. More than 600,000 people visited the 496,330 acre National Monument in 2024. The Friends organizations make these visitor experiences better.

FRIENDS OF THE RIO GRANDE DEL NORTE NATIONAL MONUMENT By Ben Mortensen, Outreach Coordinator Friends of the Rio Grande Del Norte

Located in northern New Mexico, the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument encompasses over 240,000 acres of rugged shield volcanoes, expansive plains, and the dramatic Rio Grande Gorge—one of the region’s most iconic landscapes and the largest rift valley in the U.S. Designated in 2013, it is the second-largest National Monument in the State and is home to extraordinary ecological diversity, deep cultural heritage, and year-round recreational opportunities.



Rio Grande del Norte NM
(Friends photo)

The Monument is a sanctuary for wildlife and a living cultural landscape. The Rio Grande Gorge supports nesting raptors including bald eagles, golden eagles, and peregrine falcons. In the surrounding high desert, elk, mule deer, and pronghorn antelope rely on the Monument for critical winter habitat. The area is also home to reintroduced populations of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep and River Otters, brought back through decades of collaboration between

land managers and conservationists. Thousands of years of human history are etched into this landscape, which holds archaeological sites and sacred places still used and respected by Indigenous communities.

The Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument was founded to preserve and conserve this landscape. Our mission is to support the traditions and healthy future of the Monument through community-driven stewardship for all.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Friends group plays an active role in connecting the public to the Monument in ways that build understanding, enjoyment, and care for the landscape. We host family-friendly events throughout the year, including youth fishing days, cleanup events, and guided hikes on topics ranging from geology and archaeology to wildlife ecology and land history. These programs bring together outdoor enthusiasts, students, parents, and public land professionals to foster stronger community ties and deepen personal connections to the landscape.

The Friends have worked hard to engage a broader audience in meaningful ways. Events like our Community Float on the Rio Grande, Women’s Fly-Fishing Clinic, and Otter Education Day offer free, fun, and educational experiences that encourage locals to explore and value the Monument as a shared resource.

Partnerships

Our work is deeply rooted in partnership with the BLM Taos Field Office, whose support and collaboration have been essential in bringing our mission to life. From co-hosting educational events and volunteer stewardship projects to coordinating conservation efforts on the Monument, the BLM Taos team has been an active and committed ally in helping us engage the community and care for this extraordinary landscape. Their willingness to work hand-in-hand with a local nonprofit has created a strong model for how Federal agencies and grassroots organizations can protect and improve public lands—together.

In addition to our partnership with BLM, we regularly collaborate with local conservation organizations and a network of local outfitters and schools. These partnerships bring diverse expertise and energy to our efforts, allowing us to broaden our impact, offer unique experiences for the public, and build a stronger community of land stewards across northern New Mexico.

Youth Engagement and Outdoor Education

The Friends group believes that you can't protect something unless you care about it—and you can't care about it unless you know it. That's why we invest in connecting the next generation of outdoor leaders with the land. Our youth program, the Outdoor Academy, provides hands-on outdoor learning for students in Taos County. We teach weekly classes in Taos Public Schools and Taos Pueblo Day School, introducing students to public land access, environmental sustainability, traditional land uses, and a range of outdoor recreation opportunities. Guest



Rio Grande del Norte NM – Youth Fishing Event
(Friends photo)

speakers from Federal agencies, conservation nonprofits, and local outfitting businesses help students explore real-world career pathways and see what's possible here in their own community.

Students can then enter our Youth Guide Schools, where they earn credentials in fly fishing and white-water rafting. In addition, we also offer paid summer internships, placing students with local outfitters or land management agencies. Our goal is to show students that they can build meaningful futures in the outdoor economy—without leaving home.

On-the-Ground Stewardship

Stewardship is more than a concept—it's a central part of how we show up for the Monument. Over the past year, Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte has hosted and supported multiple cleanup and restoration events that put volunteers directly on the landscape. We worked alongside BLM, Taos County, and local trail and cycling organizations to lead a large-scale cleanup of Horse Thief Mesa, a high-traffic area on the edge of the Monument that had suffered from illegal dumping. This spring over 50 volunteers helped remove trash, clean up an informal shooting area, and restore the space for safer, more enjoyable recreation.



Rio Grande del Norte NM – Horse Thief Mesa Cleanup
(Friends photo)

On the Slide Trail, a scenic route with views into the Rio Grande Gorge, we partnered with Taos Ski Valley Patrol to remove large debris—including old appliances—that had been illegally dumped down the cliff. Thanks to the Patrol's technical expertise and rope systems, we were able to hoist heavy

materials out of the canyon with minimal impact to the terrain.

In addition to targeted cleanups, we host Public Lands Stewardship Days to give community members hands-on opportunities to care for the Monument. One project we're especially proud of is our ongoing partnership with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers to remove old barbed wire and net-wire fencing. As a vital migratory corridor for deer, elk, and pronghorn, the Monument has been fragmented by outdated fencing that blocks pronghorn movement and poses fatal risks to other wildlife. By removing or replacing these barriers with wildlife-friendly fencing, we're making the landscape safer for animals and more enjoyable for those who come to view and appreciate them.



Rio Grande del Norte NM – Fence Removal Project
(Friends photo)

These monthly fence pulls, held throughout the warmer seasons, not only restore habitat—they also foster a shared sense of stewardship and community connection to this remarkable public land.

Advocacy and Protection

Advocacy has been a part of our work from the beginning. The Friends have stood against threats to public lands and fought to ensure the Monument's designation remains meaningful and intact. During the national review of monument designations, we have worked to send a strong message of support for public lands and the communities that rely on them. We've continued to speak out against proposed Federal staffing cuts, rollbacks to land protections, and efforts to weaken access to public resources. We've also partnered with Congressional leaders to elevate the importance of local voices in shaping public land policy. Through these efforts, we've helped ensure that traditional uses—like hunting, fishing, piñon gathering, and wood cutting—remain protected as essential parts of the Monument's identity and the region's heritage.

To learn more about the Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, visit our website at www.riograndefriends.org. There you can explore upcoming events, sign up for our newsletter, or make a donation to support youth education, conservation efforts, and public lands stewardship in northern New Mexico. Whether you join us for a hike, volunteer at a cleanup, or help us get a student into the outdoors, we'd love to have you involved.

FRIENDS OF ORGAN MOUNTAINS-DESERT PEAKS NM

By Patrick Nolan, Director

Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks

The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is located in southern New Mexico and surrounds the city of Las Cruces. Comprising nearly half a million acres of a Chihuahuan desert landscape—from the angular cliffs of the iconic Organ Mountains and the desert grasslands in the Uvas Mountain range to the volcanic fields of the Potrillo Mountains—it's a one-of-a-kind landscape that has inspired generations and defined life in southern New Mexico for generations. Created in 2014 after a years long community led campaign to protect its unique cultural and natural values, its very existence is a testament to the impact communities can have when advocating for the protection and preservation of our public lands.



Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks NM, New Mexico
(BLM photo)

The Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks was established in 2012 to rally local voices and leaders in the Monument campaign. As the Monument's impact in the local community has grown and evolved, so has the work of the Friends organization. Our work centers around building connections between our community and the Monument. Our Moving Montañas program offers community youth opportunities to spend time in our outdoor spaces. We offer after school programming as well as camps during fall, spring and summer breaks. In partnership with the local BLM office, we offer guided docent hikes which help to broaden and deepen the knowledge and love our community has with our desert landscapes.

Through this partnership we also host 4th grade classrooms from across the community for a guided hike of the Monument as part of the Every Kid Outdoors program. Through community engagement and advocacy, we support policies to help preserve our public lands.



Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks NM
Every Kid Outdoors Program
(Friends photo)

The Monument serves as a prime example of why the Antiquities Act is such a crucial tool in the work to protect the public lands. Since its inception in 1906, the Antiquities Act has been utilized by nearly every president to protect and safeguard our shared historical and cultural heritage. The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, with its strong cultural and historical values, is exactly the type of landscape it was intended to protect. Its early indigenous history, with over 200 documented archaeological sites, reveals 10,000 years of human habitation on these lands. Several significant sites tell the story of Spanish exploration of these lands, and the historic Butterfield Overland Trail was a main route for travelers heading to the west coast and winds its way through the Monument boundaries. The famous outlaw, Billy the Kid, roamed these lands in the latter half of the 1800s. Practice bombing targets from WWII are still visible in the desert landscape. American Astronauts utilized the lunar-like landscapes of the Potrillo Mountains to prepare for lunar missions.

FRIENDS OF ORGAN MOUNTAINS-DESERT PEAKS *(continued)*

All told, the Monument tells a powerful story about why we protect places and how we can continue to learn from these landscapes.

In the 11 plus years since designation, the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument has proven to be a major pull for visitors and locals alike. Visitation numbers have tripled from 2012 to 2022, a telling sign in how important the designation of this landscape is in our work to connect a larger population to our outdoor spaces. The economic impact is a boon to our local community, with \$236 million since designation and \$35 million alone in 2022, 305 jobs directly tied to the Monument designation, and \$13 million in tax revenue for local municipalities in the past ten years. Of all the visitors to our area, an incredible 73 percent listed the Monument as their main reason to visit. With 61 percent of total visitors being local residents, the Monument has had a significant impact on the quality of life and public health for our residents.

The Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks know that the investment in resources directed to BLM to manage and care for this incredible place is what sustains us. We have no more important partner than with our local BLM. From the Monument manager, biologists, outdoor recreation leads, archaeologists, and rangers,

we have a team of people dedicated to this place. It's a significant factor when we talk about protection. Protection also means management and having the resources to do it. After years of pushing to complete it, BLM has just this year finalized a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Monument, which will help both our community and BLM manage the Monument in ways that protect the very resources that made its designation possible.

These reasons and more provide a great opportunity to talk about the challenges we currently face in the work to protect our public lands. Early this year, threats to Monument designations, including the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, and proposals to sell the public lands would impact

our public lands for years to come. Though these efforts were met with immediate resistance from the general public, the threats still loom large. The immediate and successful push back on these efforts demonstrates the strong bond and appreciation we have for our public lands. While the road ahead for public lands conservation will certainly have some challenges, the Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks will continue to work with the local community and in partnership

with our local BLM office for the betterment of the public lands.



**Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks NM
Volunteers and Friends Celebrate Anniversary**
(Friends photo)

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS

The General Accountability Office (GAO) on June 25, 2025, issued Decisions that the requirements of the Congressional Review Act of 1996 (CRA) apply to BLM decisions and approvals of Resource Management Plans (RMPs). The GAO Decisions related to the January 2025 Record of Decision for the North Dakota RMP, the November 2024 Record of Decision for the Central Yukon RMP, and the November 2024 Record of Decision for the Miles City RMP. In addition, the GAO on July 24, 2025, issued a Decision that the CRA also applied to the April 2022 Record of Decision on the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Integrated Activity Plan. *The GAO on September 18, 2025, also issued a Decision that the CRA applied to the November 2024 Record of Decision for the Buffalo RMP in Wyoming.* However, these Decisions have much broader implications for all BLM land use management plans since passage of the CRA in 1996, as BLM has not provided decisions and approvals of RMPs to Congress for review under the Act.

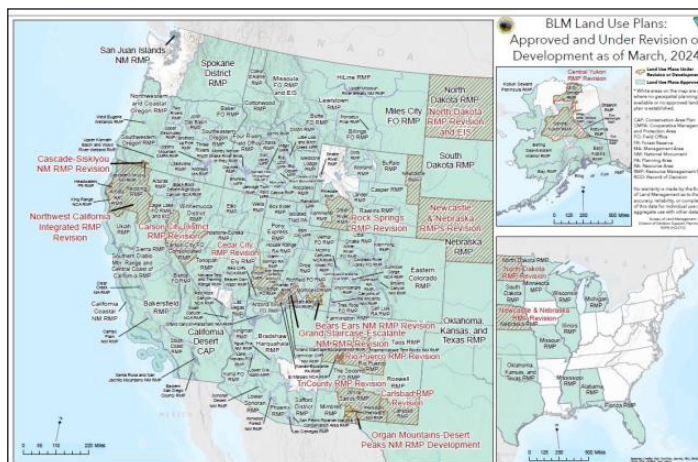
The CRA requires that before a “rule” can take effect, an agency must submit the “rule” to both the House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as the Comptroller General for review. The CRA adopts the definition of a “rule” under the Administrative Procedures Act (APA). The definition of a “rule” under the APA states that a rule is “the whole or a part of an agency statement of general or particular applicability and future effect designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy or describing the organization, procedure, or practice requirements of an agency.” The GAO determined that a BLM RMP met all of the requirements under the law to be defined as a “rule”. First, an RMP is an agency statement as it was issued by a Federal agency. Second, an RMP has a future effect as it is used to guide the use of public lands for the next 15 to 20 years. Finally, an RMP implements, interprets, or prescribes law or policy, because it designates areas of BLM-administered public land for certain purposes in accordance with BLM’s responsibilities for land use management under FLPMA.

The GAO concluded that a BLM RMP meets the definition of a “rule” and is therefore subject to the submission and review requirements of the CRA. The CRA allows Congress to review and

disapprove “rules” issued by Federal agencies for a period of 60 days using special procedures. If a Resolution of disapproval is enacted by Congress, then the new “rule” (in this case the approval of an RMP) has no force or effect.

The House of Representatives on September 3, 2025 approved Resolutions to disapprove the Miles City RMP (House Resolution 104), the North Dakota RMP (House Resolution 105), and the Alaska Central Yukon RMP (House Resolution 106). Congressman Begich (AK) on October 10, 2025 introduced House Resolution 131 to disapprove the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Plan in Alaska. Other RMPs could also be subject to additional review by Congress. The Senate on October 8, 2025 approved Resolutions to disapprove the Miles City RMP (Senate Resolution 61) and the North Dakota RMP (Senate Resolution 62) and on October 9, 2025 approved a Resolution to disapprove the Alaska Central Yukon RMP (Senate Resolution 63).

The PLF submitted a letter on September 8, 2025 to the Senate Majority Leader and the Senate Democratic Leader requesting that the Senate avoid such Resolutions, as the unintended consequences of invalidating BLM RMPs for millions of acres of public land would be significant. The PLF also requested that Congress amend the CRA to clarify that BLM RMPs prepared under the statutory authority of Section 202 of FLPMA are not “rules or regulations” subject to CRA review. The PLF letter to the Senate has been posted to the PLF website.



BLM Land Use Plans - 2024
(BLM map)

THE EXPLORE ACT

By Jack Placchi, PLF Colorado

(Editors Note: The PLF on September 25, 2025 signed onto a joint letter with other organizations to Secretary Burgum to encourage a priority be placed on implementation of the provisions in both the Modernizing Access to Our Public Land Act of 2022 and the Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences Act of 2025. Both Acts will enhance recreational access to our Nation's public lands. The joint letter to the Secretary is posted on the PLF website.)

The Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act (P. L. 118-234) was signed by the President on January 4, 2025. The EXPLORE Act is a comprehensive package with over 80 pages of detailed provisions and over 30 sections. Generally, the EXPLORE Act empowers the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to enhance recreation access and experiences on Federal public lands.

The Act encourages opening up public lands to more types of recreation—biking, climbing, fishing, camping—for a broader population, prioritizes equity for veterans, youth, people with disabilities, under served communities, and leverages public-private partnerships and new technology (digital passes, real-time data, broadband access).



For BLM, the EXPLORE Act tries to help support access, modernization, and efficiency—making public lands more accessible and enjoyable, improving infrastructure, streamlining policies, and boosting economic and social value from recreation. A summary of the key effects of the Act on BLM includes:

- **Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation** – The Act officially establishes a Council—including BLM, the National Park Service, Forest Service, and others—to align and elevate recreation policy across agencies.

- **Target Shooting Range Access** – BLM Districts must assess current coverage and, where lacking, identify and build at least one new target shooting range per district within five years—boosting safe, public firearms shooting access.



Baldy Mountain Shooting Range
BLM Phoenix District, AZ

- **Motorized and Non-motorized Access via Maps** – The Act mandates that BLM complete inventories and produce GIS-formatted maps detailing permitted routes—including over-snow usage—and refresh these maps over time.
- **Digital Connectivity and Visitor Infrastructure** – The Act pushes for better broadband, cell service, and on-site amenities (trail access, campsites, climbing, biking routes), improving visitor experience and safety.
- **Permit Processes** – The Act attempts to make the complex special recreation permit systems become more streamlined and digital—making it easier for small businesses, guides, and recreation groups to operate. One permit can now authorize activities across multiple jurisdictions and provides new rules and guidance to support media filming, motorized and non motorized access, aquatic activities, invasive species control, and gateway community support.
- **Volunteers and "Good Neighbor" Partnerships** – The BLM can lean on volunteers more heavily and extend Good Neighbor Authority.

THE EXPLORE ACT *(continued)*

The BLM is authorized to provide for incidental expenses, such as transportation, uniforms, lodging, training, equipment, and subsistence. For the purpose of a tort claim a volunteer under this Act shall be considered a Federal employee. There is no longer a requirement for a cooperator or volunteer to have liability insurance to provide the volunteer services authorized under the Act.

- **Access for Diverse Groups** – The Act prioritizes recreation access for under served communities, people with disabilities, veterans,

Gold Star families, and military members. The BLM will be required to carry out a comprehensive assessment of outdoor recreation facilities within five years.

- **Community and Economic Ties** – By improving recreation, the Act supports gateway communities—reducing overcrowding and boosting local economies tied to outdoor recreation. Promotes public-private partnerships for campground, resort, and visitor center modernization.

ELECTION 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The annual election for Officers and Board Members of the PLF is underway. Current PLF members should receive a notice by email for a Survey Monkey link that contains an online PLF ballot for the election. The online ballot should take only a minute or two to complete. There will be no paper ballots provided to members this year. You may vote for any or all of the National Representatives and for your individual State Representative. It should be noted that we currently have vacant State Representative position for Nevada and New Mexico and are looking for volunteers to fill these positions. Please be sure to vote before December 15, 2025.

Please also consider paying your membership dues when you complete your online ballot if you have not already paid your annual dues.

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY UPDATE



Photo by Ray Brady

The PLF continues to monitor Congressional legislation, rulemaking activities, and Executive Orders pertaining to the Department of the Interior, BLM, and public lands management. The PLF, as an advocacy organization for the public lands, is actively engaged in providing our perspectives on a wide range of issues including the annual BLM appropriations, any program oversight hearings, proposed amendments to FLPMA and other major statutes affecting public lands management, and proposed regulations regarding BLM resource programs. Reviewing legislation and proposed rules and preparing comments and testimony, when appropriate, is an important part of our advocacy work. We update our Position Statements and Letters and Testimony web pages on our website under the “Advocacy” link and provide legislative and regulatory updates in the *Monitor* on significant actions.

APPROPRIATIONS

STATUS: The White House on May 2, 2025 released a proposed FY 2026 Budget. The proposed budget would include a 30.5 percent reduction in funding for the Department of the Interior, including a \$198.0 million reduction in BLM Conservation Programs and a \$80.0 million reduction in Interior-wide Renewable Energy Programs. The BLM 2026 Budget request includes \$827.4 million for the Lands and Resources appropriation and \$69.3 million for the Oregon and California Grant Lands appropriation, or a 37 percent overall reduction in funding from FY 2025. *The House Appropriations Committee on July 22, 2025 advanced a 2026 Appropriations bill that included \$1,193.9 million for BLM Lands and Resources Management and \$104.9 million for Oregon and California Grant Lands. This level of funding is above the BLM’s proposed budget and would represent only an eight percent reduction in funding from 2025. The Senate Appropriations Committee on July 24, 2025 advanced a 2026 Appropriations bill that included \$1,257.0 million for BLM Lands and Resources Management and \$115.5 million for Oregon and California Grant Lands. This level of funding would represent only a three percent reduction in funding from 2025. Congress has yet to approve a 2026 Appropriations bill and the Federal government is currently shutdown for a lack of funding.*

SUMMARY: Congress will continue discussions of 2026 funding levels in response to the

President’s proposed Budget. The separate budget reconciliation and resolution package for future fiscal years includes several budget proposals that could potentially impact the Department of the Interior and BLM. Some of these potential budget proposals could include the sale of public lands to generate additional Federal revenues, proposals to increase Federal mineral leasing to increase revenues, and further reductions in staffing and resource programs to reduce Federal expenditures.

PLF POSITION: The PLF submitted written testimony on March 10, 2025 to the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies on the BLM 2026 Budget proposal to assist in their discussion. The PLF highlighted the importance of funding in the energy and minerals program areas, continued funding for the greater sage-grouse initiative, concerns over the ever increasing costs in the wild horse and burro program, need to address wild-land fire and rangeland and forest health issues, backlog of grazing lease and permit renewals, and the dramatic increase in recreation use of the public lands. However, the budget reconciliation and resolution package and the White House proposed 2026 Budget could potentially have significant future impacts on BLM and the public lands. The PLF will be closely monitoring these budget proposals and update where necessary the written budget testimony provided by the PLF on March 10, 2025 to the Appropriations Committees.

CONSERVATION REGULATIONS –
43 CFR 1600 (PLANNING)
AND 6100 (ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE)

STATUS: The BLM on May 9, 2024 issued the Final Conservation and Landscape Health Rule (Public Lands Rule). The Office of Management and Budget on April 14, 2025, posted a Notice that the BLM Public Lands Rule was marked for Recission. *The BLM on September 11, 2025 published in the Federal Register a Proposed Rule to formally rescind the Public Lands Rule. The publication of the Proposed Rule provides for a 60 day public comment period.*

SUMMARY: The Public Lands Rule applied land health standards to all BLM public lands and provided for the use of “restoration and mitigation leases” to support mitigation efforts and restoration of public lands. However, BLM in February 2025 rescinded an internal policy memorandum (IM 2024-038) that had previously been issued to implement the “restoration and mitigation” leasing system and also rescinded policy memorandum IM 2024-035 that required the identification of priority restoration landscapes. The BLM has now proposed to rescind the entire Conservation and Landscape Health Rule.

PLF POSITION: The PLF submitted comments on the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule on June 15, 2023 and those comments are posted on the PLF website. *There are many other authorities that provide the BLM the ability for mitigation and restoration of the public lands and BLM will probably continue to use these tools to participate in conservation efforts. Federal, State, and local government collaboration in conservation efforts are also expected to continue throughout the west at different scales and under various other existing authorities. The PLF has therefore decided not to provide comments on the proposed rescission of the Public Lands Rule.*

NEPA REGULATIONS
40 CFR PARTS 1500 – 1508

STATUS: The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) on February 19, 2025, issued a policy guidance memorandum to Federal agencies on Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and on February 25, 2025, published an Interim Final Rule that would remove the CEQ NEPA Implementing Regulations. On April 30, 2025, the CEQ announced the establishment of an

internal “permitting innovation center” to lead efforts to revamp and shorten agency reviews under NEPA, including the use of technology software to streamline the NEPA process. *The Interior Department on July 1, 2025 published an Interim Final Rule that would also rescind NEPA implementing regulations. Interior has prepared NEPA guidelines and procedures in a Handbook separate from the regulatory process.*

SUMMARY: The NEPA was enacted by Congress in 1969 and CEQ issued initial guidelines in 1970 to the various Federal agencies that were then in the process of developing their individual regulations and practices to comply with NEPA. Between 1970 and 1977 approximately 70 different sets of agency regulations were developed. In response to confusion among the various sets of regulations, CEQ in 1978 issued a consistent set of NEPA regulations. These CEQ regulations were amended and revised over time. On January 31, 2025, the U.S. District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia found that CEQ lacked the authority to promulgate NEPA regulations and that prior Executive Orders had unlawfully converted CEQ from an advisory body to a regulatory agency. A North Dakota Federal District Court decision on February 3, 2025 also found that CEQ lacked statutory authority to promulgate NEPA regulations. In response to these decisions, CEQ published an Interim Final Rule that would remove the CEQ NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500 – 1508). The BLM follows the NEPA guidance provided in the Department of the Interior Manual (516 DM) and the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1). *An updated Departmental Manual and Departmental Handbook on NEPA Procedures was released with the recently published Interior Interim Final Rule that rescinded the NEPA regulations. It should be noted in the Departmental Handbook on NEPA Procedures that there is no requirement for public involvement when BLM relies on a Categorical Exclusion or prepares an Environmental Assessment for an action on public land. There is a requirement for publication of a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS, but no requirement for further public involvement when preparing an EIS. The Responsible Official, however, has discretion to determine whether any further public involvement is appropriate.*

PLF POSITION: The PLF on March 24, 2025 provided comments to CEQ on the Interim Final Rule that would remove the NEPA Implementing Regulations. Those comments are posted on the PLF website. The PLF recommended that CEQ issue an

immediate “Advisory to the Agencies” that would allow BLM and other Federal agencies to continue to implement agency specific NEPA guidelines and authorities. This would include the continued use of the Department of the Interior Manual (516 DM) and the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1).

FIRE AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

STATUS: The *Aerial Firefighting Enhancement Act* (P.L. 119-18), which allows the Defense Department to sell excess aircraft and parts to fight wildfires, was signed by the President on June 12, 2025. The *Fix Our Forests Act* (H.R.471) passed the House on January 23, 2025 and a hearing in the Senate was held on March 6, 2025. This bill would establish requirements for managing forests on Federal lands, including requirements to reduce wildfire threats, expediting NEPA review of forest management projects, and implementing those projects. The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a Hearing on June 26, 2025 to discuss the use of advanced technology in forest management and to further push for passage of the *Fix Our Forests Act*. The bipartisan supported *National Prescribed Fire Act* was reintroduced by both the Senate and House in this session of Congress. The legislation proposes funding up to 20 large prescribed fire projects per year, with priority on landscapes of at least 50,000 acres and increase the total acreage by 10 percent annually for a decade. Several other wildland fire related pieces of legislation have been introduced by both the House and the Senate to increase Federal agency response to wildfire issues and have been forwarded to various Congressional Committees for

review and potential Hearings. The White House on May 2, 2025 released a proposed FY 2026 Budget that included a proposal to establish a new unified Federal Wildland Fire Service within the Department of the Interior. The President on June 12, 2025 signed an Executive Order that would consolidate wildfire programs between the Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture, without formally establishing the Wildland Fire Service. *The Secretary of the Interior on September 10, 2025 signed Secretarial Order 3443 that formally established a unified U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) within the Interior Department. The Order will consolidate wildland fire and aviation programs and establish a USWFS Fire Chief reporting directly to the Secretary of the Interior. The Order also provides for improved efficiency and effectiveness of wildland fire management between Interior and the U.S. Forest Service under existing authorities.*

SUMMARY: The 119th Congress has introduced numerous bills in response to another long and destructive wildfire season, in an attempt to increase the efficiency of Federal agency wildland fire resources. Many of these bills include similar provisions and parts of the bills in both the House and Senate may be combined to seek bipartisan support. The *National Prescribed Fire Act* was reintroduced by Senator Wyden (OR) and Senator Budd (NC) in the Senate and Representative Valado (CA) and Representative Schrier (WA) in the House. The *Emergency Wildfire Technology Act* (H.R.836) would require the evaluation of aerial firefighting systems. The *Strengthening Wildfire Resiliency Through Satellites Act* (H.R.527) would require the establishment of a competitive grant program to fund satellite monitoring of wildfires. The *Wildfire Prevention Act* (S.140) would accelerate fuel treatment projects on Federal land and includes other provisions. The *Fit for Purpose Wildfire Readiness Act* (S.441) would create a National Wildfire Service and the *Wildfire Intelligence and Coordination Act* (S.453) would establish a joint interagency office serving as the development and operational center for the assessment and prediction of wildland fires and fires that move into the built environment. Other bills include the *Fire Suppression and Response Funding Assurance Act* (S.133), the *Western Wildfire Support Act* (S.91), the *Fire Ready Nations Act* (S.306), the *Emergency Fuel Reduction Act* (S.395), the *Wildfire Response and Preparedness Act* (S.902).), and the *Wildfire Resilient Communities Act* introduced in both the House and Senate that would establish a \$30 billion mandatory fund for hazardous fuels reduction projects on Federal lands.



Prescribed Fire, Oregon (BLM photo)

PLF POSITION: The PLF is a member of the Wildfire Resilience Coalition (WFC) which is comprised of a diverse partnership of over 40 organizations including conservation groups, professional societies, tribal interests, wildfire interests, states, counties, universities, timber associations, and others. The WFC works to support the consensus recommendations of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, which released a comprehensive report on wildland fire actions in September 2023. As part of WFC, the PLF has signed onto letters favoring the Commission's recommendations, including supporting firefighter pay legislation, improving firefighter working conditions, funding for fuels and forest resiliency projects, and the *Fix Our Forests Act*. The PLF also works closely with the National Association of Forest Service Retirees, to coordinate our involvement with the WFC. The PLF on March 10, 2025 submitted written testimony on the FY2026 BLM Budget to the House Committee on Appropriations which included support for the recommendations of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission and also recommended reauthorization of the Forest Ecosystem Health and Recovery Fund. *The PLF on May 20, 2025 sent a letter to both House and Senate members regarding concerns over the establishment of a Federal Wildland Fire Service and on August 8, 2025 sent a letter to Secretary Burgum expressing opposition to the establishment of a Wildland Fire Service within the Interior Department. We will continue to monitor the legislative proposals and the White House 2026 budget proposal, as the Interior moves forward with implementation of Secretarial Order 3443.*

OIL AND GAS REGULATIONS 43 CFR PART 3100

STATUS: The U.S. District Court of North Dakota on September 12, 2024 issued a decision to grant an injunction and halt implementation of the BLM Final Methane Rule or Oil and Gas Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation Rule (43 CFR Parts 3160 and 3170). The Court ruled that the regulation represents a significant impingement of States' rights and targets an area that is already regulated by the Clean Air Act and state laws. The Western Energy Alliance and oil and gas industry associations in New Mexico, North Dakota, Wyoming, and Utah on May 15, 2024 filed a petition with the U.S. District Court of Wyoming to invalidate and vacate the BLM Oil and Gas Leas-

ing Rule (43 CFR Part 3100) of April 2024. This rule incorporated provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. The leasing rule case is still pending. The Department and BLM have also announced the intent to rescind the Oil and Gas Leasing Rule.

The Secretary of the Interior on February 3, 2025 issued Secretarial Order 3418, in response to the President's Executive Order of January 20, 2025, "Unleashing American Energy", to review the steps that may be appropriate to suspend, revise, or rescind the oil and gas leasing rule and the waste prevention rule and any BLM policy memoranda issued respect to these rules.

SUMMARY: The Final Methane or Waste Prevention Rule aims to reduce the waste of natural gas from venting, flaring, and leaks during oil and gas production activities on both Federal and Indian leases. The Final Oil and Gas Leasing Rule updates the BLM onshore oil and gas leasing regulations to codify provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and implement reforms from the Interior Department Report on the Federal Oil and Gas Leasing Program (November 2021). The Final Leasing Rule increases royalty rates to 16.67 percent, increases rental rates to \$15 per acre, increases minimum lease bids to \$10 per acre, eliminates non-competitive leasing, reduces the non-operational period for idle wells to four years, increases minimum lease bonds to \$150,000, increases minimum statewide bonds to \$500,000, eliminates nationwide bonds, and includes other provisions to ensure responsible oil and gas leasing and development on the public lands.

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PLF POSITION: The PLF submitted comments on the Proposed Leasing Rule to BLM on September 8, 2023. Those comments are posted on the PLF website. The PLF also requested in Appropriations written testimony that a 10 percent funding increase be provided to BLM in FY 2026 to handle an expected increase in priority oil and gas leasing workload.

SOLAR AND WIND ENERGY REGULATIONS 43 CFR 2800

RULE STATUS: The Department of the Interior on May 14, 2025 announced it is moving to rescind the solar and wind energy Final Rule published on April 11, 2024, which had aimed to incentivize renewable energy development on the public lands. The President's proposed 2026 Budget would also eliminate funding for renewable energy programs in the Department of the Interior. The Interior Department and BLM 2026 Budget Overview and Highlights package has the BLM renewable energy budget line-item zeroed out and refers to solar and wind energy development as "Green New Scam" technologies. *The Secretary on July 15, 2025, issued a Department memo that established new Department review procedures for all decisions, actions, and consultations for wind and solar energy projects on Federal lands that will result in slowing down the permitting process. The Secretary also on August 1, 2025, issued Secretarial Order 3438 that requires further reviews of solar and wind energy projects on the public lands and consider the "energy project's capacity density" in the decision-making process for wind and solar projects that are "inefficient uses of Federal lands". The BLM subsequently canceled the environmental review of the 6.2 gigawatt Esmeralda 7 solar energy generation and battery storage project on some 62,300 acres of public land in southern Nevada pursuant to this policy that would have powered some two million homes. The Draft EIS for the project had been released in July 2024.*

RULE SUMMARY: The Final Rule adjusted and reduced rental fees for solar and wind energy authorizations, provided BLM more flexibility in processing applications for solar and wind energy development in designated leasing areas, and updated criteria on prioritizing solar and wind energy right-of-way applications. *The Reconciliation Budget Bill (One Big Beautiful Bill Act, P.L. 119-21) signed by the President on July 4, 2025, includes an amendment that would establish a royalty rate of 3.9 percent of gross proceeds for solar and wind energy authorizations on the public lands and also provide for a distribution of 25 percent of revenues to the State and 25 percent of revenues to the local County.*

PLF POSITION: The PLF has supported renewable energy development on the public lands and submitted comments on the Proposed Rule to the BLM on August 9, 2023. Those comments are posted on the PLF website. *The PLF also on July 31, 2025, sent a letter to the Secretary requesting that the Department memo of July 15, 2025 be rescinded and that the permitting of solar and wind energy projects proceed under normal BLM review and approval procedures.*



Silver State Solar, NV (BLM photo)

BLM LEADERSHIP

With the continued changes in the leadership positions of BLM, we would like to provide an update on the current BLM Leadership, including the State Directors that provide the day-to-day on-the-ground management for the public lands. The following are the current Deputy Directors and the State Directors for each of the BLM State Offices:

Director	Bill Groffy (<i>Acting</i>)
Principle Deputy Director	Bill Groffy
Deputy Director, Programs & Admin	Jeff Krauss (<i>Acting</i>)
Alaska State Office	Kevin Pendergast
Arizona State Office	Raymond Suazo
California State Office	Joe Stout
Colorado State Office	Doug Vilsack
Eastern States Office	Leah Baker (<i>Acting</i>)
Idaho State Office	Kim Prill (<i>Acting</i>)
Montana State Office	Sonya Germann
Nevada State Office	Jon Raby
New Mexico State Office	Melanie Barnes
OR/WA State Office	Barry Bushue
Utah State Office	Jerry Davis (<i>Acting</i>)
Wyoming State Office	Kris Kirby (<i>Acting</i>)

ELECTRONIC MAILING ONLY

The PLF has gone to an all digital distribution of the quarterly Monitor newsletter to save on printing and mailing costs of our newsletter. All editions of the Monitor are distributed electronically through e-mail to PLF members and are available on the PLF website.

INTERIOR FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Since 2017, the Interior Federal Credit Union and PLF have supported one another's missions. The Credit Union currently offers membership to employees and their families, members, and volunteers of the PLF. The Credit Union in 2024 expanded the partnership to support PLF programs, including the George Lea Founder's Scholarship. The Credit Union makes a yearly donation to the PLF Scholarship Fund and allows individuals in search of membership eligibility a way to join both the Credit Union and the PLF. *The PLF has added 37 new members to our membership rolls since September 2024 under this new partnership effort.*

The Interior Federal Credit Union is the official credit union for the Department of the Interior and has also shown support and assistance to those Federal employees that are being financially impacted by the recent layoffs, terminations, unplanned retirements, and early-outs that are taking place across the Federal government. Additional information on Credit Union assistance can be obtained by calling 800-914-8619 or accessing the Credit Union website at interiorfcu.org.

The Interior Federal Credit Union team spent National Public Lands Day on September 30th giving back to our public lands at Manassas National Battlefield Park in Virginia. The Credit Union volunteer efforts focused on removal of the invasive autumn olive species, a fast-growing shrub that threatens the park's native ecosystems. Armed with gloves, tools, and a shared commitment to conservation, the Credit Union team worked alongside NPS staff and fellow volunteers to remove this aggressive plant from open fields across the historic Civil War battlefield. It was a day of hard work, teamwork, and deep appreciation for the public lands.



**Public Lands Day
Manassas National Battlefield**
(Credit Union photo)

IN MEMORIAM

The PLF is committed to never forgetting the dedicated employees of BLM who have left us. We do so on our website's Memorial Wall and by publishing names of those who passed away in the *Monitor*. If you have a death to report, please e-mail us at obits@publicland.org, preferably with a link to or copy of an obituary. You can rely on the PLF to keep you informed of topical news on the public PLF Facebook page, our website, other social media sites and the Monitor newsletter.



Emigrant National Historic Trail – WY (BLM photo)

Ronald “Ron” David Fellows on July 31, 2025, in Sun City, AZ. Ron was a graduate of Sacramento State University and also served in the U.S. Army. He had a career with BLM in New Mexico and California. His work included restoration work of the Piedras Blancas Light Station near San Simeon, CA. After retiring, he returned to Santa Fe, NM and finally moved to Arizona to be close to family. Donations in his memory were requested to be made to the Piedras Blancas Light Station restoration project at piedrasblancas.org.

Morgan Snow Jensen on December 25, 2024, in Toquerville, UT. Morgan was a U.S. Air Force veteran and served as an Intelligence Officer in both the United States and abroad in Greenland and Morocco. He attended Utah State University and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture and a second Bachelor of Science degree in Range Management. He worked for more than 30 years with BLM in a variety of positions and received many distinctions and honors for his dedicated civil service over the years.

Connie Lynn Lewis (Baski) on October 8, 2023, in Colorado Springs, CO. Connie worked at the Bonnevillle Power Administration and BLM in Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska; Beaverton, Oregon; and Boise, Idaho. She worked at both the BLM Idaho

State Office and the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC). Before she retired, she was working in the International Programs Office at NIFC.

Judyth “Judy” Elaine Reed on July 20, 2024, in Littleton, MA. She earned a degree in Classic Literature from the University of Iowa and a Masters degree in Anthropology from the University of California. She was an Archaeologist for BLM and the Forest Service for 32 years, working in California and Wyoming. She also served on the Board of Directors of the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, CA.

Michael William Roberts on August 31, 2025, in Cody, WY. He earned a Forestry degree from the University of Missouri and worked at the Defense Mapping Agency from 1981 – 1986. In 1986 he joined BLM in Cheyenne, WY and would spend the rest of his life in Wyoming. He moved to Worland, WY in 2004 and retired from BLM in 2014. After retirement he spent his summers as a tour guide at Yellowstone National Park.

Wayne Zinne on October 5, 2025, in Columbia Falls, MT. Wayne was in the Departmental training program in 1969 and later served as a District Manager in California and Montana. He retired as Deputy State Director for Operations in the Montana State Office.

Note: Putting together the Memoriam list in the *Monitor* and maintaining the *Memorial Wall* on the PLF website takes a lot of work by PLF volunteers. If you find errors, or if you know of something we may have missed, we apologize, and will correct the record. If you have concerns, please let Ray Brady know at rbrady@publicland.org.

DONATIONS*

MEMORIAL DONATIONS		GENERAL/ADVOCACY FUND		
RECEIVED FROM	IN MEMORY OF	Rene Berkhoudt	James Curri van	Guy Dugan
Louise Senzel	Irving and Jennie Senzel	Galina Fomenkova	Karen Garcia	Patricia Harvey
ENDOWMENT FUND		Ann Hutchinson	Pamela Kingsbury	Kroger Fund
John Kwiatkowski		Cheryl McCaffrey	Robert Ohrn	Louise Senzel
SCHOLARSHIP FUND		Rosemary Thomas		Shorelunch Video
John Case	Interior Federal CU	Chris and Elaine Brong		
Gregg and Mary Simmons		Gregg and Mary Simmons		

* This list reflects donations received during the period of July 1 through September 30, 2025. Donations received after this period will be reported in the next edition of the Monitor.

You can make a designated donation by credit card on our website at www.publicland.org, or by check sent to the Public Lands Foundation, P.O. Box 7226, Arlington, VA 22207. You can also make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) directly to the PLF from an eligible individual retirement account (IRA). In your transmittal, please make sure to mention if your donation is for the **PLF general fund**, the **George Lea Founder's Scholarship**, or the **Student Congress Fund**. Remember, if you are making a donation in memory of someone who has passed away, you can designate your donation to go to one of these funds. The PLF has also established a **PLF Endowment Fund** to support the long-term purposes and mission of the organization. The PLF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization. Your donations are tax-deductible to the maximum extent permitted under the law.

FOUNDATION FOR AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS

The Foundation for America's Public Lands was established by Congress in 2017 and formally launched by the Department of the Interior and BLM in January 2022. The Foundation's mission includes raising private funding that can be matched by federal appropriations to help the BLM address public land management issues across the 245 million acres of public land managed by the BLM. Information on partnership opportunities with the Foundation can be found on their website at americaslands.org. The PLF will collaborate with the Foundation for America's Public Lands where we have mutual interests and continue our advocacy efforts for the BLM and the sustainable management of the public lands.



THE PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION IS A TAX EXEMPT 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The *Monitor* is what we make it and we encourage you to provide Letters to the Editor or provide other reviews and comments on articles included in your newsletter. It is important to hear from our membership, and if you like something or don't like something, let us know. If you do send an e-mail to the Editor, don't be surprised if it winds up as a Letter to the Editor in the next edition of the *Monitor*. Please provide your comments to rbrady@publicland.org. Comments should be limited to no more than 500 words in length. In addition, members are encouraged to use the bod@publicland.org e-mail address to communicate with the PLF Board.

Essential BLM Staff

As a business owner operating on public lands, I've seen firsthand how deeply tied the outdoor economy is to the health and function of our public land agencies—especially the Bureau of Land Management. Proposed BLM funding and staff reductions, particularly those affecting recreation positions, will have devastating consequences for rural businesses like mine.

At Taos Fly Shop, we rely on access to well-managed public lands for our livelihood. But that access doesn't take care of itself. It's supported by on-the-ground BLM staff who maintain infrastructure, issue permits, steward habitats, and respond to the needs of both visitors and outfitters. Without them, we risk degrading trails and campgrounds, delayed permits, unmanaged use, and declining public trust in these places.

The Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in northern New Mexico is more than a stunning landscape—it's the backbone of our local outdoor economy. Our shop hires guides, teaches classes, hosts youth programs, and provides services to visiting anglers from all over the world. This work is only possible when our public lands are cared for, and that requires a well-supported agency with people in the field.

BLM staff are not expendable—they are essential. Cutting recreation personnel in the name of short-term savings threatens long-term sustainability for communities like mine that are built around access to public lands. I urge decision-makers to recognize the real economic and cultural value these lands represent—and to reinvest in the people who protect them.

**Nick Streit, Owner, Taos Fly Shop
Taos, New Mexico**

The *Monitor* generally reflects ongoing PLF activities, events, updates, awards, and information on former BLM employees. We encourage articles and discussions of issues by posting quality content that also provides a positive exposure of the goals, objectives, and mission of the PLF. However, we need to take some precautions when posting information to the newsletter and other forms of social media to ensure appropriate rules of behavior. In keeping a positive experience for our members, we reserve the right to publish only comments, photos, and other material deemed appropriate by the PLF. We intend on maintaining a friendly and professional tone in the articles in the *Monitor* and any Letters to the Editor.

PLF MEMBERSHIP

PLF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

Regular	\$50
Contributing	\$100
Sponsoring	\$200
Patron.....	\$500

PLF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Date _____

Amount Enclosed _____