

Public Lands Foundation



Big Jacks Creek, Idaho

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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Forest Service Retirees



President's Message

As I embark on my fifth year as President of the PLF, I need to begin by thanking everyone who has helped continue our critical advocacy mission for the public lands managed by the BLM. The members of the Executive Committee, the Board, Margaret Lliteras, Bill Disbrow, the team working to help us resolve issues with our membership database system, and the many members who agreed to assist with reviewing proposed rules and writing letters and Issue Papers have helped so much on this journey. In addition, those members who continue to support us financially are crucial. This job is difficult, but it would be impossible without the support of so many others.

2025 was a difficult year for a variety of reasons. Transitions between administrations are typically challenging and chaotic. However, the impacts on BLM personnel, the rollback of significant rules and regulations, and the moves which threaten the very existence of public lands have combined to make this transition very different. Because there were so many changes being made at breakneck speed, the PLF was unable to address each one. However, we did weigh in on the BLM budget, urged Congress to protect our public lands, argued against the use of the Congressional Review Act to upend existing Resource Management Plans, and did as much as possible to support BLM employees during this time.

We continue to partner with the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR), the Foundation for America's Public Lands, and other organizations with which we share common goals. Additionally, we have highlighted the great work of several "Friends" groups in *The Monitor* this year. In turbulent times, there is strength in numbers, so the PLF plans to continue and potentially expand these efforts in the future.

We had an excellent Annual Meeting in Boise, Idaho this year. The theme of the meeting was "Wildland Fire and Fuels Management." Unfortunately, the meeting occurred right after the lapse in appropriations and as a result, we were unable to engage with career BLM staff. Despite that, we had an excellent meeting. During the meeting in Boise, Ed Shepard graciously volunteered to lead a search committee to identify members of the organization interested in running for the offices of President and Vice-President in the future. While it has been the honor of a lifetime to serve you, I believe organizational leadership changes are healthy and essential. If you know someone who you believe would be a good fit, please contact Ed.

The PLF again this year awarded two \$5,000 scholarships to deserving students pursuing degrees in natural resources and environmental fields and your continued support makes it possible to help fund the education of future natural resource professionals. There are many worthy causes competing for your charitable dollars today, however, please keep the PLF in mind throughout the year as you formulate your charitable giving plans. While the BLM lost hundreds of employees last year, the PLF has not seen a commensurate increase in new members. I ask you to reach out to anyone you know that recently resigned or retired and encourage them to join the PLF. Our mission is more important than ever, and we need to add more public lands warriors to our organization to continue the fight.



Mary Jo Rugwell

2025 PLF Annual Meeting – Boise, Idaho

The 2025 PLF Annual Meeting was held in Boise, Idaho on October 7 and 8, 2025. The theme of the meeting was “Wildland Fire and Fuels Management”. The PLF had planned on a tour of the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise during the meeting, but the tour had to be cancelled due to the government funding shutdown and



the BLM was also unable to participate in the meeting due to the shutdown. Dustin Miller, Idaho State Department of Lands, set the stage during the General Meeting in a robust discussion of the challenges with wildland fire and fuels management on not only Federal lands, but also State lands in the west. The decline in the health of forests has been greater than the rate of growth and it has also been very difficult to manage the ever-increasing impacts of invasive species fire cycles. Wildland and urban interface issues also continue to be a challenge. John Gale, former BLM executive and now with PANO Technologies, discussed advancements in AI-powered wildfire technologies and the need for enhanced partnership efforts with Federal, State and local governments, utilities, and landowners. Steve Ellis, National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR), discussed concerns over proposals to establish a unified U.S. Wildland Fire Service within the Department of the Interior. The PLF decided to prepare a set of PLF Talking Points as followup to the meeting regarding wildland fire and fuels management on the public lands.

A PLF Board Meeting was held on October 8 and included an update from Steve Ellis on NAFSR activities for the year, an update from Tomer Hasson on activities of the Foundation for America’s Public Lands, and a presentation by Marwa Mahmoud (Student Congress representative) on the recommendations from the 2024 Student Congress session on Renewable Energy in Las Vegas, Nevada. Mike Ferguson and Jenna Whitlock provided an update on future plans for the Student Congress and the PLF partnership efforts with NAFSR, BLM, Forest Service and the Andrus Center at Boise State University. Rene Berkhoudt provided an update on the internal review of the PLF membership database system, with a followup discussion by Mary Jo Rugwell on PLF membership, membership retention, and fundraising challenges. Mark Davis, PLF Treasurer, presented a Treasurer’s Report for 2025 and a proposed 2026 Budget which was approved by the Board.

The Board Meeting ended with a discussion of Goals and Objectives for 2026, which included membership initiatives, recruitment efforts for Board members and Officers, and fundraising and donation drives. The Board supported planning efforts for an Annual Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona in 2026, with a possible theme of “Urban Interface and Public Lands Management”.

Advocacy

The PLF works year-round on advocacy outreach activities. We pursue this advocacy mission by remaining current on public land issues and policies, preparing Position Statements, and communicating our concerns and recommendations to the BLM, Congress, stakeholder interest groups and the general public, and responding to media inquiries. We testify before Congress and submit written testimony on budget, legislation, and policy matters affecting the BLM and the public lands.

FY 2026 Budget Testimony

The PLF provided written testimony in March 2025 on the BLM Fiscal Year 2026 proposed budget to both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. The White House and the BLM released proposed FY26 budgets in May 2025, that included a 37 percent overall reduction in BLM funding from FY25. However, both the House and Senate have approved budget bills that would substantially restore funding levels for the BLM and represent only a 2.7 percent reduction in funding from FY25 in the Management of Lands and Resources program area. The PLF has 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 wildland 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. The PLF will continue to monitor future budget proposals and identify those areas that would significantly impact BLM staffing and resource management programs.

Public Lands Disposal

There continues to be 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. Congressman Zinke (MT) and Congressman Vasquez (NM) in May 2025 announced the establishment of a bipartisan Public Lands Caucus in the House to stop legislative actions for the disposal of public lands. The PLF in a letter to the Senate on June 6, 2025, encouraged the Senate to form a similar Public Lands Caucus. In response, Senators Heinrich (NM) and Sheehy (MT) on October 22, 2025 announced the formation of a bipartisan Senate Public Lands Stewardship Caucus to also protect public lands. The House Public Lands Caucus pushed back against a proposed amendment in the House FY26 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.

Renewable Energy

The Department of the Interior on May 14, 2025 announced the intent to rescind existing solar and wind energy regulations that provided incentives for renewable energy development on the public lands and also proposed to eliminate funding for renewable energy programs in the proposed FY26 Budget. In addition, the Secretary has issued policy memos and a Secretarial Order that would require additional reviews of proposed renewable energy projects on the public lands. The PLF continues to support renewable energy development on the public lands and provided written testimony to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in March 2025 to highlight the importance of funding in the BLM energy and minerals program areas. In addition, the PLF on July 31, 2025, sent a letter to the Secretary requesting that the Department memo on additional reviews of renewable energy projects be rescinded and that the permitting of renewable energy

projects on the public lands proceed under normal BLM review and approval procedures. The House and Senate approved an FY26 Appropriations bill that would restore funding for the BLM renewable energy program and includes language that requires the timely review of all energy projects on the public lands, including renewable energy projects.

Conservation Regulations

The BLM on September 11, 2025 published in the Federal Register a Proposed Rule to rescind the 2024 Conservation and Landscape Health Rule (Public Lands Rule) that applied land health standards to all BLM public lands and provided for the use of “restoration and mitigation leases” to support mitigation and restoration efforts on the public lands. The PLF has supported mitigation and restoration efforts on the public lands and provided comments to the BLM in 2023 on the original Public Lands Rule. The PLF feels that there are many other authorities that provide BLM the ability for mitigation and restoration of the public lands and that the BLM would continue to use these tools to collaborate and participate with other Federal, State, and local government conservation efforts. These efforts are expected to continue throughout the west at different scales and under other existing authorities.

Fire and Forest Management

Congress has introduced numerous bills in an attempt to increase the efficiency of Federal agency wildland fire resources, including the *Fix Our Forests Act* which has passed the House and is pending final action in the Senate. In addition, the President and the Secretary of the Interior have signed Executive and Secretarial Orders that would establish a unified U.S. Wildland Fire Service within the Department of the Interior. The PLF is a member of the Wildfire Resilience Coalition which supports recommendations of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission report released in September 2023 and support for the *Fix Our Forests Act*. The PLF on May 20, 2025 sent a letter to both House and Senate regarding concerns over the establishment of a Federal Wildland Fire Service and on August 8, 2025 sent a letter to Secretary of the Interior expressing opposition to the establishment of a Wildland Fire Service within the Interior Department. The PLF will also continue to monitor legislative proposals in Congress.

Congressional Review of RMPs

The General Accountability Office (GAO) in 2025 issued several 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 has determined that a BLM RMP meets the definition of a “rule” under the CRA and is therefore subject to the review requirements that allows Congress to disapprove an RMP by passage of a Disapproval Resolution. Congress has now used this new interpretation of the CRA to disapprove several BLM RMPs and these actions have the potential for much broader implications since BLM has not provided decisions and approvals of RMPs to Congress since passage of the CRA in 1996. It is estimated that some 70 percent of all BLM-managed public lands are currently managed pursuant to RMPs that were never submitted to Congress for review. The PLF submitted a letter on September 8, 2025 to the Senate requesting that the Senate avoid such Disapproval 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 authority of FLPMA are not “rules” subject to CRA review.

Awards

The PLF is proud to acknowledge and recognize the significant contributions to public lands management by individuals, groups and organizations. We do this by issuing several kinds of awards. Most are awarded annually, but some are presented on special occasions.

Paul Makela – Lifetime Service Award

Paul Makela was presented a Lifetime Service Award at the Annual Meeting in 2025. Paul had a long career with the BLM in Wyoming, Arizona and Idaho as a wildlife biologist. He spent 20 years of his career pursuing his passion for sage-grouse conservation and was the lead author and editor on the Idaho Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan. He later helped spearhead a 10-year research project to study the effects of spring livestock grazing and contributed greatly to the management of sage-grouse in its western range.

Christopher “Kit” Muller – Lifetime Service Award

Kit Muller was presented a posthumous Lifetime Service Award at the Annual Meeting in 2025. Kit had a 38-year career in the Washington, D.C. office and served as the International Affairs Division Chief and as Strategic Planner. He was instrumental in the creation and success of numerous BLM initiatives including the 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.

Ed Roberson – 2025 Volunteer of the Year Award

Ed Roberson was presented this Award for his dedicated support and assistance to the PLF during 2025. He was recognized for his leadership as a member of the PLF Board and in coordinating the update of PLF Position Papers during the year.

James “Todd” Forbes – 2025 Outstanding Managerial Public Lands Professional Award

James “Todd” Forbes, District Manager in the BLM Lakeview District, was presented this Award in recognition of his management of some 3.5 million acres of public land in southcentral and southeastern Oregon and his dedication and commitment to collaborative partnership efforts in landscape restoration projects. He has provided leadership in working with local communities on forest and rangeland health initiatives, fire suppression, wild horse and burro management, wildlife habitat management, and recreation programs.

Stephen Schultz – 2025 Landscape Stewardship Award

Stephen Schultz was presented this Award in recognition of his 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.

Canyonlands Natural History Association – 2025 Landscape Stewardship Award

The Canyonlands Natural History Association (CNHA) was presented this Award in recognition of 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. The CNHA manages the interagency Moab Information Center and through the distribution and sales of interpretive materials has provided financial aid and valuable assistance to the BLM to improve recreation, visitor services, and educational opportunities on the public lands.

Scholarships

The PLF each year awards two \$5,000 scholarships to deserving junior, senior or masters-level college students pursuing degrees in natural resources management or public land policy related fields. These scholarships assist the students in successfully completing their studies and encourage them to seriously consider future employment with the BLM or other federal land management agencies. The awards also include paid attendance to the PLF Annual Meeting and a “shadow” opportunity with a BLM Manager. The PLF received 64 applications from students enrolled in 30 colleges and universities for the 2025 George Lea Founder’s Scholarships. The PLF awarded scholarships to Eloise Armour from Western Colorado University and Ruby Bernal from New Mexico State University.

Eloise is a Masters-level graduate student in Environmental Management and Science in Ecology. Ruby is a Junior student studying Range Science.



Eloise Armour



Ruby Bernal

John Freemuth Student Congress

The sixth biennial Student Congress was held in late 2024 in Las Vegas, Nevada and focused on the “Transition to Renewable Energy on Public Lands”. The Student Congress would have presented the recommendations from this session to BLM and DOI leadership during 2025, however, was unable to schedule a briefing during the year. Marwa Mahmoud, Student Congress representative, instead provided a briefing on the recommendations to the PLF Board at the 2025 PLF Annual Meeting in Boise, Idaho. The students identified an overarching Vision for their policy recommendations to “foster a resilient, adaptive, and energy future where renewable energy systems can coexist harmoniously with natural ecosystems, ensuring sustainable development that benefits all communities and supports the preservation of public lands for future generations”. New challenges and obstacles have arisen to constrain the development of renewable energy projects on the public lands since the 2024 Student Congress session, however, renewable energy development can in one way or another help meet our nation’s rising energy demands.



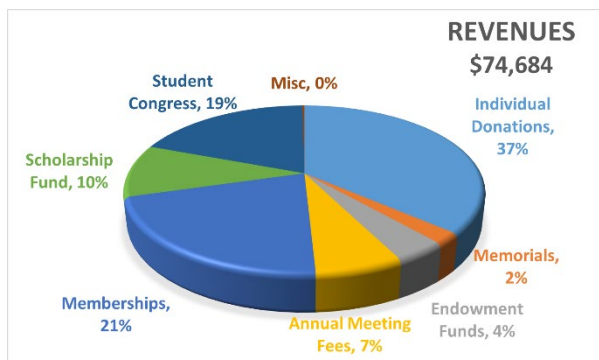
Marwa Mahmoud

Financials

The Public Lands Foundation (PLF) is financially sound with total assets of almost \$516,000 as of the end of 2025. The PLF relies primarily on individual membership dues and donations for income. Donations in 2025 exceeded the prior year by over \$11,000 and membership dues income increased over \$1,000. In addition to an operating account, the PLF holds three investment accounts with a combined value of \$453,609, an increase of over \$64,000 from the prior year. At the end 2025, total assets increased by over \$80,000 from 2024. The 2025 operating budget anticipated a need to transfer \$26,500 from investments to cover operating expenses. However, this was not necessary because of the increased donations, carryover funding, and prudent fiscal management.

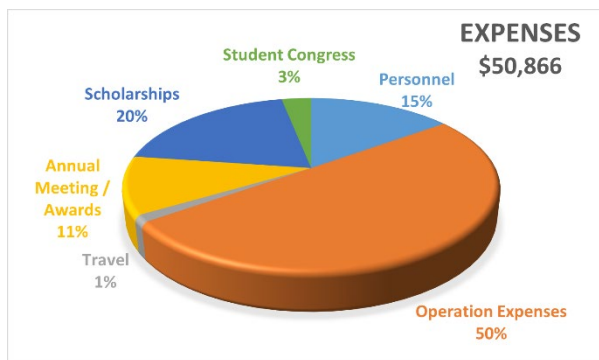
In 2025, the PLF awarded two George Lea Founder’s scholarships of \$5,000 each. The PLF Annual Meeting was held in Boise, ID in October 2025. Attendance was sufficient to cover all meeting expenses; and the silent auction netted over \$1,250. The PLF did not host a Student Congress in 2025, however, members did make directed donations for the next Student Congress. The PLF operates as a volunteer organization, except for a paid bookkeeper with personnel costs of \$7,574 in 2025, a reduction of almost \$2,000. Other major expenses include upkeep of the website, and audit, tax preparation, and accounting fees, which are a necessary component of government grant requests. However, the prospect of future government grants is in question because of the current downsizing of the Federal budget. The PLF will continue to raise funds to support its advocacy and outreach efforts, future Student Congresses, and the Scholarship fund.

Mark Davis, Treasurer



REVENUES

Individual Donations	\$ 27,162
Memorials	\$ 1,575
Endowment Funds	\$ 3,000
Annual Meeting Fees	\$ 4,981
Memberships	\$ 15,947
Scholarship Fund	\$ 7,618
Student Congress	\$ 14,251
Misc	\$ 150
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 74,684



EXPENSES

Personnel	\$ 7,574
Operation Expenses	\$ 25,533
Travel	\$ 661
Annual Meeting/Awards	\$ 5,534
Scholarships	\$ 10,000
Student Congress	\$ 1,564
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 50,866

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Beginning Assets	\$435,738
Investment Accounts	\$453,609
Operating Account	\$ 62,369
Current Liabilities	\$ 0
TOTAL ASSETS	\$515,978

Thank You for Your Support !

Appreciation for PLF Financial Supporters:

George Lea Founders Scholarship

Tom Allen	John Case	Jim Currivan
Carolyn Droscher	Dwight Hempel	Interior Federal CU
Beau McClure	Bob Moore	Jack Placchi
Ed Roberson	Bob Schneider	Gregg and Mary Simmons
David Stout	Matthew Taylor	Sharon Wilson
Elaine Zielinski		

Memorial Contributions

Carl Barna *in memory of Richard Hanes*
Celia Boddington *in memory of Dan Dubray*
Louise Senzel *in memory of Irving and Jennie Senzel*
Matthew Taylor *in memory of Lindsay Taylor*
Matthew Taylor *in memory of Jack Clark*
Maggie Wyatt *in memory of Pat Olmstead*
Maggie Wyatt *in memory of Dave Brunner*
Maggie Wyatt *in memory of Ray Jorgensen*
Elaine Zielinski *in memory of Fran Cherry*



Emigrant National Historic Trail - WY

Student Congress

Carl Barna Jerry Magee

General Fund and Advocacy

Jacob Bennett	Rene Berkhoudt	Pamela Bisson
Colette and Gretchen Blakey	Celia Boddington	David Carlile
Nicholas Brokaw	Chris and Elaine Brong	Emily Clark
Jim Currivan	Carolyn Droscher	Guy Dugan
Dwight Fielder	Galina Fomenkova	Karen Garcia
Mike Green	John Hamm	Kim Harb
Patricia Harvey	Ted Hudson	Krista Hunter
Ann Hutchinson	David A. Jones	Pamela Kingsbury
Kroger Fund	Nora Lea	Bill LeBarron
Cyndi Lee	Dave Mari	Cheryl McCaffrey
Mat Millenbach	Robert Ohrn	Karen Rice
Bob Ross	Mary Jo Rugwell	Louise Senzel
Gregg and Mary Simmons	Don Simpson	Joseph Smith
David Stout	Ann Taylor	Janine Terry
Rosemary Thomas	Maggie Wyatt	

Endowment Fund

Eric Janes John Kwiatkowski

Appreciation for Partners

The PLF expresses its appreciation to partners whose collaboration and support during 2025 contributed significantly to our accomplishments. These include:

American Wildlife Conservation Partners
Andrus Center for Public Policy, Boise State University
Conservation Lands Foundation
Department of Interior Federal Credit Union
Foundation for America's Public Lands
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

We also wish to thank the various "Friends" organizations that support the work of the BLM on the public lands. These organizations make the visitor experiences on the public lands even better.

You Can Help

The PLF also appreciates the support from many individuals who were not members of the PLF but who nonetheless took time to support the advocacy efforts for the public lands managed by the BLM. YOU can continue to help by:

- Joining the Public Lands Foundation or making a gift or donation to the PLF
- Being a BLM volunteer
- Attending a BLM public meeting or BLM Resource Advisory Committee meeting
- Commenting on a BLM resource management plan or BLM proposed regulations
- Alerting the PLF or BLM to public land issues
- Following the PLF on social media and at publicland.org



Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks NM, New Mexico

For Further Information

For further information about the PLF visit www.publicland.org, follow us on social media, email us at info@publicland.org, or contact us at P.O. Box 7226, Arlington, VA 22207.



Snake River ACEC, Idaho

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 the 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.

