



THE PUBLIC LANDS Monitor

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VOLUME XXXVIII No. 4

WINTER QUARTER 2025/2026

2026 FUND RAISING

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On July 4, 2026, our Nation will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The journey toward this historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect on our Nation's past, honor the contributions of all Americans, and look ahead toward the future for our next generation and beyond. This is also an opportunity to reflect on the legacy and value of our Nation's public lands to all Americans. **America250** is striving to engage all 350 million Americans in celebrating America's Semiquincentennial. The **America250** nonprofit organization supports the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission which was established



by Congress in 2016 to commemorate the 250th anniversary.

The PLF is pursuing a fund raising campaign of "Keep Public Lands in Public Hands" to run concurrently with **America250** celebrations during 2026. This effort will include the sale of PLF merchandise through a third party vendor and other outreach efforts. We will post on the PLF website a link for the sale of PLF merchandise and send out e-mail blasts to our members regarding our fund raising efforts.

We hope you will support the PLF's 2026 fund raising campaign!



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

I hope that you and yours had a wonderful holiday season. As you know, 2025 was a challenging year for Federal employees and organizations.



Mary Jo Rugwell

I want to thank the Public Lands Foundation's Executive Committee, the Board, and the members who have helped us respond to the issues which we felt compelled to address. We certainly could not weigh in on everything, but I believe the PLF did a good job focusing on the most pressing issues.

Ray Brady is currently working with a third party on producing some merchandise for

the PLF to offer as part of a fund raising campaign and outreach opportunity during 2026 in concert with the America250 celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Stay tuned for more information about this initiative soon.

With recent personnel changes, the PLF lost valuable expertise and is having some difficulty in using the membership and donations management database system adopted several years ago. There is currently a small team working to help us clean up our data and ensure that we can accurately track memberships and donations. Don Simpson has graciously agreed to be the liaison between the PLF Board and the team. I want to thank the team and Don for taking on this especially important and challenging work.

I have recently been approached by two different non-BLM employee organizations with requests

to establish a coordination relationship with them. These conversations are in the very early stages, so no decisions have been made about engaging with these groups. I will keep you updated.

The next PLF Annual Meeting will be held on September 15 and 16, 2026 in Phoenix, Arizona. Beau McClure has already spent a tremendous amount of time and energy researching venues and drafting plans for the meeting. Please be sure to mark your calendars now so that you can join us.

During our 2025 Annual Meeting in Boise, Idaho, 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 (currently occupied by myself and Don Simpson). 2026 marks my fifth year as President and I am committed to serving until the end of the year. 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 via e-mail at eshepard@publicland.org.

The PLF has been fortunate to recently receive a couple of donations from non-members. While this has been a pleasant surprise, it is not something that we can count on to occur on a regular basis. As I have said before, I know there are many worthy causes competing for your charitable dollars today. All I ask is that you keep the PLF in mind throughout the year as you formulate your charitable giving plans.

While BLM lost hundreds of employees last year, the PLF has not seen a commensurate increase in new members. I believe that some of this can be attributed to the way former employees were treated and literal exhaustion. I would 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 a new group of public lands warriors to continue the fight. Talk to you again soon!

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 LAND ACCESS – CORNER CROSSING

A court case in Wyoming that involved public land access to checkerboard lands, commonly referred to as “corner crossing”, was resolved by the Supreme Court on October 20, 2025. Criminal trespassing charges were filed in 2021 by the State of Wyoming after complaints by a private landowner against four hunters who accessed public lands by using a ladder to corner cross from one parcel of public land to another parcel of public land in the Elk Mountain area of southwestern Wyoming. Those criminal trespassing charges were dismissed after a jury trial ultimately acquitted the hunters. However, the private landowner filed a civil trespassing case with the U.S. District Court in Wyoming alleging damages of its property value due to the trespassing action. The U.S. District Court in Wyoming issued a decision on May 26, 2023 that dismissed the civil trespassing lawsuit against the four hunters. The District Court held that “corner crossing on foot in the checkerboard pattern of land ownership without physically contacting private land and without causing damage to private property does not constitute unlawful trespass.”

The private landowner in the Wyoming corner crossing trespass case subsequently appealed the U.S. District Court decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals. The private landowner asserted that his property rights include the airspace above his private land and

the corresponding right to exclude corner-crossers from that airspace. The private landowner also asserted that the hunters actions were a violation of Wyoming property law and considered a trespass under State law. The U.S. Court of Appeals on March 18, 2025 upheld the lower Court decision and ruled that the private landowner could not deny access to Federal public lands for lawful purposes and the hunters could corner cross on checkerboard lands as long as they did not physically touch the private land. The Court also ruled that the Unlawful Inclosures Act of 1885 (UIA) and case law interpreting that Act, overrides the State’s civil trespass statutes. The UIA provides that any inclosure of public land is prohibited, and that no one may completely prevent or obstruct another from peacefully entering or freely passing over or through the public lands. The Court found that “any inclosure that effectively prevents access to public land for lawful use is an unlawful inclosure that is a proscribed violation of Federal law.” *Attorneys for the private landowner filed a petition with the U.S. Supreme Court in July 2025 to rehear the question on whether the Unlawful Inclosures Act implicitly preempts private property rights. The Supreme Court on October 20, 2025 declined to hear the appeal and therefore the corner crossing decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals still stands – corner crossing does not constitute unlawful trespass.*



CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW OF RMPs

The General Accountability Office (GAO) has 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 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 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 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. However, these GAO 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 House of Representatives and the Senate have to date approved Resolutions to disapprove the Miles City RMP, North Dakota RMP, Alaska Central Yukon RMP, National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPRA) Integrated Activity Plan, and Buffalo, Wyoming RMP. *The President on December 5, 2025 signed the Resolution to disapprove the NPRA plan and on December 11, 2025 signed Resolutions to disapprove the Miles City RMP, North Dakota RMP, Central Yukon RMP, and Buffalo RMP. The House approved a Resolution to disapprove the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Plan for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which subsequently led the Department of the Interior on October 23, 2025 to announce the rescission of the Coastal Plain Plan and*

reinstatement of a previous Plan that provides for maximum oil and gas development in ANWR. The President subsequently also on December 11, 2025 signed the Resolution to disapprove the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Plan.

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.

A recent review by several public land advocacy organizations has also raised concerns over the question regarding the validity of RMPs and the approval of oil and gas leases that have been approved since the passage of the CRA in 1996. In fact, some 70 percent of all BLM-managed public lands available for leasing are currently managed pursuant to RMPs that were finalized after passage of the CRA and were never submitted to Congress for review. There are currently at least 5,033 oil and gas leases totaling nearly four million acres that may be invalid and there are another 850 parcels totaling some 790,000 acres that are currently being evaluated for lease sales that may lack a valid RMP. These issues raise serious legal questions regarding the status of RMPs approved since 1996 and the approval of not only oil and gas leases and APDs on the public lands pursuant to these RMPs but also all other land use authorizations on these public lands.

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.

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. 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 also 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 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!

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 FY 2026 Appropriations bill, however, a Continuing Resolution bill was approved through the end of January 2026 that provided funding at FY 2025 levels.*

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 wildland fire and range-land 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 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 rescission and 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 on September 11, 2025 published a Proposed Rule to rescind the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule. *House and Senate Democrat members of Congress on November 10, 2025 signed a joint letter to Secretary Burgum and Acting BLM Director Groff requesting that the proposed rescission of the Public Lands Rule be withdrawn. A coalition of 180 western elected local officials on November 6, 2025 also signed a joint letter to the Acting BLM Director requesting that the proposed rescission of the Public Lands Rule be withdrawn. In addition, a group of former BLM managers provided comments to BLM that “the Public Lands Rule supports the BLM’s multiple use and sustained yield mission and thus should be retained and fully implemented”. The Center for*

Western Priorities has also reported that some 98 percent of the public comments provided to BLM oppose rescission of the Rule. Several Republican Senators, however, on November 10, 2025 signed a joint letter to Secretary Burgum supporting the rescission of the Public Lands 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 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.*

FIRE AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

STATUS: The *Fix Our Forests Act (H.R.471)* passed the House on January 23, 2025. This bill would establish requirements for managing forests on Federal lands, including requirements to reduce wildfire threats, expediting NEPA review of forest management and thinning projects, and implementing those projects. The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee on October 21, 2025 passed the *Fix Our Forests Act (S.1462)* out of the Committee and final action is pending in the full Senate. 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 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 FY 2026 proposed Budget plan that included a proposal to establish a new unified Federal Wildland Fire Service within the Interior Department. 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. It has been reported that Brian Fennessy, Chief of the Orange County Fire Authority in southern California, has been selected to serve as the new USWFS Fire Chief. 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.

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 FY 2026 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.*



Prescribed Fire, Oregon (BLM photo)

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 infringement of States' rights and targets an area that is already regulated by the Clean Air Act and state laws. *The BLM subsequently announced that the December 10, 2025 enforcement deadlines under the Waste Prevention Rule would be delayed until December 10, 2026 and that the BLM will reassess the Rule.* 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 Leasing 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.

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 FY 2026 Budget would 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 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*



Oil & Gas Drill Rig, Wyoming (BLM photo)

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 BLM on August 9, 2023. Those comments are posted on the PLF website. *The PLF 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)

INTERIOR FEDERAL

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 90 new members to our membership rolls since September 2024 under this new partnership effort.*

Interior Federal 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 interiorfederal.org.

Starting off 2026 with a bang, Interior Federal has introduced a new Emergency Financial Kit. With so much uncertainty, Interior Federal came up with this toolkit to help members prepare for emergencies, whether it is a government shutdown, unexpected medical bills, or anything in between. The kit combines a Personal Line of Credit, Credit Card, debt protection on both the loans (could cancel your payment or loan balance based on qualifying life events), and an Emergency Savings Account. Interior Federal wants to provide a responsible way for members to prepare. To learn more, visit interiorfederal.org/emergency-financial-kit. Apply for membership and loans at one time, and Interior Federal representatives will help you take care of the rest!



BLM DIRECTOR NOMINATION

The White House on November 5, 2025, announced the nomination of Steve Pearce, former New Mexico Congressman, as the Director of the BLM. This nomination will require Senate confirmation. Steve Pearce, a former Air Force and commercial airline pilot, is also a former oil and gas industry business owner and served for 12 years in Congress. He was Chairman of the House Western Caucus during his term in Congress. He ran for Governor of New Mexico in 2018 but lost to Michelle Lujan Grisham, the State's current Governor. He stepped down in December 2024 as the Chair of the New Mexico Republican Party.



Steve Pearce, BLM Director nominee
(AP 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 publiclands. 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, Operations	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	Meagan Conry (<i>Acting</i>)
Montana State Office	Sonya Germann
Nevada State Office	Jon Raby
New Mexico State Office	Melanie Barnes
OR/WA State Office	Kim Prill (<i>Acting</i>)
Utah State Office	Tom Heinlein (<i>Acting</i>)
Wyoming State Office	Tanya Thrift (<i>Acting</i>)

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.

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)

Sandra Lee Dunn on August 14, 2025, in Yachats, WA. Sandy was a graduate of Oregon State University. She had a lifetime career with the BLM in Alaska, starting as a cartographer, then training employees in the Anchorage office and at the BLM training center in Phoenix. She became the Assistant District Manager at the Anchorage District Office and was later selected as the BLM Alaska Assistant State Director of Resources. She was also the BLM Alaska Representative for the PLF and received many meritorious awards during her long Federal career. After retirement, she became involved in community activities and served on the Yachats, WA City Council from 2010-2016.

Shela Ann McFarlin on December 28, 2025, in Tucson, AZ. Shela received a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of Kentucky and a Master's degree in Anthropology from Michigan State University. She taught at California State

University – Fresno and accepted a position as an archaeologist with BLM in Ely, NV in 1981. She accepted the position of Director of the Anasazi Heritage Center (Canyons of the Ancients) in Dolores, CO in 1985 and in 1992 moved to Phoenix, AZ to develop and direct the Hohokam Heritage Center. She later joined the Phoenix District Management Team, coordinating land use planning efforts and worked on the State-wide land exchange team. Shela was selected as the Tucson Field Office Manager in 2003 and retired in 2008.

William Cliff Yardley on November 16, 2025, in Mesa, AZ. Cliff was a graduate of Utah State University and served in the Utah National Guard for six years. He worked for the BLM for 43 years in numerous positions in Utah, California, and Arizona. Following retirement, he owned a consulting business continuing his work with BLM.

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.

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* This list reflects donations received during the period of October 1 through December 31, 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 BLM address public land management issues across the 245 million acres of BLM-managed public land. 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 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.

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.

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