



For America's Heritage

# THE PUBLIC LANDS Monitor

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## 2025 PLF ANNUAL MEETING BOISE, IDAHO

OCTOBER 7<sup>TH</sup> AND 8<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

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This year's Annual Meeting will be in Boise, Idaho, on October 7 and 8, 2025. Please be sure to save the date and mark your calendar!

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Oxford Suites Boise, 1426 S. Entertainment Avenue, Boise, Idaho. The room rate for a King Suite (for one or two people) is \$145.00, plus guest room tax of 13 percent per night. You also may reserve a room with two queen-sized beds at the same price. The hotel amenities include a free breakfast, free parking, pool, fitness center, and airport shuttle service. If you wish to arrive early (October 5) or stay longer (October 9) the same rate will be available for those dates.

Please make your reservations by calling the hotel directly at (208) 322-8000 and mention the **Public Lands Foundation 10-2025** to receive our group rate. Your reservations must be made by **September 6, 2025**.

The theme for this year's meeting is "Wildland Fire and Fuels Management." The general meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 7, and it will include a tour of the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC). The Banquet, awards ceremony, silent auction, and raffle will take place on Tuesday evening. As in the past, the silent auction and raffle will help support the George Lea Founder's Scholarship Fund. So, be thinking about what you can contribute. The Board of Directors meeting will be held on October 8<sup>th</sup>, followed by an evening barbeque at the Ruhs Ranch.

More information will be provided in the next edition of the Monitor. Don't forget to mark your calendar and reserve the date. We look forward to seeing you in Boise in October!



National Interagency Fire Center, Boise, ID

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

The new year has brought with it challenges for BLM employees and all dedicated Federal civilservants. We believe wholeheartedly in the worth of those employees who manage America's public lands for the benefit of current and future generations.

To demonstrate our commitment to BLM employees, the PLF has engaged with leadership at both the Departmental and Bureau levels and we will continue to do so. We posted a Statement of Support for BLM employees on our website in early February and prepared an updated Statement of Support and letter to BLM employees in March (thanks to David Howell for drafting the letter). We have partnered with other organizations like the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) to strengthen this message of support. Individual members have also contacted their Congressional delegations. We have done several interviews with a variety of media outlets to discuss the importance of BLM employees. The PLF has also significantly increased its use of social media platforms to help tell the stories of dedicated BLM employees (thanks go to Nancy Haug for all her efforts on social media).

The PLF hosted its first ever All Member Zoom call

on Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, to get ideas from our members about other actions we could take to support BLM and the dedicated BLM employees who serve all Americans in the management of our public lands and resources. As a result of these discussions, the decision was made to offer a complimentary one-year PLF membership to any terminated BLM employees. To access this offer, terminated employees can contact our membership coordinator, Scott MacPherson, at [smacpherson@publicland.org](mailto:smacpherson@publicland.org).

The NAFSR engaged retired Forest Service Human Resources professionals to craft two different outreach documents that provide assistance and answers to employees. They gave us permission to revise these documents for PLF use to ensure they were consistent with BLM HR practices. I want to thank NAFSR and Cindy Pogue, retired HR professional from NIFC, for taking on this task on our behalf. These employee support and advice documents will be posted on PLF's website with links shared on social media platforms.

While it appears that initial personnel losses at BLM are smaller than originally anticipated, the termination of any BLM employee represents a loss to us all. The PLF will continue our work to support the dedicated and professional employees who manage the BLM-administered public lands.

The PLF's next in-person Annual Meeting is scheduled for October 7-8 in Boise, Idaho. Please be sure to mark your calendars, see the information in this edition of the Monitor, and stay tuned for more details.

### DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT CONTACT INFORMATION?

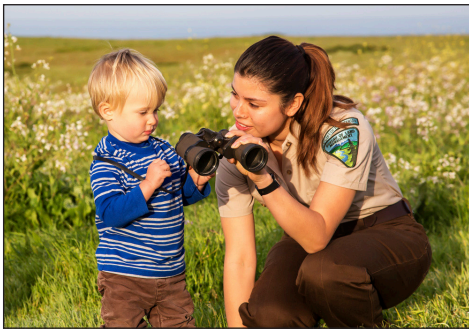
Please help us keep our records current and ensure we have your current e-mail address on file.

Message us at [info@publicland.org](mailto:info@publicland.org)

## SUPPORT FOR BLM EMPLOYEES

*On February 9, 2025, the PLF posted the following message on the PLF website and widely distributed our Statement of Support for BLM Employees to Congressional staff, Federal employee retiree organizations, social media outreach, and several media contacts. The PLF followed up with an Updated Statement of Support and other information for BLM employees in a message posted on March 13, 2025.*

The BLM is an organization located within the Department of the Interior. It has the responsibility for managing one in ten acres in the United States. These



public lands are a gift to past, current, and future generations. Career BLM employees are among the hardest working and most dedicated in the

entire Federal workforce. Their charge to administer public lands for the benefit of all Americans is among the hardest and most complex mandates in the Federal Government.

The work accomplished by career BLM employees has a profound effect on ranchers, recreationists, miners, oil and gas developers, wildlife and wildlife agencies, cultural and historical resources, homeowners, states, counties, and many more sectors of society. BLM's culture is built on collaboration. Revenues from the programs managed by BLM employees annually return much more money to the U.S. Treasury than it costs to cover their salaries.

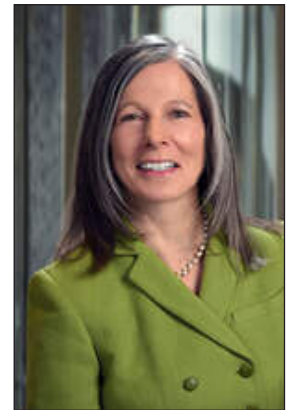
Even at its fully authorized staffing level of 10,000 employees, BLM lacks the resources to fully manage the public lands. The current staffing level is significantly less than that number. The per acre dollars allocated to BLM via Congressional appropriations are much less than any other Federal land management agency. Despite this, BLM employees routinely find a way to get the job done. Any attempt to further erode the resources needed to manage the public lands will have a devastating impact on everyone who relies on public lands for their livelihoods and well-being.

The Public Lands Foundation (PLF) is a nonprofit organization whose membership is comprised primarily of retired BLM employees. As former civil servants who spent their careers working for the American people, we understand the value of the jobs that BLM employees perform. Their worth cannot be overstated as what they do benefits us all.

Please join us in advocating for BLM employees by writing to your Congressional delegation, touting the benefits of public lands and those who manage them to everyone you meet, and supporting organizations that are working to protect Federal civil servants.

## BLM DIRECTOR NOMINATION WITHDRAWN

The President on February 11, 2025 nominated Kathleen Sgamma, President of Western Energy Alliance, as the BLM Director. The nomination was referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and required confirmation by the Senate to lead the BLM under Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum. Secretary Burgum was confirmed on February 1, 2025. However, on April 10, 2025 Sgamma's nomination was withdrawn before her scheduled hearing before the Senate Committee. Sgamma has worked for nearly 20 years for Western Energy Alliance, the Denver-based organization which represents independent oil and natural gas producers who operate in the western States. Western Energy Alliance has long advocated for greater industry access to public lands and less regulation of oil and natural gas and mining interests.



Kathleen Sgamma

Prior to her work with Western Energy Alliance she spent eleven years in the Information Technology sector and three years as a Military Intelligence Officer in the U.S. Army. She holds a B.S. degree in Political Science/Defense and Arms Control Studies from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an M.S. degree in Information Technology from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech).



## AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON PUBLIC LANDS

There has been considerable debate regarding proposals for the disposal and use of Federal lands in the west for addressing the need for housing in many 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 (DOI) 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 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. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) also requires that any land disposals be in conformance with BLM land use plans. In addition, it should be noted that 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. The BLM has already identified some 400,000 acres of public land near western communities that may potentially be available for community expansion. However, 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. Another issue that would need to be resolved is whether any land disposals would be at fair market value (FMV), as required by FLPMA, or whether these disposals would be at less than FMV, which would require special legislative authority.

An example of a successful land disposal program to support community development needs is the ongoing land disposal program in Las Vegas, NV pursuant to the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act of 1998 (SNPLMA). The SNPLMA allows BLM to sell public lands within a defined land disposal boundary area in and around the Las Vegas area. The land disposal area includes some 67,900 acres of public land. Some 2,252 acres

were specifically identified for local Recreation and Public Purpose and Affordable Housing purposes. Section 7(b) of the Act allows state and local governments, throughout Nevada, to purchase land at less than FMV to support Affordable Housing. Revenue derived from land sales under the SNPLMA is split between the State of Nevada General Education Fund (five percent), the Southern Nevada Water Authority (ten percent), and a special account available to the Secretary of the Interior for:

- Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas
- Capital Improvement projects
- Conservation Initiatives
- Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan
- Environmentally Sensitive Land Acquisitions
- Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Wildfire Prevention
- Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project
- Lake Tahoe Restoration Projects

Since enactment, SNPLMA has generated more than \$4 billion that BLM has reinvested in Nevada’s public lands. The vast majority of land sales in the Las Vegas area have been competitive sales at more than FMV, however, one of the most recent land sales was the sale of a 20-acre parcel of public land to the Clark County Department of Social Services for the development of 210 single-family affordable housing units in the southwest portion of the Las Vegas valley. These homes will be provided to households that make \$70,000 per year or less. The land was sold at less than FMV, consistent with the provisions of SNPLMA and the provisions of an MOU signed in 2022 with HUD. Although the economic value and benefits of public lands in and around Las Vegas, NV may be different than the situation of public lands surrounding other communities in the west, the lessons learned and the experiences from land disposals in the Las Vegas area could inform decisions made for future land disposals in other areas. It should also be noted that these disposals in the Las Vegas area have only been able to be accomplished pursuant to the special provisions of specific legislative authority under SNPLMA.



Affordable housing parcel, Las Vegas, NV



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## BENEFITS OF SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT TO CSRS RETIREES

### By Beth Stover and Dwight Fielder, Consultants to NEW Solutions

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*Editors Note: The following article may be of interest to many of our PLF members who are Civil Service Retirement System retirees.*

In early January 2025, the Social Security Fairness Act was signed into law. The Social Security Fairness Act represents a landmark shift in policy, providing significant benefits to certain employees who received pensions from public sector jobs. This includes Federal employees who retired under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). This act aims to rectify long-standing disparities and offer new incentives for retirees to reenter the workforce, ultimately enhancing their financial security and well-being.]

#### KEY BENEFITS FOR CSRS RETIREES

**Elimination of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)** – One of the most significant benefits of the Social Security Fairness Act is the elimination of the Windfall Elimination Provision. Historically, the WEP reduced Social Security benefits for individuals who also received a pension from employment not covered by Social Security, such as the CSRS. By removing this provision, the act ensures that CSRS retirees receive their full Social Security benefits without unfair reductions.

**Repeal of the Government Pension Offset (GPO)** – The act also repeals the Government Pension Offset, which previously reduced Social Security spousal or survivor benefits for individuals who received a government pension. With the GPO repealed, CSRS retirees can now receive their full Social Security spousal or survivor benefits, providing additional financial support and stability.

#### INCENTIVES FOR REENTERING THE WORKFORCE

**Obtaining the Necessary 40 Quarters** – The Social Security Fairness Act provides a compelling incentive for CSRS retirees to reenter the workforce and obtain the necessary 40 quarters of employment required to qualify for Social Security benefits. By working part-time or full-time in positions covered by Social Security, retirees can accumulate the necessary quarters and unlock additional financial benefits.

**Enhanced Earnings** – Reentering the workforce allows CSRS retirees to supplement their pension income with additional earnings. This not only helps to bridge any financial gaps but also provides an opportunity to increase their overall retirement savings. As retirees work towards achieving the 40 quarters, they can also benefit from higher Social Security benefits based on their new earnings records.

#### CONCLUSION

The Social Security Fairness Act marks a pivotal moment for Federal employees who retired under the Civil Service Retirement System. By eliminating the WEP and GPO, the act ensures fair treatment and access to full Social Security benefits. Additionally, the new provisions encourage retirees to reenter the workforce, allowing them to achieve the necessary 40 quarters and enhance their financial security. Ultimately, the act empowers CSRS retirees with greater financial stability, personal fulfillment, and a brighter future. For additional information, contact your local Social Security Office or visit [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

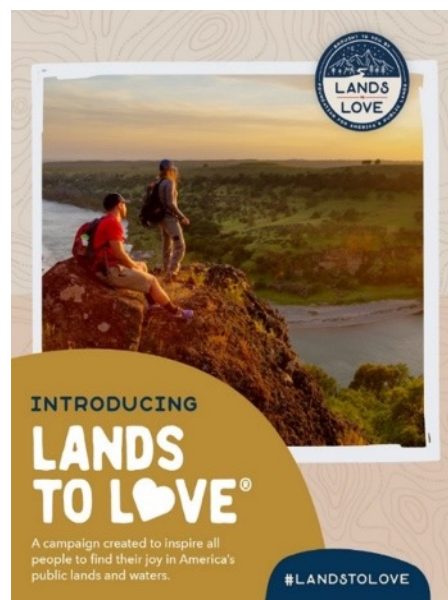
## UTAH PUBLIC LANDS

The PLF reported in the Winter edition of the *Monitor* on the Supreme Court's decision to deny the State of Utah's petition that the Federal retention of "unappropriated" public land in Utah was unconstitutional. This decision by the Supreme Court was a victory for the protection of public lands. Any departure from the legal precedents and history regarding the ownership of public lands would have had a significant impact on the future management of some 245 million acres of public lands managed by BLM, across the west, for all Americans. In another positive action to ensure the future management of public lands, the BLM on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025 completed a major land exchange agreement with the State of Utah pursuant to the John D. Dingell Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019 (Dingell Act). Through the exchange authorized by the Dingell Act, BLM will receive approximately 116,042 acres of isolated State lands within many protected land areas in Utah, which will help consolidate and simplify management of the public lands in these areas. The equal-value exchange also provided for the transfer of approximately 83,000 acres of Federal land with subsurface mineral estate, approximately 4,000 surface-only acres, and approximately 5,000 sub-surface mineral only acres to the State of Utah. The Dingell Act also created 17 BLM-managed wilderness areas in Emery County, Utah, the San Rafael Swell Recreation Area, the John Wesley Powell National Conservation Area, and other federally-managed areas. Acting BLM Director Jon Raby said: "This mutually beneficial land exchange benefits Utah and the entire country by advancing American energy production, supporting local jobs and economies, and improving the recreation experience on Utah's iconic landscapes."



## FOUNDATION FOR AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS – LANDS TO LOVE

The Foundation for America's Public Lands was established by Congress in 2017, but was not formally launched by the Department of the Interior and BLM until January 2022. Until 2022, BLM was the only major Federal land management agency without an affiliated foundation support organization. The Foundation's mission includes raising private funding that can be matched by Federal appropriations to help the Bureau address public land management issues across the 245 million acres of public land managed by BLM. The Foundation in 2024 launched a public awareness campaign, **Lands to Love**, to help spotlight the amazing people, places and cultures that make the public lands and waters so unique. This is a chance to shine the spotlight on the diversity of our public lands and waters, and the BLM caretakers watching over them each day. The Campaign also features a grant program, the *Lands to Love Catalyst Fund*, designed to help community partners working with BLM leverage existing funds, and expand their work through a capital boost from the Foundation. 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.



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## REQUEST FOR AWARD NOMINATIONS

### LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP AWARD

### LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD

### OUTSTANDING PUBLIC LAND PROFESSIONAL AWARDS

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The Public Lands Foundation is accepting nominations of a private citizen(s) or group(s) who deserve to be recognized for their sustained contributions to the conservation and management of public lands administered by BLM. The **PLF Landscape Stewardship Award** honors the work done by private citizens/groups who work to advance and sustain community-based stewardship on a landscape scale that includes, in whole or in part, lands administered by BLM. The focus on landscapes is intended to be broad in nature versus small-scale, local, project-oriented efforts. PLF members, partner organizations, and BLM employees are encouraged to submit nominations for the PLF Landscape Stewardship Award by July 15, 2025. The nomination form and guidelines for the Landscape Stewardship Award can be found on the PLF website under the “Programs” and “Awards” link. Please send nominations to Dave Mari at [dmari@publicland.org](mailto:dmari@publicland.org).

The Public Lands Foundation is also seeking nominations for its **2025 Lifetime Service Award**. Every year PLF honors one or two individuals for their lifetime career achievements. Any career BLM employee is eligible, regardless of job, grade, profession, etc. Nominees should be retirees who had a career that lasted at least 30 years with at least 20 years having been with BLM. The award can be granted posthumously. Recipients of this prestigious award are those who have demonstrated exceptional performance in furthering the management of public lands, inspiring public and employee participation, and providing leadership that “made a difference”. Full criteria for nomination can be found on the PLF website under the “Programs” and “Awards” link. Lifetime Service Award nominations are due by July 15, 2025, and should be submitted to Maggie Wyatt at [51booklover@gmail.com](mailto:51booklover@gmail.com).

The PLF has established two **Public Land Professional Awards**, one for Managerial/Administrative employees and one for Technical (Resources)/Operational disciplines. This will be the 35<sup>th</sup> year the PLF has given these national awards to active or recently active BLM employees who have demonstrated outstanding professional performance during the past three years. These awards are focused on recent accomplishments, rather than a career of service with BLM. We invite you to identify, no later than July 15, 2025, those individual(s) that, in your opinion, are deserving of these prestigious awards. Outstanding employees deserve recognition. Full criteria for nomination for the awards can be found on the PLF website under the “Programs” and “Awards” link. An optional digital photo may also be included for our use. Send nominations to Jim Currivan at [jimc38@yahoo.com](mailto:jimc38@yahoo.com).

### 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.



## BLM EXPERIENCED SERVICES PROGRAM ENROLLEE SPOTLIGHT

### Michael Crawford, Reforestation Advisor BLM Oregon/Washington State Office

**Editors Note:** The PLF has highlighted the work of National Experienced Workforce Solutions (NEW Solutions) in previous articles in the *Monitor* newsletter. NEW Solutions has assisted BLM by providing experienced BLM retirees to support special projects and workforce needs through the BLM Experienced Services Program.

Since the inception of the BLM's Experienced Services Program (ESP) in 2019, its dedicated enrollees, ages 55+, have supported mission-focused work across the agency. The program's sustained commitment has enabled enrollees to contribute consistently and meaningfully. Michael Crawford's story spotlights the variety of work being accomplished by BLM ESP enrollees.

As a Reforestation Advisor and mentor to two new BLM Orchardists and a Program Manager, Michael's expertise and dedication have been instrumental in ensuring the reforestation project's success. His mentorship and knowledge transfer were crucial in maintaining the operational timing, tracking, and cooperative agreements necessary for the project's timely execution.

Michael's journey to becoming a mentor began with a B.S. in Forest Science from The Pennsylvania State University, a foundation that would support a remarkable 44-year career. His professional journey included significant roles with the

U.S. Forest Service, Oregon State University, and BLM in the forests of western Oregon.

For the last fourteen years of his career, he served as a Seed Orchard Program Manager for BLM, overseeing four conifer seed orchards (2,100 acres). He worked with over 40 cooperators between Northern California and British Columbia, including State and Federal agencies, tribal governments, universities, industrial timberland owners, forest

management organizations, and conifer nurseries. He also provided technical assistance to orchard staff in contracting, pesticide application, cone harvest strategies, and seed extraction. In addition, he worked closely with geneticists from Oregon State University, U.S. Forest Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, and private forest management organizations on many conifer tree improvement projects in the Pacific Northwest.

Michael's three-year mentorship project concluded in December 2024. His impactful work was made possible through his participation in the BLM Experienced Services Program via NEW

Solutions. His work exemplifies the profound impact experienced professionals can have when given the opportunity to share their knowledge, skills, and expertise. For more information about the BLM Experienced Services Program and NEW Solutions, visit [www.newsolutions.org](http://www.newsolutions.org).



Michael Crawford, Douglas Fir progeny test site  
Coast Range of southwestern Oregon

## LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP AWARD

### JAKSICK FAMILY AND JACKRABBIT PROPERTIES

The Public Lands Foundation presented the Jaksick Family and Jackrabbit Properties with its 2024 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 Jaksick Family and Jackrabbit Properties have demonstrated unwavering commitment over the past two decades, during which they have transferred over 15,000 acres of land to BLM, including a recent transfer of 2,659 acres spanning the California and Nevada border with crucial water rights.



(l to r) Todd Jaksick, Ben Jaksick, Jim Currihan (PLF), Dan Ryan (BLM Realty Specialist, Northern California District), Dereck Wilson (BLM District Manager, Northern California District)

The visionary leadership of the Jaksick Family has set a benchmark for land stewardship. Their partnership

with BLM has not only facilitated large-scale land transfers, but it has also inspired other landowners and stakeholders to consider similar contributions. By working closely with BLM, the Jaksick Family has helped to articulate a clear vision of enhanced public land management, motivating others in the community to recognize the value of collaborative conservation efforts. Their leadership has been pivotal in fostering a culture of shared responsibility and stewardship.

Their proactive approach in offering lands that are of significant ecological and recreational value has substantially contributed to the BLM's mission of conserving and managing public lands for the benefit of current and future generations. By prioritizing the transfer of their lands with critical habitats, scenic landscapes, and recreational potential, they have played a crucial role in expanding public access and preserving natural resources. Their contributions have led to more resilient and well-managed public lands, demonstrating the power of cooperative action in addressing complex environmental issues.

The Jaksick Family's dedication to shared stewardship responsibility has set a precedent for others, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving sustainable land management goals. Their contributions have led to more resilient and well-managed public lands, demonstrating the power of cooperative action in addressing complex environmental issues. Their unwavering commitment, visionary leadership, and proactive initiatives make them deserving candidates for recognition and serve as an inspiring model for others to follow.

The Public Lands Foundation is pleased to present the Jaksick Family and Jackrabbit Properties with its 2024 Landscape Stewardship Award for invaluable contributions to the stewardship of America's public landscapes.



## GREATEST OUTDOOR PHOTOGRAPHER YOU NEVER HEARD OF

### Excerpt from Backpacker Magazine (December 19, 2024)

**Editor:** For over three decades, BLM photographer Bob Wick captured the beauty and diversity of America's public lands. Over the years, he has taken some 200,000 digital photos that have been used by BLM, the Department of the Interior, and non-profit organizations. The PLF highlighted some of Bob's work in an article in the Summer 2019 edition of the Monitor when he was recognized by the U.S. Postal Service for three stamps selected for the Wild & Scenic River stamp series on the 50th Anniversary of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. Bob was also a member of a PLF panel of judges for a PLF photo contest in 2021. Bob retired from the BLM in July 2021 as a Wilderness Specialist in the BLM Headquarters Office.

A retired Bureau of Land Management employee may well be the most-published outdoor photographer working today, with his jaw-dropping landscapes showing up everywhere from the New York Times to Patagonia ads. The kicker? Photography wasn't even in his job description. If you read about the outdoors, chances are you've come across a Bob Wick photo. His images – lonely canyons, the northern lights, a strutting male sage grouse that still amuses Wick everytime it pops up on his screen – have appeared in the *New York Times*, in *Outside*, on *Patagonia's* website, and on a U.S. Postal Service stamp. While it's impossible to say with certainty, Wick is a strong candidate for the most published outdoor photographer in the world.



Bob Wick with USPS Wild & Scenic River stamp of Deschutes River, OR

From the first time Wick picked up a camera in college, the medium suited him. While he loves visiting national parks, he rarely spends time in those spaces with a camera, especially since they've been photographed so often. Instead, he carved out a niche capturing and sharing public lands that most people knew nothing about. Working for the BLM gave Wick a unique opportunity to experience places most photographers skip right over, if they're even aware of the spot's existence.



Big Jacks Creek, Idaho  
(photo by Bob Wick)

Part of the secret to Wick's reach is that his photography is free for anyone to use. As an employee of a Federal agency, the image library he amassed during his work trips became public domain on the BLM Flickr web site. That meant conservation groups and news organizations could use his professional-quality photos without paying for them. Not only are his images oftentimes the only ones depicting a particularly remote chunk of public land, but they're also easy to obtain and free to use. He included photos shot during his personal time in that public domain collection, as well.





**Cedar Mesa, Utah**  
(photo by Bob Wick)

Over the years, Wick has had many memorable shoots. He's photographed everything from sage grouse mating, to wild and scenic rivers in Alaska, to the Iditarod in negative 15-degree weather, and oil and gas restoration projects. The thing that remains constant through his images, no matter the subject, is their timeless quality. While Instagram is an ever-changing landscape of saturation, exposure and focus, Wick's images capture the thing many of us love most about public lands: their sense of endurance. Wick hopes that what other photographers will take away from his work is not to follow everyone else to the same spot. Bob Wick's photographic legacy isn't so much about quantity as it is about the little moments. Folks are captivated by a landscape they never knew existed, and are suddenly inspired to get out and explore.



**Bear Trap Canyon, Colorado**  
(photo by Bob Wick)

## STUDENT CONGRESS REPRESENTATIVE MARWA MAHMOUD

The sixth biennial Student Congress was held October 7-10, 2024 in Las Vegas, Nevada. The PLF again partnered with the Andrus Center for Public Policy at Boise State University and the National Association of Forest Service Retirees to host this year's forum. The PLF received 58 student applications from 37 colleges and universities to participate in the session and 25 students were selected to attend. The students from each session of the Student Congress select one student to be a representative to the PLF Board of Directors. The students this year selected Marwa Mahmoud from Washington State University as the student representative for a two-year appointment to the PLF Board of Directors.

Marwa is a second-year Master's student in the School of the Environment at Washington State University. Prior to graduate school, she had worked for the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, pursuing research on a variety of topics including regeneration in post-fire landscapes, aquatic ecology, carnivore distribution, and community engagement. Her Master's research focuses on the Sierra Nevada red fox, an endemic mountain fox in Oregon and California. She is working with a variety of stakeholders and citizen scientists in Oregon to document the Sierra Nevada red fox and provide a State-wide contemporary distribution of the species to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. She is also identifying drivers of distribution for the species. She indicated that she is interested in solving natural resource issues that lie at the intersection of policy, science, and conservation of species, spaces, and human values.



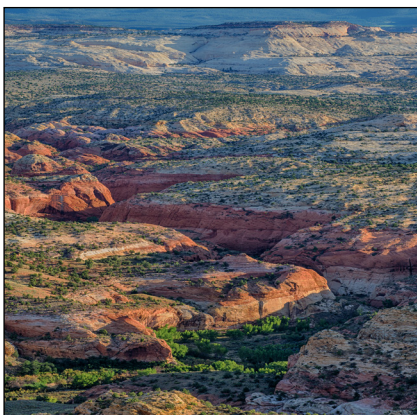
**Marwa Mahmoud**  
Washington State University



During 2025, BLM will be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) of public lands. The places that make up this system of public lands are ruggedly beautiful wonders, primarily located in the West, and feature some of the Nation's most spectacular landscapes. These places conserve and protect special natural features, including wild and scenic rivers and red-rock deserts to historical sites and mountain vistas. Many of these lands are also the current and ancestral homelands of Tribal Nations and indigenous peoples who have deep cultural, historic, and spiritual connections to these places. The NLCS is currently comprised of 906 units covering some 38 million acres, including the recently designated Chuckwalla National Monument in California. These units include:

- 31 National Monuments
- 25 National Conservation Areas/similar designations
- 263 Wilderness Areas
- 487 Wilderness Study Areas
- 19 National Scenic and Historic Trails
- 81 Wild and Scenic Rivers

As BLM begins its yearlong celebration of these special places, BLM will be sharing stories and holding events at many of the locations. In addition to the BLM celebration, partner organizations and "Friends" groups will also be involved and engaged. We encourage you to make time this year to visit some of these amazing places yourself and to attend one of the Anniversary celebration events. You can find more information on the Anniversary celebration activities on the BLM website at [www.blm.gov/NLC S25](http://www.blm.gov/NLC S25).



Grand Staircase – Escalante  
National Monument (BLM photo)

## CHUCKWALLA NATIONAL MONUMENT



Chuckwalla National Monument, CA (BLM photo)

On January 14, 2025, President Biden signed a Proclamation and officially designated the Chuckwalla National Monument to be managed by BLM in southern California. Establishment of the Chuckwalla National Monument will protect and preserve more than 624,000 acres of public land south of Joshua Tree National Park at the confluence of the Mojave and Colorado deserts. The new Monument encompasses extraordinarily diverse ecological, cultural, and historical resource values and also protects the ancestral homelands and cultural landscapes of the Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Mojave, Quechan, and Serrano Nations and other indigenous peoples. The Monument showcases an awe-inspiring landscape of mountain ranges, meandering canyons and washes, dramatic rock formations, palm oases, and desert-wash woodlands. Its natural wonders include the Painted Canyon of Mecca Hills and Alligator Rock and also provides exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities for communities in the Coachella Valley of southern California. The region is home to more than 50 rare species of plants and animals, including the desert bighorn sheep, Agassiz's desert tortoise, and the iconic Chuckwalla lizard from which the Monument gets its name.

The establishment of the Chuckwalla National Monument will also create the largest corridor of protected lands in the continental United States, covering nearly 18 million acres stretching for some 600 miles from Utah to southern California. This new Moab to Mojave Conservation Corridor protects wildlife habitat and a wide range of natural and cultural resources along the Colorado River, across the Colorado Plateau, and into the deserts of California. The Moab to Mojave Conservation Corridor stretches from Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah, through Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon



National Monument in Arizona, through Avi Kwa Ame National Monument in Nevada, and reaches the deserts and mountains of southern California within the Chuckwalla National Monument. The designation will also provide for a balance of natural and cultural resource protection and renewable

energy development consistent with the BLM Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan developed in 2016 and allow for the construction and expansion of electric transmission and distribution lines within the Monument to transport clean energy to western cities.

## FRIENDS ORGANIZATIONS

**Editor:** *There are over 80 local place-based “Friends” organizations that support the work of BLM on the public lands. This concept, like the National Landscape Conservation System, was part of 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 Lost Coast in California and Friends of the Yampa in Colorado. The Friends of the Lost Coast supports BLM in the management of the*

*King Range National Conservation Area (NCA) along the northern California coast. The King Range NCA is the Nation’s first NCA and was designated by Congress in 1970. More than 135,000 people visit the 68,000 acre NCA each year and the Friends of the Lost Coast make these visitor experiences better. The Friends of the Yampa supports the BLM in outreach, education and volunteer activities on public lands along the Yampa River in northwest Colorado.*

### FRIENDS OF THE LOST COAST – KING RANGE NCA By Justin Crellin, Executive Director, Friends of the Lost Coast

The King Range National Conservation Area (NCA) is a spectacular meeting of land and sea, with mountains that thrust straight out of the surf and King Peak (4,088 feet) only three miles from the ocean. The King Range NCA encompasses more than 68,000 acres along 35 miles of California’s remote north coast. Lying at the intersection of the San Andreas Fault, the Mendocino Fault, and the Cascadia Subduction Zone – this complex zone of faulting represents California’s most seismically active region. The resulting landscape is so rugged and inaccessible that the area is called California’s Lost Coast.



King Range National Conservation Area, CA  
(Friends photo)

The King Range NCA is America’s first NCA, designated by Congress in 1970 – and a fitting unit to highlight on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of BLM’s National Conservation Lands. The King Range NCA’s Douglas fir-covered peaks and magnificent grasslands attract hikers and hunters from around the globe, while the coast beckons to surfers, anglers, and beach-combers alike. World-class mountain bike trails, and 42,585 acres of coastal wilderness are two of the highlights of this incredibly unique area – as is the iconic Lost Coast Trail, the NCA’s star attraction.

The Lost Coast Trail is one of two National Recreation Trails (NRT) in the King Range NCA. The Lost Coast Trail is a challenging 53-mile trek that parallels the coastline and traverses the entire length of both the King Range NCA and Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, one of the longest stretches of roadless coastline in the lower 48 states. It also showcases long expanses of pristine black sand beach, a rare phenomenon globally, and boasts the Rocks & Islands Wilderness and three Marine Protected Areas just offshore. The other NRT in the King Range NCA is King Crest Trail, offering ridgetop views and an opportunity to climb the range’s namesake, King Peak. In total, there are over 100 miles of wilderness hiking and multi-use trails in the NCA, exploring



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## LOST COAST *(continued)*

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wildly varying terrain and numerous ecotypes. There are also four primitive campgrounds and a handful of day-use areas.



Lost Coast Trail - King Range NCA (BLM photo)

Visitors are also attracted to two lighthouses within the King Range NCA. The Punta Gorda light station stands sentinel near the northern end of the Lost Coast Trail and is a national historic landmark. The site is also home to an ever-growing elephant seal colony, which began taking root approximately 15 years ago and represents the species' first successful northward colony expansion beyond their known historic range. The Cape Mendocino lighthouse originally stood on the flanks of Cape Mendocino (just north of the NCA), but was moved to the coastal hamlet of Shelter Cove in the late 1990s and beautifully restored at BLM's Mal Coombs Park—which also has great tide-pooling. The lighthouse is open to visitors thanks to volunteers with the Cape Mendocino Lighthouse Preservation Society. Shelter Cove also offers public amenities and some of the best near-shore whale watching to be found.

For those new to the area, the King Range Visitor Center in Whitethorn is a great first stop for any visit. It features a variety of informational displays and a cool relief map of the NCA and surrounding area. The Lost Coast Education Center & Native Plant Garden is another King Range highlight. Located behind the Visitor Center, it features two historic barns, a salmon-bearing creek, and a demonstration native plant garden and nursery. The space hosts a wide array of educational, stewardship and community events—including twice-monthly volunteer work parties and seasonal native plant sales, plus activities like Art In The Garden and astronomy nights. The Lost Coast Education Center is operated under a co-management agreement between BLM and the Friends of the Lost Coast (FOLC).

The Friends of the Lost Coast was initially founded in 2000 as the Lost Coast Interpretive Association. With a mission to inspire passion for nature, the organization was originally conceived for the sole purpose of supporting BLM projects in the King Range NCA. Though the mission has since expanded to include the larger public lands of the Lost Coast, what started as a vehicle to support BLM's education programs, eventually gave way to a native plant garden, and now a wide-ranging suite of education, stewardship, youth and citizen-science offerings.

The Lost Coast Environmental Education Resource (LCEER) is the flagship program of this long-standing partnership. Funded by a BLM Assistance Agreement, the program brings FOLC's Environmental Educator and a custom natural-science curriculum with King Range focus into local classrooms and on field trips to visit the NCA. Other popular education and youth programs offered by the FOLC include the six-week Summer Adventure Camp, Natural Science Day, and numerous stand-alone offerings throughout the year. Education isn't just for kids either, and the FOLC's interpretive presentations take numerous forms, from the virtual Lost Coast Lectures series to a popular summer hike program, and a mix of diverse workshops, trainings, and more. Active social media accounts and newsletters are also important tools for furthering interpretation and appreciation of the unit, plus advocacy for numerous public lands campaigns and conservation initiatives.



Summer Adventure Camp - King Range NCA  
(Friends photo)

Stewardship is the other core aspect of the FOLC's work, supporting the King Range NCA through regular Shelter Cove workdays, invasive plant removal events, Lost Coast Trail Stewards outings, an

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## LOST COAST *(continued)*

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Adopt-A-Beach program, Trailhead Host weekends, and big annual functions to celebrate Earth Day and National Public Lands Day. Stipends are offered to youth for all FOLC stewardship events to help incentivize participation and highlight career pathways in conservation. The FOLC also advances stewardship and education through citizen-science, managing both the Lost Coast Phenology Project and the Shelter Cove hub of the North Coast Stranded Marine Mammal Monitoring Program.



2024 National Public Lands Day -  
King Range NCA (*Friends photo*)

important role the FOLC plays in supporting the King Range NCA, they received a BLM Community Engagement Award for Outstanding Volunteer Group in 2024. The FOLC is also a principal member of the King Range Alliance, a coalition of organizations/tribes who work collaboratively to support the King Range NCA—including Mattole Restoration Council, Sanctuary Forest, Mattole Salmon Group, Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria, and the Conservation Lands Foundation.

Much of this work is volunteer powered. As a testament to these efforts and the

To learn more about the Friends of the Lost Coast visit [www.lostcoast.org](http://www.lostcoast.org).

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## FRIENDS OF THE YAMPA – YAMPA RIVER, COLORADO

BY KATIE BERNING, FRIENDS OF THE YAMPA

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Friends of the Yampa is a watershed nonprofit that has been an advocate of river conservation efforts in the Yampa River Basin of northwest Colorado. Founded in 1982, the Friends of the Yampa has focused on preserving and enhancing the Yampa River and its tributaries, a vital waterway of the greater Colorado River Basin. The Yampa River, stretching 250 miles from its source in the Flat Tops Wilderness of Colorado to its confluence with the Green River in Dinosaur National Monument, is a lifeblood for the surrounding areas. The river provides water to irrigate ranches, support recreation, and maintain local habitats for many protected species.

With a commitment to protecting the river's natural ecosystem, supporting sustainable water management, and fostering community involvement, Friends of the Yampa plays an essential role in safeguarding this wild and free river system for future generations. What started as a river recreation community of rafters and kayakers grew into the organization they are today: focused on water conservation, advocating for policies that balance the needs of human populations with the preservation of natural ecosystems. Friends of the Yampa's approach to conservation involves not only environmental protection but also community education, stewardship, and advocacy. Friends of the

Yampa believes that active engagement with local communities and stakeholders is crucial to achieving lasting and meaningful change. This belief has led to numerous collaborations with governmental agencies, private and public landowners, and community organizations to ensure that the river's health is prioritized in the decision-making and planning processes.

### PROTECTING THE YAMPA

One of the key initiatives of Friends of the Yampa is its focus on maintaining the ecological integrity of the river and its tributaries. Healthy river systems support biodiversity, provide habitat for fish and wildlife, and ensure clean water for the basin communities. Friends of the Yampa works to protect this critical resource through a variety of efforts, including habitat restoration, river health monitoring, and advocacy in the face of drought and development. Through an ongoing monitoring program like the Yampa River Scorecard Project, the Friends of the Yampa also ensures that the river remains healthy and that there are continued ways to monitor any change over time. The Scorecard Project helps identify and inform future needs of the Yampa through the Yampa River Stewardship Project.





**Yampa River Scorecard Project**  
Electrofishing Monitoring (*Friends photo*)

Friends of the Yampa supports local public lands, including the BLM and Colorado State Parks and Wildlife. Meeting with land managers has helped Friends of the Yampa focus efforts on ways to help with outreach, education, and volunteer resources. The Friends were successful in 2012 in working with partners at Western Rivers Conservancy and others to purchase the Cross Mountain Canyon Ranch and the Hubbard Cabin and transferring these properties to BLM for management. Work around Little Yampa Canyon has been a great partnership with the Friends, BLM, and other entities to support campsite makeovers along the river with picnic tables and fire rings. In 2022 and 2023, Friends of the Yampa worked with the BLM, Yampa River State Park, City of Craig, and a student at Colorado State University on a data collection effort regarding river recreation in Little Yampa Canyon.

### ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Friends of the Yampa has a variety of programs to connect people to the Yampa River and inspire a sense of responsibility and passion. Through volunteer opportunities, educational events, and stewardship programs, Friends of the Yampa makes it easy for individuals to get involved.



**Yampa River Festival**  
(*Friends photo*)

In its 45th year, the Yampa River Festival combines recreation and awareness in a celebration of the Yampa in Steamboat Springs. The festival brings together locals and visitors for a series of races and events. For many, River Fest is their introduction to the Yampa outside of tubing and connects the visitors with local public organizations and businesses.

There are many other events and volunteer opportunities throughout the year, including Yampa River Cleanups and other programs like River Watch and Stream Team that engage trained volunteers. The Friends new Yampa River Center will serve as a home base for training programs and workshops, as well as offer educational information through partnerships with area river organizations and the local museum, Tread of Pioneers Museum.

### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Engaging the next generation through Youth River Camps in Steamboat Springs, Craig and Dinosaur National Monument will help inspire future river advocates and stewards. From splashing through Class II-III rapids to collecting macroinvertebrate, the camps give middle school through high school students a hands-on way to experience the Yampa and Green rivers. The goal of the camps is to spark a passion to protect the wild and free Yampa River.



**Yampa River – Youth River Camp**  
(*Friends photo*)

As the challenges facing the Yampa River continue to evolve, Friends of the Yampa remains committed to its mission of preserving the river for future generations.

Through conservation efforts, advocacy work, and community engagement, they continue to ensure that the Yampa River will remain a vibrant, healthy, and sustainable resource for years to come. By fostering collaboration, protecting habitats, and inspiring action, Friends of the Yampa plays a critical role in securing a future where the Yampa continues to serve as a vital lifeline for both people and wildlife in northwest Colorado. To learn more about Friends of the Yampa, visit [friendsoftheyampa.com](http://friendsoftheyampa.com).



## PUBLIC LAND ACCESS – “CORNER CROSSING”

The PLF has been tracking a court case in Wyoming that involves public land access to checkerboard lands, commonly referred to as “corner crossing”. 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 private landowner in this case had sought \$9 million in damages, citing diminished property values due to the alleged “corner crossing” trespass. 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 hunters in this case had used a ladder to corner cross from one parcel of public land to the adjacent parcel of public 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 was passed to harmonize the rights of private landowners and those accessing public lands. The UIA in short 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.”



## FOREST SERVICE RETIREE REUNION

Some of our PLF members have work and life experiences with both BLM and the U.S. Forest Service. The PLF also has an ongoing partnership relationship with the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) organization, including joint sponsorship of the Student Congress program. The NAFSR helps organize a Forest Service Reunion every three years and has scheduled a Reunion this year in Missoula, MT on September 22-26. PLF members who may be interested in attending the Reunion this year have been invited and are more than welcome to join the activities. More information on the Reunion can be found at [2025usfsreunion.org](https://2025usfsreunion.org).



**US Forest Service  
Retiree Reunion 2025**

Join Us On A Trip Down Memory Lane

September 22-26, 2025  
Missoula, Montana

<https://2025usfsreunion.org>

Join us in Missoula, or with a kind donation, to rekindle old memories

## PUBLIC LANDS RULE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMINATED

The BLM on January 13, 2025, announced the selection of 15 primary members and 11 alternate members appointed to the National Advisory Committee for Implementation of the BLM Public Lands Rule (Conservation and Landscape Health Rule). **However, the new administration on January 27, 2025 announced that the Advisory Committee had been indefinitely suspended and the Secretary of the Interior on February 27, 2025 officially terminated the Advisory Committee.** The BLM on April 18, 2024, had released the Final Public Lands Rule under the 43 CFR 1600 and 6100 regulations and on August 8, 2024, had announced that a public Advisory Committee would be established to engage the public in implementation of the Public Lands Rule. **However, the future of the Public Lands Rule is now uncertain. The new administration on January 31, 2025 filed motions for stay of the Public Lands Rule in the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah and the U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota. The motion for stay of the Rule was approved by the Court on February 6, 2025. Senator Barrasso (Wyoming) and Congresswoman Maloy (Utah) have also introduced legislation that would rescind the Rule.**

The newly appointed Committee members had represented a diverse background and shared interest in the public lands and would have served in an advisory role to the BLM on matters concerning implementation of the Rule and offered feedback and developed recommendations regarding the Rule and associated public outreach and engagement activities. The Committee's inaugural first meeting was originally scheduled for February 19, 2025, but was cancelled. The PLF, however, will continue to advocate for the sustainable multiple-use management of the public lands and the conservation of public land resources.

## 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!



## 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.



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## LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY UPDATE

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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.

### BLM REORGANIZATION

**STATUS:** *Congressman Hurd (Colorado) on February 7, 2025, introduced the Local Opportunities, Conservation and American Lands (LOCAL) Act (H.R. 1125) to relocate the BLM Headquarters Office to Grand Junction, CO and also require the Secretary to conduct a study on the feasibility of relocating more BLM employees to western locations. Senator Ernst (Iowa) has also introduced a bill (S. 23) that would require each Federal agency to move 30 percent of their Washington, D.C. employees to offices across the country. H.R. 1125 has been referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.*

**SUMMARY:** The LOCAL Act has 15 co-sponsors, including former Interior Secretary, Congressman Zinke (Montana), and calls for moving the BLM Washington, D.C. Headquarters Office to “provide for improved management of Federal lands and increased efficiencies while strengthening tourism, conservation, outdoor recreation, grazing, responsible energy production, and other multiple uses”.



BLM Western Headquarters Office, Grand Junction, CO

The bill would also require the Secretary, within one year of enactment, to submit to Congress a study on the feasibility of relocating more BLM employees to the Grand Junction office and to other western States. There are currently 21 BLM employees physically located in the Grand Junction Western Headquarters office, but 40 total positions are currently assigned to the office that include employees working remotely.

**PLF POSITION:** The PLF will be monitoring the status of H.R. 1125 and determine appropriate actions in response to any progress on the bill in the House.

### APPROPRIATIONS

**STATUS:** *On March 15, 2025, the President signed a full-year Continuing Resolution (CR) that continues funding the federal government through the end of the current fiscal year.*

**SUMMARY:** The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act was passed by the House on March 11, 2025 and by the Senate on March 14, 2025, and maintained funding levels at FY 2024 levels. The CR also includes language instructing departments and agencies to report back to Congress within 45 days on spending, expenditure, or operating plans at the program, project, or activity level for FY 2025 in preparation for development of budget proposals for FY 2026. It is anticipated that Congress will begin discussions of FY 2026 funding levels in the late April to May 2025 time frame.

**PLF POSITION:** The PLF submitted written testimony on March 10, 2025 to the House Committee



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on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies on the BLM FY 2026 Budget to assist in the discussion of FY 2026 budget proposals. 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 rangeland and forest health issues, backlog of grazing lease and permit renewals, and the dramatic increase in recreation use of the public lands.

#### NEPA REGULATIONS 40 CFR PARTS 1500 – 1508

**STATUS:** *The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, published an Interim Final Rule in the Federal Register that would remove the CEQ National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Regulations. Public comments on the Rule were required to be provided by March 27, 2025.*

**SUMMARY:** The legal and administrative situation regarding the proposed removal of the NEPA regulations issued by the CEQ is very complex. The NEPA was enacted by Congress in 1969 and the 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 inconsistency and confusion among the various sets of regulations an Executive Order was issued in 1977 that directed the CEQ to issue NEPA regulations and these regulations were promulgated in 1978. These CEQ regulations have been amended and revised over time, including the most recent implementing regulations finalized on May 1, 2024. 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. In addition, on February 3, 2025, a North Dakota Federal District Court decision also found that CEQ lacked statutory authority to promulgate NEPA regulations. In response to these decisions, CEQ published the Interim Final Rule that would remove the CEQ NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500 – 1508). This action by the CEQ was also consistent with directions provided by the President in an Executive Order issued on January 20, 2025 for “Unleashing American Energy” (Section 5(b) of the EO). Until recently, BLM has

followed the CEQ regulations and guidance provided in the Department of the Interior Manual (516 DM) and the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1) which was first issued in 1988 and revised and reissued in 2008.

**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).

#### OUTDOOR RECREATION ACT

**STATUS:** *The President on January 4, 2025 signed the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act (P.L. 118-234).*

**SUMMARY:** The EXPLORE Act is a comprehensive piece of legislation that aims to enhance recreation access and revamp outdoor recreation opportunities on the public lands. Key provisions of the Act support gateway communities, modernizes technology at recreation facilities, streamlines the permitting process, provides resources to combat park overcrowding, enhances accessibility for individuals with disabilities, promotes recreation for service members and veterans, protects rock-climbing areas and encourages the creation of long-distance bike trails, enhances access, and modernizes and restores campgrounds.

**PLF POSITION:** The PLF did not take a position on the bill but will track future implementation of the legislation by BLM.

#### GREATER SAGE-GROUSE EIS

**STATUS:** The BLM on November 8, 2024 released the Final Resource Management Plan Amendment and EIS for management of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat on the public lands and on January 16, 2025 issued *Records of Decision for updated Sage-Grouse Management Plans in Colorado and Oregon. Records of Decision for eight other States covered by the planning process are still pending.*

**SUMMARY:** The Final EIS will amend 76 BLM Resource Management Plans across the range of Greater sage-grouse. *The BLM preferred alternative in the EIS*

considered potential alignments of habitat management areas and associated management actions to try and balance Greater sage-grouse conservation with other public land uses. The preferred alternative identified 34.8 million acres of Priority Habitat Management Areas and 23.7 million acres of General Habitat Management Areas for rangewide management actions on BLM administered surface lands.

**PLF POSITION:** The PLF submitted comments on the Draft Greater Sage-Grouse EIS and Plan Amendment on June 10, 2024. Those comments are posted on the PLF website.



Greater Sage-Grouse (BLM photo)

#### OIL AND GAS REGULATIONS 43 CFR PART 3100

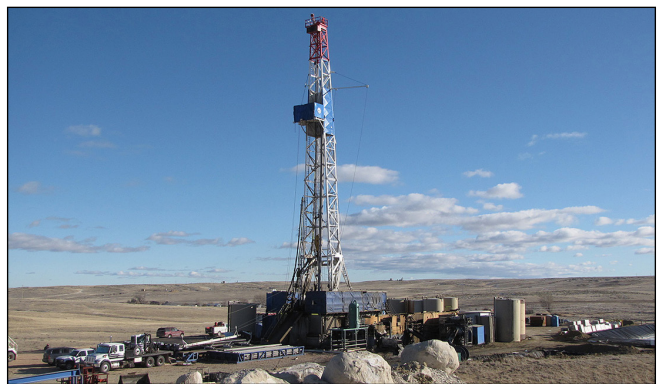
**STATUS:** The BLM on March 27, 2024 announced the release of the Final Methane Rule, or Oil and Gas Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation Rule (43 CFR Parts 3160 and 3170). *The U.S. District Court of North Dakota on September 12, 2024 issued a decision to grant an Injunction and halt implementation of the Final Methane Rule in North Dakota, Texas, Utah, Montana and Wyoming. 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 BLM on April 12, 2024 announced release of an Oil and Gas Leasing Rule (43 CFR Part 3100) to reflect provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. 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 leasing rule for being

procedurally deficient, arbitrary and capricious, and contrary to law. *The leasing rule case is still pending.*

*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 new provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and implement reforms from the Interior 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 nonoperational 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.



Oil and Gas Drill Rig – WY (BLM photo)



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

**STATUS:** The BLM on April 18, 2024 announced the release of the Final Public Lands (Conservation and Landscape Health) Rule under the 43 CFR 1600 and 6100 regulations. The BLM Director on August 8, 2024, announced that a Federal Advisory Committee will be established to engage the public in implementation of the Public Lands Rule and that BLM released a set of initial guidance documents to support consistent implementation of the Rule across the BLM State and Field Offices. *The BLM on January 13, 2025, announced the selection of members for a 15-member Advisory Committee to provide feedback and recommendations regarding implementation of the Public Lands Rule. However, the new administration on January 27, 2025 announced that the Advisory Committee had been indefinitely suspended and the Secretary of the Interior on February 27, 2025 officially terminated the Advisory Committee. The new administration also on January 31, 2025 filed motions for stay of the Public Lands Rule in the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah and the U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota. The motion for stay of the Rule was approved by the Court on February 6, 2025. Senator Barrasso (Wyoming) and Congresswoman Maloy (Utah) on February 11, 2025 introduced the Western Economic Security Today (WEST) Act to rescind the Rule as having “no force and effect”. The legislation is pending action by Congress.*

Considerable controversy has surrounded the intent of this Rule. The States of Utah and Wyoming on June 18, 2024 filed suit in U.S. District Court of Utah challenging the adequacy of NEPA review in issuance of the Final Rule. The States of North Dakota, Idaho and Montana filed a suit on June 21, 2024. A coalition of energy, mining, ranching and farming groups on July 12, 2024 filed a suit in U.S. District Court of Wyoming asserting that the Final Rule exceeds the authority of FLPMA. On July 25, 2024,

the Conservation Lands Foundation, The Wilderness Society, and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance filed a Motion to Intervene in the U.S. District Court of Utah to defend the BLM in the lawsuit against the Rule. These conservation groups also on September 19, 2024, filed a Motion to Intervene in the U.S. District Court of North Dakota. The Department of Justice on August 1 and September 6, 2024 filed motions with the Courts to dismiss the claims by the States for a preliminary injunction in the case. *However, the new administration on January 31, 2025 filed motions for stay of the Public Lands Rule in the U.S. District Court for Utah and the U.S. District Court for North Dakota. The stay was approved by the Court on February 6, 2025.*

**SUMMARY:** The Final Rule supports the principles of multiple use and sustained yield in the management of the public lands, restoration of degraded habitat, and applies land health standards to all BLM-managed public lands. This rule within 43 CFR 6000, which includes Conservation and Preservation, revised existing regulations to prioritize designating and protecting Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and also included provisions that allow a BLM State Director to place temporary management restrictions on “nominated” ACECs until land use management plans are completed for ACEC areas. *The Rule also provided for the use of “restoration and mitigation leases” to support mitigation efforts and restoration of public lands. However, on February 27, 2025, BLM rescinded an internal policy memorandum (IM 2024-038) that was previously issued to implement the “restoration and mitigation” leasing system. The BLM also rescinded an internal policy memorandum (IM 2024-035) that required the identification of priority restoration landscapes and the development of restoration plans for these landscapes.*

**PLF POSITION:** The PLF submitted comments on the Proposed Rule to the BLM on June 15, 2023. Those comments are posted on the PLF website.

## INTERIOR FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Since 2017, the Interior Federal Credit Union and the PLF have supported one another's missions. The Credit Union currently offers membership to employees and their families, members, and volunteers of the PLF. Recently, the Credit Union expanded the partnership to support PLF programs, including the George Lea Founder's Scholarship and the John Freemuth Student Congress. The Credit Union makes a yearly donation to the PLF and allows individuals in search of membership eligibility a way to join both the Credit Union and PLF. The PLF has added 15 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. The Credit Union is currently offering several programs to assist those members in need:

- Options for extensions or deferred payments on current loans.
- Waiver of early withdrawal penalties or fees on saving certificates.
- Free credit counseling and debt management planning.
- Free consultation and financial planning, including TSP advice.
- Mobile app access to accounts and Credit Union news and information.

Additional information on Credit Union assistance can be obtained by calling 800-914-8619 or accessing the Credit Union website at [interiorfcu.org](https://interiorfcu.org).



STRENGTH. STEWARDSHIP. COMMUNITY.

## 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	Jon Raby ( <i>Acting</i> )
Principle Deputy Director	Vacant
Deputy Director, Programs & Admin	Michael Nedd
Alaska State Office	Karen Kelleher ( <i>Acting</i> )
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	June Shoemaker ( <i>Acting</i> )
Montana State Office	Sonya Germann
Nevada State Office	Kim Prill ( <i>Acting</i> )
New Mexico State Office	Melanie Barnes
OR/WA State Office	Barry Bushue
Utah State Office	Matt Preston ( <i>Acting</i> )
Wyoming State Office	Andrew Archuleta



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## IN MEMORIAM

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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](mailto: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)

**William “Bill” M. Deegan** on January 20, 2025, in Phoenix, AZ. Bill was a U.S. Air Force veteran and joined the staff of the BLM Phoenix Training Center in 1985. For more than 15 years he was part of BLM’s national video production and broadcast team. While creating training, external affairs, and special assignment projects he traveled across the western states and Alaska and worked across all BLM program areas. Among the major projects he worked on was the BLM History series “Fractured Patterns”, a “Tricks of the Trade” series on the Wild Horese & Burro program, and he developed and edited “Make a Difference – Volunteer” about the BLM’s volunteer program. After moving to the new BLM National Training Center facility in the 1990’s, Bill mixed audio for countless live BLM and interagency satellite training broadcasts. Bill retired from the NTC at the end of 1999.

**Daniel John DuBray** on February 15, 2025, in Portland, OR. Dan attended the University of Utah and later earned a Bachelor’s degree in Communications from Montana State University–Billings. He had a long career in broadcasting at local radio and TV stations in Billings, MT and from 1989 to 1992 served as Communications Director for Representative Ron Marlenee in Washington, D.C.

Over time he served three Members of Congress and later became a non-political career Federal civil servant with the Department of the Interior, including BLM, until his retirement in 2018 as the Chief of Public Affairs for the Bureau of Reclamation.

**Richard Clay Hanes** on December 5, 2024, in Springfield, OR. Richard graduated from Texas A&M University with a degree in Aerospace Engineering and began a career in southern California in the aerospace industry. In the early 1970s, his passion for history led him to the University of Oregon and he earned his PhD in Anthropology. This began his 36 year career with BLM and his leadership in building the Cultural, Paleontological, and Tribal Coordination programs in Oregon, Washington, and Nevada. From 2004 to 2008 he led the Cultural and Heritage resource programs for both the BLM Oregon/Washington office and the Sixth District of the U.S. Forest Service. This was unprecedented to work concurrently for two different departments of the Federal government. He served on many advisory committees during his career, both nationally and for the Pacific Northwest, including the Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial Committee and the Oregon Travel Information Council’s Historic Marker Committee.

**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](mailto:rbrady@publicland.org).

## IN MEMORIAM (continued)

Richard finished his Federal career in the BLM Washington, D.C. offices from 2008 – 2012 where he oversaw regulatory compliance programs and coordination with the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

**John Augustus Rego** on December 14, 2024, in Glennallen, AK. John had a long military career, serving in the U.S. Air Force, Army Special Forces and the Rhode Island and Alaska National Guards. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel after 26 years of military service, earning a Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, and two Purple Hearts. Between assignments, he earned a Geology degree from the University of Rhode Island and used it in his second career as a Mining Geologist for BLM in Alaska where he worked for 24 years. He was also a wildland firefighter with the Alaska Fire Service during the summers.

**Cecil Melbourne Roberts Jr.** on July 30, 2024. Cecil was a U.S. Army veteran and served in the Army Reserve, and was also a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary for more than 30 years. He graduated from the University of Maine with a degree in Forestry and later earned a Masters degree in Natural Resources Management from the University of Michigan. He began his career with BLM as a Forester in Eugene, OR. He retired in 1987 after 30+ years of Federal career service with stops in Baker, OR, Washington, D.C., Pinedale, WY, and the Colorado State Office where he retired as Deputy State Director.

## PLF MEMBERSHIP

### PLF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

### PLF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

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



## DONATIONS\*

MEMORIAL DONATIONS		GENERAL FUND		
<b>RECEIVED FROM</b> Celia Boddington	<b>IN MEMORY OF</b> Dan Dubray	Celia Boddington	Carolyn Droscher	Ted Hudson
Matthew Taylor	Lindsay Taylor and Jack Clark	Krista Hunter	Dave Mari	Mat Millenbach
Maggie Wyatt	Pat Olmstead Dave Brunner Ray Jorgensen	Kim Harb	David A. Jones	Bill LeBarron
Elaine Zielinski	Fran Cherry	Maggie Wyatt		
		Bob Ross and Janine Terry		
		Gregg and Mary Simmons		

SCHOLARSHIP FUND		
Carolyn Droscher	Matthew Taylor	Elaine Zielinski
Gregg and Mary Simmons		

*\* This list reflects donations received during the period of January 1 through March 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](http://www.publicland.org), or by check sent to the Public Lands Foundation, P.O. Box 7226, Arlington, VA 22207. 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.



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

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### KEEP PUBLIC LANDS IN PUBLIC HANDS

I am a former National Park Service ranger and I am scared for the future of our public lands. Our national parks are currently under extreme threat, to a level never before witnessed in the 109-year history of the National Park Service. However, I see in the public outpouring of support to protect our parks a dangerous future beginning to form in which the current administration will provide just enough support for our parks alone to placate the public and provide political cover to dispose of our other public lands. That is, unless we as a park-loving public can expand the scope of our movement and come to understand the interdependencies that inherently tie the health and future of our national parks to the health and future of the entire network of federal public lands.

National media coverage of the federal employee firings across land management agencies has focused primarily on the impacts to our national parks, and as a result some concessions have been made to protect our parks. Meanwhile, the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management have been similarly impacted. The comparative mute response regarding the impacts to these agencies has been deafening. National parks do not exist in a vacuum, and both the ecological health of our parks and the public's ability to enjoy them are dependent on other federal lands. Arches and Canyonlands National Parks in Utah are surrounded by desert lands managed by the BLM for example. Many park visitors camp and recreate on these lands also, alleviating pressure on the

national parks. Yellowstone and Grand Teton are surrounded by national forests and BLM-managed public lands. These lands make up the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, one of the largest remaining nearly intact ecosystems in the northern temperate zone. Simply put, the national parks alone are inadequate to ensure the ecological wholeness of the region.

Those intent on dismantling our public lands, I believe, intend to continuously threaten the national parks so that the public is so preoccupied in protecting these places that they neglect to show up to protect our other public lands, including the BLM-managed public lands. In so doing, they expect to force upon us their agenda of disposing of our other national public land resources. Expect to first see efforts to dismantle the BLM, because the public is currently mobilized to stand up for the national parks, but appear less passionate about our other public land resources. Crippling the BLM by gutting their staff is the first step towards the disposal of public lands. The administration intends to force agencies like the BLM to fail by starving them of staff and resources, and then the wholesale disposal of our public land inheritance will begin. Thus the time is now for national park lovers to fiercely stand up for all public lands and their dedicated stewards, lest tomorrow they come for our national parks as well. To take action, please contact your federal elected officials asking them to support our public lands and the bipartisan "Public Lands in Public Hands Act", which would provide some limitations on BLM and Forest Service land disposals.

**Adam Auerbach, Boulder, Colorado**

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](mailto: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](mailto: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.