

## BLM Montana Firefighter Receives Top Academy Leadership Award

*Don Smurthwaite, MSO*

*Miles City* — Enrique Olivares, a squad leader with the BLM Fort Howes helitack crew, recently received the Kelso Award for his performance at the National Interagency Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Academy, held in Sacramento, California.

The award is named after Jon Kelso, who lost his life in the South Canyon Fire in July 1994. It is awarded to the individual who demonstrates commitment, dedication, leadership and professionalism throughout the two months of the apprenticeship program.

Olivares said the Kelso Award “stands out a bit, because it’s voted on by the students” participating in the apprenticeship program. About 100 students from a variety of federal agencies attend each session of the academy.

Olivares is in his fifth season as a BLM firefighter. He’s served on a hand crew, engine crew, and helitack crew.

The apprenticeship program includes two four-week long residential academies, a prescribed program of technical training and 4,000 hours of on-the-job training. Academy students receive training in fire behavior, prevention, fuels management, fire use, medical response, basic air operations and other topics.

Upon completion of the academy, an apprentice will be non-competitively promoted to the senior firefighter level and converted to a career-conditional appointment with a federal agency.

Olivares said he was surprised at being selected by his peers and the staff.

“I didn’t think I’d receive it,” he said. “There were a lot of people who were far more charismatic than myself. I just tried to do my best at whatever was going on. I didn’t have a clue that I’d get the award until that day.”

Dave Overcast is the fire management officer in Miles City and has worked with Olivares for two



*Enrique Olivares*

years. He’s not surprised that Olivares received the honor.

“He is a can-do kind of individual. He comes to work each day with a great attitude. If we ask him to do something, he gets right into finding a way to make it happen. He has a lot of character and good people skills,” Overcast says.

Olivares is a native of Miles City and attended Montana State University at Bozeman, where he majored in sociology.

Olivares isn’t quite sure where he wants his career path to take him, but he knows his future remains in wildland fire.

“To be honest, I haven’t really thought about it. I’ll probably stick with aviation,” he said. “The agency has been very good to me and the academy has been very good for me.”

## State Director's Column

By Sandy Berain

Wow! These last two months have flown by. It's been a pleasure to sit in as the associate state director. Not that there hasn't been the occasional evening when I've gone home with a headache, and not that there haven't been some challenges that came with a few barbed hooks attached, but my experience in the front office has reaffirmed that Montana and the Dakotas is a good place to work, with people who are conscientious about how they perform their duties.

I'm not alone in that assessment. As you probably all know, our organization was the subject of a General Management Evaluation the second week of June. A team of fifteen people from other BLM offices came in and conducted a stem to stern evaluation, interviewing more than 400 employees and 50 external customers. On the final day of the GME, managers from the state office gathered with the team, joined by a few of the field office managers on the phone, and had an hour-plus review of the preliminary findings. Elena Daly, the GME team lead, set the tone for the meeting when she said that we had a healthy organization and she'd decided she would like to work in Montana, too!

The team had high praise for many of the people and programs being conducted in our three states. Among those highlights:

- Most employees feel that a lot is "going right" in Montana and the Dakotas. A positive work atmosphere, management accessibility and a professional workforce were specifically cited.

- The feedback from our external customers was "overwhelmingly positive." Elena said that 95 percent of the individuals had extraordinarily high praise for our employees, while the other five percent indicated they were highly satisfied with our performance. That's a tribute to our employees' willingness to provide nothing but the best in customer service.
- We have many outstanding partnerships in the three states, resulting in tremendous benefits to BLM and the organizations we work with.
- The minerals program (both solid and fluids) was specifically mentioned as being "highly effective," with a good sense of teamwork and professionalism.
- Another nice stroke was the finding that most top managers seemed to genuinely care about employees and working conditions.

As good as the initial report is, the GME did compile a list of recommendations. One of those is the need to improve our internal communication. Another is the zone concept works well in some ways but not in others. The personnel management committee process is not well understood. The layout of the state office needs to be addressed. And the state office itself is too cold – something I've noticed in my fifteen months here.

Employees, in one-on-one interviews or through written comments, also raised other issues that Howard and I and others will begin to address. That's our promise to you. We will not sweep away any issues, nor will we merely bask in the glow of what was generally a very positive review. We'll take on these issues for as long as we need to – either until they are resolved or the new state director and associate come on board. Some of those issues will be relatively easy to solve (if you work in the state office, you've probably already noticed that we've thrown an extra log on the fire) while others will take longer to address.

The full GME report will be written and sent to us in a few months. I'd like to thank the GME team for devoting a week of their life and sacrificing a few brain cells to help us improve as an organization. Special thanks also goes to Pam Dandrea, who coordinated the GME for us here, a job that required her to play many roles: Master organizer, tour guide, scheduler, and, on occasion, den leader, to name a few.

All in all, our organization did well on the review. It's easy to predict that whoever permanently ends up in the state director's and associate state director's chairs will be fortunate to inherit a very good organization, one that will continue its rise in the future.

So again, our thanks to you for your good work, healthy attitudes and constant awareness of serving our customers!

# Upper Missouri Interpretive Center Dedicated

An international crowd gathered on June 25 in Fort Benton to help dedicate the new Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Interpretive Center. Governor Brian Schweitzer was on hand, as were members of Alberta's Steele's Scouts, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and a representative of the Alberta government. The chaplain of the Nez Perce Executive Committee gave the invocation, and former Montana/Dakotas BLM State Director Marty Ott acted as the master of ceremonies.

The sun was fierce and the shade was scarce, so the speakers mercifully kept their remarks to a minimum, but nearly all of them acknowledged Fort Benton resident Jack Lepley's efforts to make the interpretive center a reality. The dedication was the final event of Ft. Benton's annual Summer Celebration.

The center is mostly finished, and the BLM river staff has moved in. The displays and exhibits are now open to visitors, and an open

house is planned for this fall when the final details are complete.

The BLM, City of Fort Benton, and The River and Plains Society are partners in the interpretive center. The BLM will pay for construction, permanent fulltime staffing, and part of the operation and maintenance of the center. The City of Fort Benton provided the land for the center and will also assist with maintenance of the grounds. The River and Plains Society plans to provide staffing and volunteers during the summer season, as well as assist with gift store operations at the center. The River and Plains Society is a nonprofit group dedicated to preserving and providing education about the history of Chouteau County and the surrounding areas.



(L-R) Larry Greene, Jr (Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee Chaplain), Elena Daly (BLM), Ann Reid (president of the Fort Whoop-up Interpretive Association), Jack Lepley (The River and Plains Society), Fort Benton Mayor Rick Morris, Governor Brian Schweitzer, Len Mitzel (member of the Alberta Legislative Assembly), and Selma Sierra (BLM Chief of Staff) cut the official ribbon.



Steele's Scouts were on hand for the dedication.

## Interpretive Trail Enhances Site

Montana's Undaunted Stewardship program is working with the BLM to enhance the new interpretive center in Fort Benton and extend the city's walking trail.

As construction on the interpretive center winds down, work to develop an interpretive trail along the Missouri River on the center property is getting underway. Signs along the new trail segment will interpret local cultural history and the area's natural history. The trail information will dovetail with exhibits and information inside the interpretive center.

Additional information along the fully accessible trail will highlight the Undaunted Stewardship goals to recognize the stewardship of private landowners that has resulted in many areas along the Lewis and Clark Trail remaining undeveloped and closely resembling what Lewis and Clark saw during their expedition through the state.

"Another aspect of Undaunted Stewardship is to develop on-the-ground projects with private landowners that can enhance the natural resources along the trail," said Jim Peterson, Montana State University's representative on the Undaunted Stewardship Executive Steering Committee. "It also highlights the importance of public-private partnerships and the good results that can come from them."

"The new trail will enhance the interpretive experience for visitors and add an important outdoor component to the site," said Connie Jacobs, BLM's interpretive center director.

Undaunted Stewardship is helping to fund the new trail that will connect with, and become an extension of, Fort Benton's walking trail that fronts the Missouri across much of the town. The trail is expected to be completed this fall.



The center's concrete outer wall mimics the famed White Cliffs of the Upper Missouri.

MCFO Petroleum Engineer Chuck Laakso entertains questions at a CBM fair held at the Powder River County offices in Broadus, Sept. 9th. Developers, interested stakeholders and speakers were on-hand to speak to the public regarding natural gas development. Citizens For Resource Development sponsored the event.



# PIECES OF THE PAST

*Marilyn Krause, Western Zone*

Twenty volunteers from the Madison Valley History Association and the Blackfeet Community College/Blackfeet Tribal Preservation Office used metal detectors to try and locate the site of a skirmish that took place near what is now Ruby Creek Campground east of Dillon.

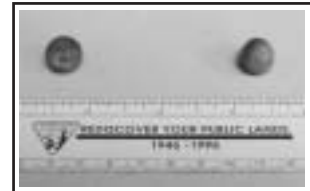
Diaries tell of a battle in June of 1838 between a village of Blackfeet and a trapper brigade consisting of some of the western frontier's most famous characters – namely Jim Bridger, Kit Carson and Osborne Russell!

The volunteers found numerous modern rifle and pistol bullets and even a few rim fire .44 Henry cases dating from the 1870s. The highlight of the day was two lead .54 caliber round balls that probably date to the trapper era. According to Mark Sant, Dillon archaeologist, the evidence is not conclusive but very suggestive that the volunteer sleuths may be in the right spot.

The Dillon Field Office has received special funding from the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Antiquities Act to develop an interpretive display at the Ruby Creek Campground which will be devoted to describing the battle and the historical utilization of the Madison Valley by the Blackfeet Tribe.



Volunteers search an area near Ruby Reservoir in southwest Montana trying to locate an 1838 skirmish site. *Photo by Mark Sant*



These .54 caliber lead balls that date from the trapper era suggest that the volunteer detectives may be in the right area. *Photo by Mark Sant*



MCFO Wildlife Biologist Kent Undlin examines some regeneration during a recent site visit to the Missouri Breaks. The trip identified several sites which will be used to monitor post-wildfire shrub regeneration and browsing pressure response.



(Left to right) MCFO Wildlife Biologist Kent Undlin, MCFO Archaeologist Doug Melton and USGS Ecologist Richard Keigley discuss a possible paleo find during a September visit to a burn area in the Missouri Breaks.

# Clark on the Yellowstone



*Clark on the Yellowstone*, the 13<sup>th</sup> of 15 Lewis and Clark Bicentennial National Signature Events, was held at Pompeys Pillar National Monument July 22-25. About 47,000 people attended the event, which featured ongoing programming and demonstrations at numerous locations throughout the site. Highlights included the dedication of the new interpretive center, author's symposium, and the Crow Nation Parade of Honor.

Visitors seemed unanimous in their praise of the programming and organization. As a sponsoring partner and caretaker of the Pillar, the BLM played a significant role from the earliest planning stages through the finishing details. During the event, well over 300 community volunteers and numerous employees from federal, state and local agencies including BLM kept things running smoothly. Many thanks to everyone who contributed!



John LeVar, member of the Pompeys Pillar Historical Association, shows a young visitor how to use a sextant, an instrument used for navigation. *Photo by Sandy Ward*



The "tent city" as seen from the boardwalk at Clark's signature. The hayfield-turned-parking lot is in the distance. *Photo by Sandy Ward*



Members of the Discovery Expedition re-enact Clark's landing at Pompeys Pillar. *Photo by Sandy Ward*



Dedicated volunteers welcome visitors to Clark on the Yellowstone. Parking lot duty was just one of the many critical tasks that volunteers capably handled during the event. *Photo by Sandra Choate*



Members of the National Park Service's Corps II exhibit. *Photo by Sandy Ward*



Amy Mossett takes on the role of Sacajawea in her interpretive program. *Photo by Sandy Ward*



The Crow Nation Parade of Honor on July 25. *Photo by Sandy Ward*





## They proceeded on . . .



### Summer 1806

#### July 3

After re-crossing the Bitterroots, the expedition splits into smaller units, in order to explore more of the Louisiana Territory. Clark takes a group down the Yellowstone River; Lewis heads across the shortcut to the Great Falls and then explores the northernmost reaches of the Marias River (and therefore the Louisiana Territory). It will mean they will be split at one point into four separate groups.

#### July 25

Having reached the Yellowstone (with some guiding assistance from Sacagawea), Clark's group has re-entered the Great Plains, built two dugouts, been stopped on the river by a huge buffalo herd, and now comes to a sandstone outcropping east of present-day Billings, Montana. He names it Pompey's Tower, in honor of Sacagawea's son, nicknamed Little Pomp. And on the rock face, Clark inscribes his name and the date – the only physical evidence the Corps of Discovery left on the landscape that survives to this day.

Lewis and three men, meanwhile, are now 300 miles away, near the Canadian border and what is now Cut Bank, Montana.

#### July 26/27

Heading back toward the Missouri, Lewis sees eight Blackfeet warriors. They camp together warily, but the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup> the explorers catch the Blackfeet trying to steal their horses and guns. In the fight that follows, two Blackfeet are killed – the only act of bloodshed during the entire expedition. Lewis leaves a peace medal around the neck of one of the corpses "that they might be informed who we were." The explorers gallop away, riding for 24 straight hours, meet the group with the canoes on the Missouri, and paddle off toward the rendezvous with Clark.

#### August 12

Downstream from the mouth of the Yellowstone, the entire expedition is finally reunited.

#### August 14

They arrive back at the Mandan villages. John Colter is given permission to leave the expedition and return to the Yellowstone to trap beaver (and become one of the first American "mountain men"). The captains say good-bye to Charbonneau, Sacagawea, and Baptiste.

#### September

Speeding home with the Missouri's current, they cover up to 70 miles a day, often not even stopping to hunt in order to get back sooner. They exchange harsh words with the Teton Sioux chief, Black Buffalo; pay their respects at the grave of Charles Floyd, their only casualty; and begin meeting boat after boat of American traders already heading upriver into this newest section of the nation.

#### September 20

The men see a cow on the shore and raise a cheer at the sign that they are finally returning to the settlements; that day they reach La Charette.

#### September 23

Their last day as the Corps of Discovery. They reach St. Louis. Having been gone nearly two and a half years, they had been given up for dead by the citizens, who greet the explorers enthusiastically. "Now," young John Ordway writes, "we intend to return to our native homes to see our parents once more, as we have been so long from them."

#### Fall 1806

The captains are national heroes; as they travel to Washington, D.C., balls and galas are held in the towns they pass through. In the capitol, one senator tells Lewis it's as if he had just returned from the moon. The men get double pay and 320 acres of land as rewards; the captains get 1,600 acres. Lewis is named governor of the Louisiana Territory; Clark is made Indian agent for the West and brigadier general of the territory's militia.

(source: [www.PBS.org](http://www.PBS.org))



# Burning Research in the Whitetail Basin

*Marilyn Krause, Western Zone*

A cooperative project started in 2003 with Montana State University continues to expand and provide research information. The Whitetail Basin Prescribed Fire Demonstration Project looks at the relationship between fire and stream flow with the hypothesis that since fire has mostly been absent from the landscape for the last 50 years, the increased number of conifers use more of the water that would historically have recharged the streams.

In the Whitetail Basin area north of Whitehall, MSU graduate students targeted two similar drainages – one for burning and one to be used as a control. The students installed 15 water sampling devices in both drainages which are read every hour one day a month. Monitor well records show that stream flow rebounds at night, leading the students to surmise that the trees don't take up water once the sun sets, and more water flows out the drainage.

Prescribed fire was used in Hay Canyon in the fall of 2005 and again in spring of 2006. "We were looking for a spotty burn," stated MSU professor Clayton Marlow on a recent field trip, "and I'm pleased with the look of the Hay Canyon burn."

Graduate student Ron Tucker shared his findings at the Billings Land Symposium on June 5 in his presentation "*The Use of Prescribed Fire for Riparian Ecosystem Rehabilitation.*" BLM was one of the symposium sponsors.

Even though the water data collection is still ongoing, the study has piqued the interest of other researchers. Another graduate student is collecting soil moisture data and trying to discern what percentage is coming from ground water versus surface water. She will also try to determine which size class of vegetation uses water from different depths.

Researchers recently received a National Research Initiative grant for other studies, including the construction of four enclosures to see how aspen and willow recover from burning with no grazing pressure from either wildlife or livestock. A professor from Montana Tech in Butte has proposed mapping the groundwater to see how water moves through the heavily fractured geology of the basin.

Stay tuned as researchers gather data and draw conclusions that will assist specialists and managers responsible for land management decisions.



Mike Small uses a drip torch to burn in Hay Canyon as part of the prescribed burn for the Whitetail Basin study north of Whitehall.



The holding crew waits "in the black" during spring burning for the project area that is the focus of numerous studies by MSU graduate students. *Photos by Mark Goertel*



MCFO Soil Scientist Robert Mitchell demonstrates his flint knapping technique to crowds visiting the Corps II , "Clark on the Yellowstone" event held in Miles City, July 30th through August 3rd.



MCFO Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist and Assistant Field Manager Dale Tribby visits with an interested patron at the Eastern Montana Fair held August 24 - 27 at Miles City.

# Spring Cleaning on the Limekiln Trail

*Craig Flentie, Lewistown Field Office*

Residents of the Lewistown area observed National Trails Day on June 3 by working on the Limekiln Trail in the Judith Mountains, northeast of Lewistown. Now in its 14th year, National Trails Day has grown to inspire nearly a million trail enthusiasts to flock to their favorite trails to discover, learn about and celebrate trails while participating in educational exhibits, trail dedications, gear demonstrations, instructional workshops and trail work projects.

Members of the Judith Basin Backcountry Horsemen's Club; Dave Mari, a founding member of the Lewistown trails group; Jim Hansen, a new Lewistown resident from Minnesota; and Rod Johnson (the Fergus County youth probation officer who supervised a work crew) all stepped up to a hard day's work on the trail, while enjoying magnificent views of the Judith and Big Snowy Mountains. The work included clearing trees and debris, sawing off stumps and raking dirt berms in addition to other trail maintenance tasks.

The BLM's Lewistown Field Office started developing the Limekiln hiking/bicycling/equestrian trail six years ago. In the years since, a number of volunteers have donated time and effort to improve the increasingly popular trail. BLM employees have also donated their time to building and maintaining the trail.

Rod Sanders, the BLM's recreation planner stationed in Lewistown, coordinated the day's activities, and is very grateful to the volunteers who made the day a complete success. "Without the dedicated efforts of these individual



Members of the Judith Basin Backcountry Horsemen's Club prepare for a day of volunteer work on the trail.

volunteers and groups like the Backcountry Horsemen, this local recreation resource would not be available for the public to enjoy," Sanders added.

The BLM would like to thank all of those who have volunteered

their time and labor to improving the Limekiln Trail and various other public land improvement efforts. Such volunteer efforts are becoming more and more important to building and maintaining similar improvements on our public lands.



Rod Sanders (left) briefs volunteers about the importance of safety during their volunteer efforts.



Dave Mari has spent many hours working on the Limekiln Trail.

## Attention BLM Retirees

The BLM Retirees Association meets at 11:30 a.m. on the first Tuesday of even-numbered months. The location has changed to Guadalajara in the Riverboat Casino (444 S. 24th St. West) in Billings. If you would like to receive email or postcard notifications of these meetings, please call Shirley Heffner at 259-1202, Cynthia Embretson at 252-1367, or send your address to Cynthia at ceatsage@wtp.net.

**The Public Lands Foundation** offers new retirees a free one-year membership. Please contact Bill Noble, PLF Montana Representative, at 406-656-0267 to join.

Please also help us keep our *Quarterly Steward* mailing list current by contacting Ann Boucher of the External Affairs staff at 406-896-5011 or aboucher@mt.blm.gov with address changes.

Retired from Montana/Dakotas BLM since April 1, 2006:

Gerald Clark – 32 years  
Archeologist, Great Falls Field Station

Huey Long – 35 years  
Soil Scientist, Butte Field Office

Thomas Hernandez – 32 years  
Supply Technician, Montana State Office

Gary Peterson – 35 years  
Range Technician, Miles City Field Office

Richard King – 30 years  
Law Enforcement Ranger, Dillon Field Office

Victor Roberts – 16 years  
Biological Science Tech (Plants), Lewistown Field Office

Bernice Knopp – 21 years  
Land Law Examiner, Miles City Field Office

Clark Whitehead – 38 years  
Outdoor Recreation Planner, Lewistown Field Office

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