

People, Places, and Partners

Planning, Managing, and Enhancing Recreational Experiences on BLM Public Lands

Vast and varied, Bureau of Land Management public lands represent the largest acreage available for recreation in America, offering unparalleled leisure opportunities. Recreation has become one of the BLM's premier programs and is vital to the local economy in many communities across the West. As recreation and tourism take their place alongside more traditional land uses in the culture and economy of these communities, the BLM's responsibility to these places and the people who live there is also growing.

In managing the public lands for multiple uses, as directed by Congress in a landmark 1976 law, the BLM oversees a broad array of activities on these lands. This includes such traditional land uses as grazing and timber harvesting, which benefit Western rural communities, as well as oil and gas development, which contributes to America's energy supply. But the BLM also conserves natural resources and manages newer uses of the public lands in the West, where rapid growth and urbanization have created an unprecedented demand for outdoor recreational opportunities.

Managing recreation in a multiple-use setting requires that the BLM meet visitor demands for adventure, renewal, and wide-open spaces, while maintaining conditions that conserve the land and create sustainable recreational benefits for visitors and communities alike. In serving visitors, the BLM also has an opportunity to increase public understanding of the concept of multiple use and the unique role of the public lands in the history and cultural life of the United States.

Cooperation and partnership in conserving public lands and the communities that depend on them are perhaps the ultimate resource the public lands provide, sustaining the unique character of recreation in these truly American places and their social and economic benefits to local communities and the nation.

Serving People

Today, 8 out of every 10 contacts between the BLM and the public relate to recreation. Expectations about the experiences and benefits associated with recreating on public lands have risen along with the number of visitors, which has doubled over the last decade. As a result, planning for and managing recreational use at sustainable levels have become key dimensions of the BLM's overall resource management planning.

BLM planners study recreational use trends and responses to visitor surveys to gain vital information about the kinds of services people expect. In order to maintain the distinctive recreational experiences visitors and local communities want from BLM-managed lands, the agency is already improving concessions, reservation systems, and other commercial operations in recreational areas.

As more and more people find their way to nature and the outdoors on public lands, they also want to learn more about where they are and how to care for what they see and experience. So, the BLM is also working to hire and train more staff and volunteers to provide information, interpretation, and hosting services—in short, better equipping our people to better serve our visitors and in turn, encouraging responsible use and stewardship of the land.

Sustaining Places

The BLM connects people and recreational settings in a number of ways—from developing maps, signs, brochures, and other descriptive information to providing facilities that ensure visitor health, safety, and comfort. Designating trails, byways, and other transportation routes that showcase the diversity of recreation on BLM public lands also helps maintain the unique qualities that draw visitors to these places. Best practices and guidelines for managing trails and visual resources help ensure that the land continues to provide the desired experiences for visitors and sustained benefits for communities.

Land use planning, which guides all activities on public lands, supplies the roadmap for BLM recreation management. Involving residents of nearby communities of place as well as members of communities of interest is crucial to success and presents another opportunity for people to work for the places they treasure. The bonds that develop between public lands and the people who use them for leisure or livelihood transform these visitor-users into partners in the work of stewardship.

Engaging Partners

The BLM needs collaborative partnerships with public and private recreation stakeholders to serve customer needs, meet its stewardship and service commitments, and maintain economic viability.

Recreation and tourism on the public lands already benefit from numerous alliances with volunteer and fundraising groups that help accomplish specific projects. More broadly, the BLM looks to representatives of the recreation-tourism industry, local and state authorities, and advocates from communities of interest as managing partners in jointly charting the future of public-lands recreation and tourism.

Communicating, consulting, and collaborating during every phase of planning and implementation enhance each partner's ability to sustain the character and productive capacity of the public lands as places to visit and surrounding communities as places to live. Partnerships mirror and model the connection between people and places that sustain us as individuals and as a nation.

For more information about the BLM's Recreation program, visit www.blm.gov/recreation.

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