Montana/Dakotas

Bureau of Land Management

Summer 2008

Firefighters Honored for Bravery

Four Lewistown BLM firefighters received the Department of the Interior's Valor Award for their role in rescuing a pilot who had crashed in the path of a quickly advancing wildfire.

Scott Meneely, Andrea Robinson, Steven Spellberg, and Andrew Rishavy accepted their awards during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., on May 13.

Meneely, Robinson, Spellberg, and Rishavy were members of a BLM engine crew. They were working with two other crews to create a buffer between the Barrel Springs Fire and homes in Winnemucca, Nev., on July 17, 2007, when they saw a single engine air tanker that was attempting to make a retardant drop get caught in a sudden crosswind and crash. They raced to the crash site and radioed for medical assistance, but recognized that the pilot was in immediate danger from the fire. While some of the firefighters scrambled to slow the fire's advance, others pulled the pilot to safety. The fire soon reached the plane and consumed it. Soaked in jet fuel, the pilot would not have survived without the quick action and bravery of the firefighters.

Meneely was the chief of the engine crew when the rescue occurred. He began working for the BLM in 2006 but also worked for the Helena National Forest for several years previously. He lives in Lewistown.

Rishavy is from Alexandria, Minn., and coaches high school cross-country skiing during the winter. He plans to return to the Zortman fire crew this year.

Spellberg's home is in New England. He will to return to Montana this summer for his second fire season with the BLM.

Robinson grew up in Zortman, Mont., and spent four seasons working for the Central Montana Fire Zone there. Currently employed by Air Methods, she flies the ambulance airplane for the Billings Clinic.

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Valor Award recipients were Washington, D.C., on May 13. From left: Scott Meneely, Lewistown BLM; Secretary Dirk Kempthorne; Andrew Spellberg, Lewistown BLM.

recognized at a ceremony in Michael McMaster, Nevada BLM; Scott Brandt, Nevada BLM; Interior Rishavy, Lewistown BLM; Andrea Robinson, Lewistown BLM; Andrew Snyder, Nevada BLM; and Steven

A Message from our Associate State Director

First off, there's a group of employees that I'd like to showcase, much as we did with our oil and gas inspectors in a previous edition of the Steward.

Our procurement and purchasing folks do an amazing job. They have adapted to our crazy budget cycles that don't allow us even to know our subactivity funding until well after the start of the calendar year. What that means is that they deal with a whole lot of compressed procurement and purchasing that will be even further complicated this year by the conversion to the FBMS system. Often times we find ourselves making financial obligations late in the fiscal year. That puts a great deal of stress on these folks, as the following numbers would indicate.

In 2007, we entered orders and signed contracts to the tune of nearly \$4 million. Almost half of that was done in the month of September. We had financial assistance and interagency agreements that totaled more than \$10 million, of which nearly \$4 million was obligated in September. Procurement also supports the fire program, and those numbers are not included here.

Without the exemplary efforts of procurement folks and their ability to adapt to changing budget schedules, we would be virtually shut down. They are about as operational and "on the ground" as you can get. I'd like to offer a great big THANK YOU to everyone in the field offices and the state office who perform these services on our behalf.

Moving on to other issues, in the next couple of months you'll see a draft proposal to implement our three-tier organization. It will provide much of the detail for how we intend



to proceed organizationally. We are obligated to have an implementation plan completed by the end of this fiscal year. Our intention is for this proposal to have the required elements of a three-tier organization while causing the minimum amount of disruption and staying within our budget.

Another initiative that the SMT has been working on over the past six months or so will also be released in the near future. This one is regarding our commitment to enhance access to our public lands. Gene and I and the entire SMT are especially excited as we develop this proactive vision to address a topic near and dear to all of us internally, and to the general public as well.

As you know, our land ownership pattern is very intermixed, presenting management and access challenges. We believe this initiative is among the

> most important that we have ever undertaken. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting proposal.

Finally, in keeping with the pledge that our most important resource is our employees, we are pleased that new building space has been acquired and completed for both Havre and Malta. Phasing and fine-tuning at several other locations are ongoing, and our next priority is to address the need for a new building in Belle Fourche. It is springtime in Montana

and the Dakotas, and it's field season. It doesn't get much better than that. Take care, enjoy the privilege of what we get to do and where we get to live, and please be safe.





Members of the Montana/Dakotas BLM procurement staff:

BACK: Peg Geiger, Connie Sweeney (Lewistown), Becky Undlin (Miles City), Lori Anderson (MSO), Bernice Havelka (Dickinson), Gina Merwin (Lewistown), Jackie Woods (Butte)

FRONT: Charlie Gunther (MSO), Mary Clark (MSO), Tom Carrillo (MSO)

Missoula FO Goes Green

Marilyn Krause, Western Montana Zone

The Missoula Field Office spent a good share of the winter in an office undergoing a major upgrade to the heating and cooling system. As inconvenient as it was, the employees knew their sacrifice would pay off in the future with less energy consumption.

Johnson Controls installed a ground-source heating/cooling system under an "Energy Saving Performance Contract" (ESPC). The BLM did not pay any up-front costs for the system - the contractor will be paid over the next 20 years through the energy savings (reduced utility usage) the new system provides. ESPCs are an option only for BLM-owned buildings, not leased offices. To measure and verify the changes and utility reductions, a new electrical metering system was also installed.

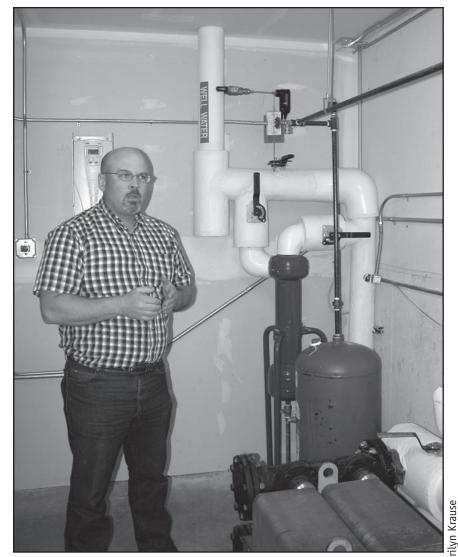
Ground-source heat pumps are electrically powered systems that tap into the stored energy of the earth. These systems use the earth's relatively constant temperature to cool the building in the summer and heat it in the winter.

The Missoula system is state of the art. It is run by a stand-alone computer that manages the two zones – east and west halves of the building. An additional feature is the carbon dioxide detection system – when more employees are in the building and the C02 level rises, dampers automatically open to let in fresh air. In addition, sensors monitor the temperature at different places

in the building and adjust airflow accordingly.

"With this system, we have increased air movement around the office, compared to the old system," stated Chuck Bridgeman, assistant field manager. "It takes some getting used to, but our employees are comfortable."

To save additional energy, the Missoula Field Office also had an on-demand hot water heating system installed and replaced all the ceiling fluorescent lights with two bulb units rather than four. The new light fixtures have the same amount of lighting capability but use much less energy.



Chuck Bridgeman, Missoula assistant field manager, explains how the ground source heat pump system works. The unit in the foreground is the actual "heat exchanger."

3

No Simple Solutions

but collaboration leads to satisfying results

Craig Flentie, Lewistown FO

Travel planning on public land.

The mere mention of it draws different reactions from different people. Some public land managers begin feeling queasy; public land users begin casting suspicious looks at each other; mothers rush their kids out of the room; and preachers start writing sermons about sharing and caring.

Well, maybe not quite.

However, travel planning on public land is one of those unique discussions of the American West that makes public land users of all types come to the public participation table with distinctively differing opinions--and often times, limited concern for other perspectives. Typically, four-wheel drive enthusiasts, mountain bike riders, hikers, hunters, horsemen/women, pleasure drivers, landowners, motor bikers, and outfitters have distinct opinions about public land travel and how it impacts, or may impact, their own opportunities on public land.

Travel planning challenges land managers to find better ways to involve the public, design suitable alternatives, and make multiple-use management decisions that resolve or prevent resource issues.

Where to Start?

About 18 months ago, the Lewistown Field Office was at the threshold of starting a travel plan for the Judith and North and South Moccasin mountains near Lewistown.

The Judith and North Moccasins are relatively small mountain ranges with at least some public access and a variety of road and trail combinations across the public lands they contain. Some earlier travel management recommendations have been implemented while others have not. As is common with public land that is close to a community, recreational use and conflicts are increasing in these two mountain ranges. There is no public access into the public lands in the South Moccasin Mountains.

Designing an equitable travel plan encumbered by these circumstances seemed

the equivalent of putting together a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle without knowing what the finished image would look like.

Subgroup Forms

As a means of avoiding some of the problems common to travel planning (and a variety of other public-land planning issues) the Lewistown FO was determined to involve the public at the very onset. Public involvement requires extra time in the planning process, but in most cases provides better decisions in which the public and management share a sense of ownership.

During a July 2006 meeting of the Central Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC), the Lewistown FO approached the council about assuming an integral role in this planning effort. After an extensive question and answer period, the council recommended forming a subgroup to study the project in detail and then work toward creating a set of travel plan recommendations for the RAC to consider.

The subgroup would be chaired by Terry Selph, with assistance from Ron Moody and Glenn Terry. All three men were RAC members (Glenn has since termed off the council) and regular contributors to many RAC discussions and recommendations.

The Lewistown FO would support the subgroup by providing accurate maps, inventory data, a description of current management, revised maps as necessary, and at least one staffer or manager at each subgroup meeting or field trip. And, as an extra assist (which would prove very beneficial), the Lewistown FO directed a few dollars toward the effort; advertised for bids; and awarded a contract for a facilitator to help add a sense of organization to the project and to track the information and discussions the subgroup would generate.

Forming a subgroup is not an easy task and both the RAC and the BLM offered names toward a pool of potential members. Selph, Moody and Terry then contacted those suggested about serving on the subgroup. It's critically important



The Judith-Moccasin Travel Plan Subgroup on a site visit.

that any subgroup mirror the basic structure (categories and interests) of the RAC and it took most of the fall and early winter of 2006 to secure subgroup members along those guidelines.

By the spring of 2007, a subgroup consisting of motorized and non-motorized interests, hikers, mountain bikers, hunters, horseback enthusiasts, grazing permittees, other agency representatives and landowners was ready to venture into the world of consensus-based resource planning.

Gathering Information

Early on, the subgroup decided that field trips combined with public meetings would provide them the best opportunity to see firsthand some of the travel issues and opportunities on the ground and to benefit from a wide variety of public comment. The facilitator, Mr. Bently Roth, with RAM Intergrated Solutions, from Molt, Mont., was also dedicated to attending each field trip as well as the meetings.

Through the spring, summer, and fall of 2007, the subgroup hosted multiple field trips and work meetings (all open to the public) as they worked their way through a complex maze of existing roads, trails, uses, conflicts, resource needs, current management guidance, and potential opportunities.

Rod Sanders, a recreation planner in the Lewistown FO, and/or Willy Frank, an associate Lewistown field manager, accompanied the subgroup during its field trips and attended each meeting. They were able to advise the group about existing management guidelines and answer a gamut of questions from subgroup members.

Through the course of these field trips and meetings, the subgroup began to jell as their mutual trust and confidence increased. Most of the subgroup members became and remained very dedicated to the challenge of finding a representative set of travel recommendations for

these public lands. They contributed considerable amounts of time, energy, effort, and cooperation to the project -- all key attributes to a successful subgroup.

Through the winter of 2007, the subgroup met several times to review the information they had gathered and to continue refining a set of inclusive travel recommendations.

Central Montana RAC Endorses Subgroup's Recommendation

In January 2008, Terry Selph brought the subgroup's recommendations before the RAC. A number of subgroup members also attended this council meeting to see how their recommendations would be received and to help answer any questions that may arise.

RAC members asked questions about how the recommendation package would represent the various public interests, and how additional information from the public could be added to the process. After being satisfied with responses to both of those concerns, the council unanimously thanked the subgroup members for their dedication, accepted their recommendation package, and conveyed it intact to the BLM.

By forwarding this travel package with no further study or revision, the RAC gave a strong endorsement of the

attending had worked previously with the subgroup; several wanted to offer their comments late in the process; and a couple of folks were attending because they suspected that their interests were not addressed.

The conclusion of the open house was even more interesting. After brief presentations about the resource issues, the subgroup's efforts, and their recommended travel plan package by Willy Frank and Rod Sanders, those attending were invited to review maps of the recommended travel plan and talk with resource specialists. By the end of the night, without exception, the attendees were impressed with the subgroup's product; amazed by the amount of work invested by subgroup members; satisfied that their interest had been involved; and encouraged by the BLM's willingness to open this process to the public.

All in all, the subgroup, the RAC, the BLM and the public seem comfortable that this complex puzzle came together quite nicely. As a result, the BLM now has a proposed alternative for travel planning in the Judith-Moccasin Mountains that addresses issues and needs; represents and provides something for all interests; and perhaps most importantly, is a true product of the public the BLM serves.

A Satisfying Product

subgroup's efforts.

This past March, the BLM hosted an afternoon/evening open house in Lewistown to discuss the subgroup's recommendation package, answer questions, and to accept additional comments from the public. The open house would be another measure of how the subgroup's travel recommendation package would be viewed in the court of public opinion.

It was an interesting open house. Some of those



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Air Force Group Honored for Volunteer Service

Ann Boucher, MSO

On duty, one of their jobs is to provide security around the missiles scattered across thousands of acres in Montana; off duty, they've donated hundreds of hours toward the maintenance of public lands and the safety and comfort of its visitors.

Their outstanding volunteer contributions earned the 341st Security Forces Group from Malmstrom Air Force Base the BLM's annual Making a Difference national volunteer award. Colonel Steve Asher and Chief Master Sergeant Larry Wilson accepted the award on behalf of the entire group during a special ceremony in Washington, D.C., on May 8.

The successful volunteer partnership started as a tailgate brainstorming session. In 2006, Chief Wilson attended the National Public Lands Day event at Wood Bottom in central Montana. While visiting with Mark Schaefer, BLM park ranger and retired Air Force security forces manager, and Wade Brown, BLM river manager, he learned of other needs along the river. At the time, the Fort Benton River Management Station had a particularly limited budget and sparse seasonal staff.

Chief Wilson recruited some of his troops – enough to double BLM's workforce – to conduct patrols on the Upper Missouri River. They accompanied BLM park rangers on river patrols and cleaned facilities, provided visitor contacts, registered boaters, conducted Wilderness Study Area surveillance,



Colonel Steve Asher and Chief Master Sergeant Larry Wilson.

and performed campsite maintenance. In addition, they erected campsite identification signs at 19 remote locations along a 149-mile stretch of the river, dismantled livestock exclusion fencing, and assisted with seasonal closedown operations in primary developed campgrounds.

The partnership continued and expanded in 2007, again doubling BLM's seasonal workforce and allowing BLM to maintain a visible presence on the river. Further, 124 members of the unit pulled down and removed unserviceable barbed wire fencing to improve the habitat at Wood Bottom

BLM

Recreation Area. A project that was expected to take several more years was nearly finished in just four days.

While this partnership was initially a windfall for the Fort Benton River Management Station, other offices in the region are now capitalizing on its success. The BLM Butte Field Office recruited Malmstrom volunteers to paint administrative buildings and otherwise spruce up Log Gulch Campground on Holter Lake, a popular recreation area near Helena. They have also helped build a fence in rough terrain to keep livestock out of the **Humbug Spires Wilderness** Study Area.

Colonel Steve Asher is the commanding officer and Chief Master Sergeant Larry Wilson is the security forces manager. They command more than 1,200 men and women assigned to the 341st Security Forces Group, whose primary function is to provide security and law enforcement protection to the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Systems located throughout a 23,000-square mile portion of Montana, as well as Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls. It should be noted that some of our volunteers from this group are now serving in various locations throughout Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chief Wilson was one of the original members of that first tailgate brainstorming session, and Colonel Asher personally led the volunteers in the Wood Bottom fence project and conducted river patrols. His leadership by example was crucial to the success of this entire effort.

Colonel Asher, Chief Wilson, and the 341st Security Forces Group's volunteerism and willingness to make a difference on our public lands have been extraordinary. Both the Fort Benton and Butte field offices look forward to their assistance in the years to come.



Park Ranger Mark Schaefer, Acting Associate State Director Diane Friez, Colonel Steve Asher, Chief Master Sergeant Larry Wilson, and BLM Deputy Director Henri Bisson at the Making a Difference volunteer awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

DISPATCHER RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

Mark Jacobsen, Miles City FO

Miles City Field Office Senior Fire Dispatcher Amy Lancaster was awarded the 2007 National Excellence in Dispatching Award during a surprise ceremony March 11 in Butte, marking the first time the prestigious award has been given to a Montana fire dispatcher.

The annual Excellence in Dispatching Award is an interagency award that recognizes individual excellence and contributions to wildland firefighting dispatch and coordination operations.



BLM Miles City Field Office Senior Fire Dispatcher Amy Lancaster received the 2007 National Excellence in Dispatching Award March 11 in Butte.

The award nominees come from any level of the national dispatch or coordination system. Selection criteria were based on five elements: technical proficiency, follow through, attitude and customer service, contributions to the national mobilization operation system, and accomplishments from the previous year.

Lancaster seemed a bit taken back.

"It's an honor, that you do get recognized for the work that you do," she said in an interview.

Unaware that she had even been nominated, Lancaster was presented with the engraved glass crystal award in front of her peers during a dispatcher meeting.

BLM Assistant Center Manager Chuck Wamack, from the National Interagency Coordination Center in Boise, Idaho, presented the award.

"Everyone else was on break and I was up at the front of the room with some other people getting ready to present this award," he said. "I looked down and there was Amy, sitting down and working. It was very appealing to be able to present this award to Amy."

"Amy has an incredible work ethic and is always seeking ways to improve our business practices to meet the needs of the customer," said Wamack in an earlier email announcing the presentation. "This award recognizes Amy for her superior performance and contributions to the dispatch community."

Lancaster oversees the operation of the BLM initial attack dispatch center in Miles City. Her varied duties include coordination between the aviation desk and other Eastern Montana Fire Zone initial attack dispatchers. The center coordinates federal, state, and local fire fighting resources, keeps them apprised of local conditions, and liaisons with the fire duty officer to provide for effective suppression efforts.

Lancaster's award marks a milestone for the Montana BLM according to Miles City Dispatch Center Manager Gloria Gunther.

"A dispatcher from eastern Montana has never received this national-level award before," said Gunther. "The fact that she was selected as the Northern Rockies candidate was a big deal. Quite frankly she's a top-notch dispatcher."

For more BLM Miles City Fire Dispatch Center information visit: http://www.blm.gov/ mt/st/en/fo/miles_city_field_office/fire.html

Cooperative Effort Provides Sign for Sage Grouse Viewing

Marilyn Krause, Western Montana Zone, and Kelly Bockting, Dillon Field Office

Lucky are the people who have the opportunity to view a sage grouse lek in the spring and watch the intricate mating dance. The Reservoir Creek Lek south of Dillon has become a popular spot for public viewing over the years because of its accessibility.

The Sage Grouse Working Group in Dillon funded an interpretive sign that will be installed near the lek each April and removed in May to keep vandalism to minimum. The goal is to manage public viewing and minimize disturbance here and at other leks.

The sign provides a description of the sage grouse and gives a brief overview of its



Jim Karamanos

Craig Fager of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and Kelly Bockting, BLM biologist, helped install the sign near the lek.

breeding biology. It tells visitors where to park and how to act in order to minimize disturbance near the lek.

Local sage grouse working group members installed the sign with assistance from Jim Karamanos of the Dillon Field Office.

PHILIP GILL RECEIVES PATRIOT AWARD

Ann Boucher, MSO

Fire Management Officer Philip Gill received the Patriot Award from the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve during an all-employee meeting at the Montana State Office on April 30.

The award recognizes employers who are supportive of their employees who serve in National Guard and Reserve units. Gill was nominated by Gary Boyd, assistant



Retired Army Col. Mike Rubich, BLM Fire Management Officer Phil Gill, retired Army Gen. Allen Leppink, and retired Army Col. James Mariska. The retired officers presented the Patriot Award to Gill on behalf of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

GACC manager at the aerial fire depot in Missoula, and member of the Air Force Reserve.

Members of the National Guard and Reserve take time off from their regular jobs to fulfill military obligations.

"Without employer support, it would be pretty hard to participate," said Boyd, who travels to McChord Air Force Base near Tacoma, Wash. His job in the Reserve is superintendent of the Air Terminal Operations Center/Load Planning and Passenger Services for the 86th Aerial Port Squadron. They provide operational control for the loading of military and civilian contract aircraft with cargo and passengers that arrive and depart McChord Air Force Base.

According to the ESGR website (http://www.esgr.org/), our nation's National Guard members and Reserve forces from all branches of the military comprise almost half of our total military manpower, so the support of civilian employers plays a critical role in the defense of the nation.

A Bear Trap Rite of Spring

David Early, Dillon Field Office

Every spring since 2002, a couple dozen BLM staffers and Madison County weed crew members have shouldered backpack sprayers and headed upstream along the banks of the Madison River in the Bear Trap Wilderness.

On May 14, 27 people and two horses once again did battle with a stubborn and persistent foe: spotted knapweed. Fanning out along about five miles of the river corridor, teams of four to six applied herbicide to early spring rosettes in what has become a rite of spring.

In the fall of 2001, John Simons (state weed program lead and former Dillon Field Office resource management specialist), Pat Fosse (Dillon FO assistant field manger), and Mike Mooney (Dillon FO weed coordinator) walked up the river trail and were dismayed by a vast sea of purple flowers. Because the Bear Trap is designated wilderness, using airplanes, helicopters, and/or 4-wheelers to apply herbicide to the landscape-level infestation was not an option. Although somewhat skeptical, they agreed that the only way to attack the problem was with backpack sprayers, tenacity, and strong backs. As Pat said when commenting on the initial decision to go for it, "We had no choice; we just had to get started and eat the elephant one bite at a time."

The patient and persistent effort is showing very encouraging results. Most of the crew reported the number of rosettes vastly reduced, and many of last season's standing skeletons are without any green basal growth.



Weed coordinator Mike Mooney readies the backpack sprayers for Dillon employees and cooperators to attack infestations along the Madison River in the Bear Trap Wilderness.



David Early

Steve Lubinski, Jonathan Hockett, and Aly Piwowar add water to their sprayers before looking for noxious weeds – mostly spotted knapweed and hounds tongue.

"Our consistent effort is paying off," said Mike Mooney. "We are beginning to exhaust the large seed bank in the ground. Knapweed populations can be eradicated, but it takes a longterm commitment because the seeds remain viable in the soil for a long time."

Freed from his computer screen in Billings for a day in the field, John Simons enjoyed strapping on a backpack and working the riverbank. When asked if he noticed any difference since he last participated in a Bear Trap spray day, John simply said, "Definitely! I never thought we could do



David Early

The whole crew! Participants found fewer weed infestations this year, proof that aggressive treatment does pay off.

this with just back packs, but then again I did not envision 30 people on the ground twice a year. It's great."

A second spray day also takes place every July during the height of the growing season.

Attention BLM Retirees

The BLM Retirees Association meets at 11:30 a.m. on the first Tuesday of even-numbered months at 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 David Mari, Montana PLF Representative, at (406) 538-7121, or email dmari@earthlink.net. If you send an email, please note "PLF" on the subject line.

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@blm.gov with address changes.

Retired since March 1, 2008:

Daniel Ray Smith, Jr. – 30 years Forester, Miles City Field Office

Barbara J. Hamburg – 25 years Management Assistant, Miles City Field Office

James Roscoe – 32 years Wildlife Biologist, Dillon Field Office

Terry Sauer – 33 years Law Enforcement Ranger, Butte Field Office (Duty Station: Helena)

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