



Bureau of Land Management Highlights

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 264 million acres of public lands—about one-eighth of the land area of the United States—and approximately 300 million additional acres of subsurface mineral estate. The BLM manages more public land acreage than any other Federal agency, putting the Bureau in a unique position to manage and protect our Nation's priceless natural and cultural heritage.

BLM Mission

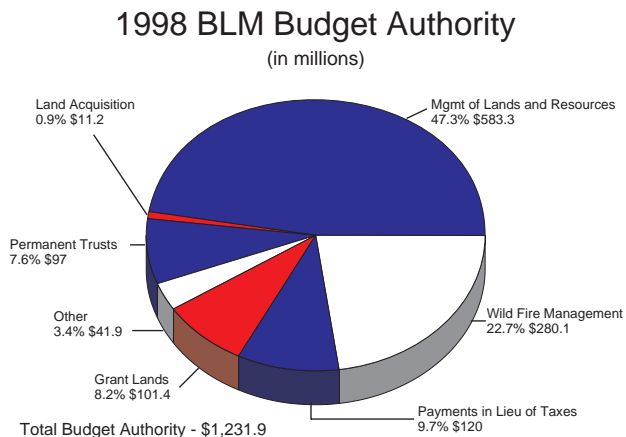
"To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."

The lands administered by the BLM are some of the most ecologically and culturally diverse and scientifically important lands in Federal ownership. The Bureau is responsible for protecting and preserving paleontological localities and archaeological and historical sites; wild free-roaming horses and burros; wilderness and wilderness study areas; Wild and Scenic Rivers; rare, vulnerable, and representative habitats, plant communities, and ecosystems; and numerous other outstanding natural and cultural areas.

Providing Opportunities for Environmental Responsible Recreation

Studies indicate that 94.5 percent of the U.S. population participates in some form of outdoor recreation. These studies also reveal that the demand for recreation will continue to expand as the U.S. population increases. Visitation to BLM public lands in 1997 (the most recent year for which data is currently available) was 61 million visits, resulting in nearly 72 million visitor days of recreation use.

The BLM public lands provide visitors with a vast array of recreational opportunities. These include hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, boating, hang gliding, off-highway vehicle driving, mountain biking, birding, and visiting natural and cultural heritage sites. The BLM administers 205,000 miles of fishable streams, 2.2 million acres of lakes and reservoirs, 6,600 miles of floatable rivers, over 500 boating access points, 64 National Back Country Byways, 300 Watchable Wildlife sites, and thousands of miles of multiple use trails used by motorcyclists, hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers.



The BLM's Recreation Fee Demonstration Program increased from 10 projects in 1997 that collected \$419,000, to 67 fee projects in 1998 that collected \$3.5 million. The Bureau also worked hard to provide electronic recreation information to the public, participating in the award-winning "Recreation.gov" site and playing a lead role in the Public Land Information Center websites. Additionally, the BLM produced a CD-ROM "People of the Past," which helps people better understand the value of, and the need to protect, cultural resources. Finally, the Bureau continued working with

Western gateway communities to develop a common strategy for sustainable tourism and related economic development.

Providing Opportunities for Environmentally Responsible Commercial Activities

The public lands provide myriad opportunities for commercial activities. Commercially valuable natural resources include energy and mineral commodities, forest products, grazing forage, and special uses such as rights-of-way for pipelines and transmission lines. The BLM recognizes the Nation's need for a domestic source of energy, minerals, food, timber, and fiber from the public lands.



During fiscal year 1998, the public lands produced 31 percent of the Nation's coal, 11 percent of its natural gas, and 5 percent of its oil. These lands also produce a large portion of the Nation's fertilizer minerals, mineral materials, gold, silver, and other metals.

Timber production and livestock grazing also important uses of the public lands. Approximately 260 million board feet of timber were sold from the public lands, most (97 percent) coming from Oregon. Livestock grazing on the public lands is central to the livelihood and culture of many local communities. In 1998, the BLM authorized livestock grazing for more than 17,000 operators on about 164 million acres public land in 16 western States, providing 10.1 animal unit months of grazing.

Other commercial uses include rights-of-way and other permits and leases. This year over 5,000 rights-of-way actions were processed, resulting in 2,719 grants issued to companies to use public lands for roads, pipelines, transmission lines, and communication sites. Many of these provide for the basic infrastructure of society, meeting the needs of local cities and towns.

As the table to the right shows, the estimated fiscal year (FY) 1998 market value of production occurring on the public lands was \$11.8 billion, 99 percent of which was derived from energy and minerals. The direct and indirect economic impact of all commercial activities amounted to \$26.3 billion. Of the total of \$ 1.3 billion in annual revenues derived from BLM-managed lands, energy and minerals generated over \$ 1.2 billion from mineral royalties, rents, bonuses, sales and fees. States share in a large portion of the revenues collected.

BLM Market Value of Production (\$ in millions)			
Public Land Commercial Activity	1998 Value	1998 Output Impact	1998 BLM Revenue Collected
Oil and Gas Leasable Minerals	\$6,241	\$11,483	\$787
Coal Leasable Mineral	2,826	7,348	321
Other Leasable and Salable Minerals	1,358	3,531	83
Locatable Minerals *	1,204	3,130	30
Grazing	95	410	14
Timber	107	365	72
Realty	18	43	10
TOTAL	\$11,849	\$26,310	\$1,317

Note: Table does not include the economic value of commercial and non-commercial recreation activities on the public lands.

* BLM does not collect locatable minerals production area. The production value was estimated from the 1995 estimate and adjusted for productions patented out of the public lands in subsequent years.

Preserving Our Cultural Heritage

The BLM is steward for the Federal government's largest, most varied, and scientifically most important body of archaeological and historical resources—an estimated 4 to 4.5 million cultural properties. These range in age from various early human occupation sites such as the 11,700-year-old Mesa Site in the Brooks Range to the remains of Spanish period exploration and settlement, and more recent historic sites documenting westward migration.

In fiscal year 1998, the Bureau continued its efforts to protect our Nation's cultural heritage by inventorying 507,491 acres for cultural resources, recording 7,687 properties, and issuing or continuing in effect a total of 570 study or management permits (excluding permits for paleontological collecting). To date, the Bureau has inventoried a total of 13.4 million acres and recorded 220,809 cultural resource properties. Of these, 248 are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, with 22 listed as National Historic Landmarks, helping assure that these properties will be protected and preserved for future generations.

Preserving Our Natural Heritage

A total of 739 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern totaling almost 13.1 million acres have been designated nationwide on the public lands to protect important historical, cultural, scenic and natural areas or to identify areas where hazards to human life and property exist. About 7 million of these acres have been designated to protect biological resource values.

The BLM continued its stewardship of 136 Congressionally designated wilderness areas (5.2 million acres) and its management of 622 wilderness study areas (over 17 million acres). The Bureau also continued to manage 34 Wild and Scenic River segments totaling 2,038 miles, including 392 miles of the Fortymile River in Alaska, the longest designated river in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system.



In addition, the BLM exercised stewardship responsibilities for eight National Conservation Areas (11.7 million acres), eight National Historic Trails, two National Scenic Trails, 26 National Recreation Trails, one National Scenic Area (101,000 acres), one National Recreation Area (1 million acres), 43 National Natural Landmarks (600,000 acres), 148 Research Natural Areas (345,000 acres), five World Heritage sites, three Biosphere Reserves, and two Globally Important Bird Areas (56,500 acres).

The Bureau also continued to move forward in managing the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. This Monument, which was created by Presidential Proclamation September 18, 1996, is a dramatic, multi-hued landscape that is rich in both natural and human history. In fiscal year 1998, the BLM completed its Draft Management Plan for the Monument. In fiscal year 1999, the Bureau will complete a public review period and then issue the final version of the Management Plan.

In FY 1998, the BLM undertook several paleontological projects that resulted in the recovery of some of the most complete fossil specimens ever found, the identification of new species, and the recovery of new exhibit materials. These included a project in New Mexico with the New Mexico Army National Guard, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the New Mexico Museum of Natural History to recover what may be the most complete

Pentaceratops skull and the most complete skeleton of a carnivorous dinosaur yet found in New Mexico.

Wild Horses and Burros

More than 44,000 wild horses and burros in approximately 200 herd management areas roam the Western public lands; most are found in Nevada. The BLM seeks to ensure a healthy, viable population of wild horses and burros within the limits of available public land resources.



In 1998, a total of 6,389 wild horses and burros were removed from the range, while 7,844 animals were adopted through BLM's popular Adopt-A-Horse or Burro program. The remaining animals are still in our facilities awaiting adoption. The Adopt-A-Horse or Burro program is very active in the continental United States; approximately 100 adoptions are held across the country each year.

Reducing Threats to Public Health, Safety, and Property

The Bureau's stewardship responsibilities include protecting public lands and facilities from unauthorized uses, illegal dumping, unsafe conditions, vandalism, theft, and wildfires. These challenges are met by making prevention a priority, while also maintaining BLM's traditional level of response capability and responsiveness.

The 1998 fire season was affected by the unusual El Niño weather pattern. A mild winter followed by a very wet spring delayed the start of most BLM wildland fire suppression operations, as fuels did not begin to cure until late June over much of the West. Overall, fire activity was below normal on BLM lands. The Bureau did significantly increase prescribed fire and hazardous fuel treatment to reduce fuel accumulations that contribute to unnaturally large wildfires.

In 1998, the Bureau discovered 131 sites on public land where releases of hazardous substances were suspected, almost double the number found in 1997. Close to half of the new discoveries were at inactive mines and mill sites, where environmental problems ranged from unstable tailings to abandoned drums and dynamite. Other discoveries on public land included fuel and chemical spills, trespass dumping of pesticide containers, illegal drug labs, and an errant test missile.

Land, Resource, and Title Information

The BLM has extensive historical and current information about land ownership, use, and condition in the United States. The agency performs cadastral surveys and produces information to support a variety of land management activities for a number of agencies. Historical data on patented lands, along with information on mineral estate, resource conditions, and permits or leases on Federal lands are provided on a daily basis.

The BLM responds to thousands of requests for information every year and has improved customer access and use of this information. Cadastral survey information for 24,412 townships and over 2 million General Land Office (GLO) land title records have been converted to digital form and are more readily accessible to decision makers as well as the public through the use of Internet and GIS technologies.

The public is performing online Internet searches for information and subsequently downloading digital data or filing requests for historical information directly with BLM offices. As one example, the Bureau's General Land Office Records website (www.glorerecords.blm.gov), during its first five months, recorded almost 400,000 visitors who looked at more than 5 million pages of records. During one week alone, visitors to this site electronically requested 500 copies of patent records from BLM's Eastern States Office.

Economic and Technical Assistance

BLM-managed public lands generate substantial revenue from multiple use activities, much of which is returned in direct payments to the States and counties of origin. These payments are distributed to local governments to pay for such things as schools, roads, and employee salaries.

Each year, the Bureau calculates and sends the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) to counties. These payments are intended to offset property tax shortfalls (under a Congressional formula) occurring in counties with tax-exempt Federal lands administered by the BLM and other agencies. In 1998, a total of \$118.8 million in PILT payments were made.

Restoring and Maintaining the Health of the Land

Working with others to restore and maintain the health of the land is the foundation for everything the BLM does. Livestock grazing, timber harvesting, hunting, fishing, and other benefits from the public lands can be sustained over time only if the lands are healthy.

In fiscal year 1998, the BLM completed ecological site inventories on over 1 million acres. This information improves BLM's understanding of the potential for these rangelands.

The Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Program responds quickly to prevent additional resource damage following wildfires on range and forest lands. In fiscal year 1998, the BLM implemented 52 emergency fire rehabilitation projects in Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah to protect over 84,000 acres from degradation at a cost of over \$5 million.

In its ongoing efforts to eradicate invasive weeds on our Nation's public lands, the BLM cooperated with county, Federal, State, and private partners to treat approximately 127,000 acres of land to prevent and control the spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants and improve the health of vegetation communities.

In fiscal year 1998, the Bureau developed or maintained 1,200 on-the-ground projects designed to restore riparian-wetland areas to proper functioning condition. As just one example, BLM's Farmington Field Office increased the success of riparian cottonwood pole plantings by using intensive soil mapping and soil testing techniques to select planting areas and by installing protective fencing around each tree. The Bureau also revised management prescriptions to improve riparian-wetland conditions on 820 miles of streams and 8,900 acres of wetland areas.



The BLM is restoring and maintaining forest health by reducing stocking in overly dense stands, salvaging dead and dying timber, protecting forests from insects and disease, and reintroducing fire into forest ecosystems to help restore natural conditions. Additionally, measures are taken to ensure that reforestation takes place following harvesting and major disturbance events. These are just a few examples of the hundreds of initiatives undertaken by the BLM to restore and maintain the health of the land.



Promoting Collaborative Management

Natural resource agencies are becoming increasingly aware of the complexities involved in public land management and the effects land use decisions have on others. Land ownership patterns in the West are fragmented. Public lands are intermingled with lands owned and managed by many others. As a result, watersheds, plant and animal populations, and human uses frequently cross jurisdictional boundaries.

The BLM is committed to managing the land and its resources for the good of both the environment and the people who rely on resources from public lands. But the BLM is acutely aware that it cannot accomplish this in a vacuum. The Bureau's land use decisions affect adjacent landowners and State, local and Tribal governments, as well as BLM public lands themselves. Given these realities, the BLM is dedicated to understanding socio-economic and environmental trends, being more inclusive in its decision-making, and implementing appropriate on-the-ground activities in partnership with others.

In fiscal year 1998, the BLM, in collaboration with its science partners, supported and participated in numerous research projects dealing with rangeland ecosystem function and restoration, weed management, riparian improvements, minerals, threatened and endangered plant and animal species, forest ecosystem restoration, wild horse fertility and genetics, and wildfire control. The Bureau also approved three Resource Management Plans (RMPs), along with their integrated Environmental Impact Statements (EISs).

The Bureau's Volunteer Program continues to be successful, making an enormous contribution to BLM's efforts and successes. Bureauwide, volunteers worked a total of 1,149,000 hours for a monetary value to the BLM of \$14.4 million in fiscal year 1997 (the most recent year for which data is available).

The BLM also undertook a number of environmental education initiatives, including publication of two Science and Children articles, presentation of workshops for science teachers, and continuation of the Wonderful Outdoor World (WOW) program, which provides an initial camping experience for children ages 8-12 in their local parks.