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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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Subject 1271 - BLM INFORMATION ACCESS CENTER

1. Explanation of Material Transmitted: This release establishes policy for BLM Information Access Centers, traditionally referred to as BLM Public Rooms.
2. Reports Required: None.
3. Material Superseded: None.
4. Filing Instructions: File as directed below.

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All of 1271  
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1271

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.01 Purpose. This manual section provides policy and guidance for the functions of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Information Access Center, also referred to as Public Room and access area, and establishes a consistent Bureauwide customer service standard for federal and nonfederal users. This manual also provides a cross reference to associated programs and activities which have an impact on the BLM Information Access Center functions.

.02 Objectives. The objectives are to provide BLM information products and services through the BLM Information Access Centers. Specific objectives are:

A. Provide a central location for information and data sharing and access through diverse media. In person (one-on-one), telephone and mail contact, and electronic access, (Facsimile, on-line access, etc.) will be provided in compliance with Federal Statutes and OMB Circular A-130 requirements.

B. Provide quality service to internal and external customers while ensuring that information and records are provided on equitable and timely terms to all customers in compliance with Executive Order 12862 of September 11, 1993, Setting Customer Service Standards.

C. Apply BLM cost recovery policy to the dissemination of BLM records. See BLM Manual Section 1270-2 and Handbook H-1270-2, Cost Recovery.

D. Provide access to BLM records while ensuring protection of proprietary/sensitive records and data.

E. Research, interpret, and provide information on BLM programs; e.g., lands, minerals, cadastral survey, recreation, wildlife and cultural heritage.

F. Provide assistance and "self-help" tools and guides to customers that are filing applications for benefits, privileges, and uses of the public lands and resources administered by BLM.

G. Provide reasonable access to BLM records by all customers, including the physically challenged, e.g., hearing-impaired, wheelchair bound, etc.

.03 Authority.

A. Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 (44 U.S.C. 3501-3520).

B. Paperwork Reduction Reauthorization Act of 1986 (44 U.S.C. 35).

C. Copy Fees (43 U.S.C. 1460).

D. Distribution and Sale of Public Documents (44 U.S.C. 17, PL 90-620).

E. Freedom of Information Act of 1986, as amended (5 U.S.C. 552).

F. Copyright Act of 1976 (17 U.S.C. 101 et seq.).

G. 30 CFR, Mineral Resources.

H. 36 CFR Ch. XII, 1228.74, National Archives and Records Administration regulations.

I. 43 CFR, Public Lands: Interior.

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C. Chief, Washington Office (WO) Division of Information Resources Management (IRM), as the delegated Program Manager, is responsible for ensuring that an effective and efficient BLM Information Access Center program is developed, managed and evaluated and effectively integrated with other Records Administration components.

D. Chief, WO Branch of Information Access Policy and Coordination is responsible for providing management oversight in the overall development of the BLM Information Access Center program on a Bureauwide basis.

E. Bureau Records Administrator is responsible for developing, implementing, coordinating, and monitoring Bureauwide policy and standards, and providing assistance to all Field Offices concerning all phases of the administration, evaluation, and development of training for BLM Information Access Center staff.

F. State Directors, Service Center (SC) Director, and National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) Director are responsible for the establishment and administration of practices and procedures for managing the dissemination of records and access to BLM records within their areas of jurisdiction in conformance with this and related manual releases. This includes establishing BLM Information Access Centers and staff to operate them, and supplement this manual section with handbooks that document detailed standard operating procedures for day-to-day operation of local BLM Information Access Centers as appropriate. They are also responsible for establishing policy for providing research through BLM Information Access Centers and for fees or fee waivers to Federal, state, and local government agencies.

G. District and Resource Area Office Managers are responsible for the establishment and administration of practices and procedures for managing the dissemination of records and access to BLM records within their areas of jurisdiction in conformance with this and related manual releases.

H. Records Administrators. Service Center, NIFC, State and District Records Administrators are responsible for: (1) implementing and administering the overall policies and procedures concerning access to BLM information; (2) establishing procedures for access to public records through the BLM Information Access Center; (3) implementing cost recovery procedures for BLM information; (4) establishing procedures for access to public and nonpublic records under FOIA requirements; (5) facilitating data and information exchange within the BLM, other Federal Agencies, and the public sector; and (6) training in access and records requirements functions.

I. State Records Managers are responsible for implementing and monitoring Bureauwide and state policy and procedures for records management and providing advisory services for all records operations within the state or area of jurisdiction.

J. Office Records Managers are responsible for records operational oversight and training for all records custodians within the jurisdiction of their office, including detached filing station custodians and docket custodians.

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K. BLM Information Access Center Staff are responsible for developing local policy for standard operating procedures to ensure that the BLM Information Access Center principles are applied by: (1) providing information for Bureau programs and activities; (2) managing external access to BLM information in accordance with this manual section and with BLM Manual Section 1278, External Access to BLM Information; (3) applying applicable cost recovery to requests for BLM information in accordance with this manual section and BLM Manual Section 1270-2, and Handbook H-1270-2, Cost Recovery; (4) safeguarding all public and nonpublic records in their custody, including records containing proprietary/confidential or otherwise sensitive information and for protecting these records from unauthorized disclosure; and (5) providing training for all persons accessing public records.

L. Docket Supervisors are responsible for maintaining the Serialized Case File System as prescribed in BLM Manual Section 1274, Serialized Case File System. They are also responsible for adhering to guidelines in BLM Manual Section 1220, Records and Information Management, for maintaining records.

M. Collection Officers and/or Cashiers are responsible for accepting, processing, and placing all collections under immediate accounting control. It may be the responsibility of Collection Officers and/or Cashiers to attend land and mineral sales to collect and receive payments adhering to BLM Manual Section 1372, Collections.

N. Program and Technical Specialists are responsible for determining which documents are to be posted in BLM Information Access Centers to meet legal requirements. They are also responsible for assisting the public on complex matters as requested by Information Access Center staff. It is also their responsibility to provide to BLM Information Access Center staff copies of documents legally required for posting.

O. Employees. All employees are responsible for following BLM policy and guidance contained in this manual section and BLM Manual Section 1278, External Access to BLM Information, when responding to requests for records and information. Employees are also responsible for safeguarding all records they use during the everyday flow of paperwork and those within their custody. This includes protecting these records from unauthorized disclosure. Employees will not give official land and mineral information, either general or specific, to the public outside of official working hours or when away from the office and not on official business.

.05 References.

- A. BLM Manual Section 1103, Uniforms.
- B. BLM Manual Section 1220, Records and Information Management.
- C. BLM Manual Section 1270, Records Administration.
- D. BLM Handbook H-1270-1, Managing Electronic Records.
- E. BLM Manual Section 1270-2 and Handbook H-1270-2, Cost Recovery.
- F. BLM Manual Section 1273, Vital Records.
- G. BLM Manual Section 1274, Serialized Case File System.
- H. BLM Manual Section 1275, Land Status Records.

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- I. BLM Manual Section 1278, External Access to BLM Information.
- J. BLM Manual Section 1371, Billings.
- K. BLM Manual Section 1372, Collections.
- L. BLM Manual Section 1385, Imprest Funds.

.06 Policy. BLM public records and information will be made available to the public to the greatest extent possible, in compliance with Federal statutes and Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-25 and A-130 requirements. BLM offices will establish a BLM Information Access Center or area for receiving and processing public requests for records, information, and assistance.

.07 File and Records Maintenance. All files and records will be maintained and disposed of in accordance with current guidelines. Public records will be maintained to provide up-to-date information.

.08 Relationship with Other Programs. The Records Administration Program initiates policy and procedures in managing access to BLM Information Access Center information, regardless of the media on which the information is provided, and has developed cost recovery policy in BLM Manual Section 1270-2 and Handbook H-1270-2. Refer to BLM Manual Section 1274, Serialized Case File System, which provides for receiving, docketing, and managing serialized cases and describes various procedures for processing various types of filings. BLM Manual Sections 1371, Billings, 1372, Collections, and 1385, Imprest Funds, provides guidance for billing and collection records; and BLM Manual Section 1275, Land Status Records, provides guidance for land and mineral status records notation. See BLM Manual Section 1273, Vital Records, for maintenance of vital public records, e.g. Master Title Plats, under the custody of BLM Information Access Center staff. BLM Manual Section 1220, Records and Information Management, provides policy and guidance for managing BLM information, regardless of media, within the principles of life cycle management.

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.1 Background.

.11 Old Records--Tract Books, Survey Plats and Records of the General Land Office. Keeping separate land status records--the tract books and the status plats--in the federal land offices, and the idea of "noting" the status records, was not an administrative action. Section 8 of the Act of May 18, 1796 (1 STAT 464, 469) introduced the concept of maintaining a status plat on which tracts sold under the Act were to be noted. Section 7 of the Act of May 10, 1800 (2 STAT 73, 75-76) directed the Registrars of the land offices to enter purchase applications "...on books kept for that purpose only..." i.e., the tract books. When the General Land Office was established within the Treasury Department in 1812, all survey and land records became the responsibility of that office. Functions of the General Land Office included issuance of land warrants and grants, schedule of sales at various district land offices, collection of monies from land sales, preparation and issuance of patents or deeds, and the maintenance of land records, including copies of plats of survey, tract books, original entries, copies of patents, case records, and related data. The Act of March 3, 1849, created the Department of the Interior. In 1946, the General Land Office was merged with the U.S. Grazing Service (formed within the Department of the Interior in 1934 to administer various grazing districts established under the Taylor Grazing Act) to form the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Department of the Interior. In the process, BLM became the custodian of the official land records of the United States.

.12 The Existing Land and Mineral Records Systems. In 1955, the Bureau of Land Management initiated the Records Improvement Program (RIP). The tract books were replaced (for the most part) with the Master Title Plats (MTPs) and Historical Indices (HIs). It is important to note that the Eastern States Office and portions of the western states (parts of North and South Dakota, as examples) still maintain the original tract books (outside of the areas covered by RIP). Serial Register Pages (SRP's) are a part of the existing record system, but not a part of RIP. The "new" land record system was designed in such a way that once the users became familiar with the basic rules, terminology, symbols, and notations, they could determine the status of any area of land. The 1955 record system contains updatable records in a reproducible format. These records contain the same information that was shown on the "old records." The records include the Master Title Plat, Use Plat, Historical Index, Serial Register Page/case abstract, Control Document Index, and an index to mining location and contest actions.



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.2 BLM Information Access Centers (traditionally referred to as BLM Public Rooms) serve as the primary focal point for the public to gain access to Bureau records and information since the General Land Office days. Fees have been collected for providing copies of records since the 43 U.S.C. 1460 Copy Fee Statute was passed in 1912. Today, BLM Information Access Centers also serve as a vehicle for the public to apply for benefits or privileges and use of public lands and resources administered by BLM. However, the primary users of BLM Information Access Centers are those seeking access to BLM records. BLM Information Access Center staff research and interpret official BLM lands and minerals records. Research into these types of records can be complicated and lengthy due to the historical changes in laws and regulations, or the incompleteness of the information provided by the requestor. The BLM Information Access Center is the focal point for the public to gain access to automated land and mineral records systems.

.21 Assistance. Information and assistance are provided to the public and other agency personnel regarding public land, mineral, and survey matters, and general inquiries regarding all programs within BLM. Oral information and assistance are provided in response to telephone and in-person inquiries. Photocopies and written replies are provided in response to inquiries received via mail and telephone orders. A BLM Information Access Center may contain land and mineral status plats, cadastral survey records, survey field notes, case files, and other records, maps, brochures, and pamphlets regarding recreation and other BLM programs. Records are maintained and made available for free public inspection. Assistance is provided to walk-in customers to help them locate records and to answer questions on how to read or interpret the information, including assistance in the use of the computer for retrieval of information. Courteous service, timely responses, and correct information will be provided to customer requests. Signs and other visual aids will be provided to assist walk-in customers with "self-help" tools. Copies of MTPs and survey plats, cadastral field notes, case abstracts, patents, etc., will be provided upon request, applying applicable cost recovery rates. Case files may be checked out for inspection. These files will not be removed from the BLM Information Access Center or taken apart or altered in any way by the customer. Copies of records may be requested by the customer and should be made by BLM staff. Information will be provided in response to inquiries on historical, current, and proposed legislation, public land laws, and Federal regulations. Customers needing or seeking guidance from program specialists will be provided this assistance in the BLM Information Access Center. Refer to BLM Manual Section 1270-2.42B.

A. Setting Customer Service Standards. In accordance with Executive Order 12862 of September 11, 1993, Setting Customer Service Standards, the highest possible service will be provided to the public. In order to carry out the principles of the National Performance Review, the BLM must be customer-driven. Information, services, and complaint systems will be made easily accessible by BLM customers. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (PL 93-112) requires more than physical access. It requires program accessibility in all services provided with Federal funds.

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.22 Research. Research time includes situations where a BLM employee actually conducts an examination or analysis of records necessary to locate specific records which have been requested by a member of the public. Research does not include retrieving records and other public relations type work identified as assistance above. The Department of the Interior's authority for recovering the cost of production of copies plus the administrative costs, including research time, when copies are provided, are derived from 43 U.S.C. 1460. Fees cannot be charged if in the conduct of research copies of records are not provided. The Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-25 and A-130 provide guidelines on how to implement charges for services and provide copies of records.

A. Calculating Research Time. Research time will be free up to 15 minutes per request. Time expended for research in excess of 15 minutes will be charged if a document or record is located and provided. To facilitate customer service, a verbal agreement to pay a maximum amount for research can be solicited from the customer prior to exceeding the free 15-minute research limit in lieu of payment in advance. This should eliminate costly reimbursements when copies are not provided relative to the research. In these cases, the copies are not provided until payment is received, including the charges for research. Based on capabilities of each office, research time may be limited. Each State Director, and Service Center Director, shall establish policy for providing research services through their respective Information Access Center (e.g., Research time is limited to 15 minutes per request, including time expended to compile a written summary of research information). Once this time limit has been reached, the requestor will be informed of the following options: (1) he/she can visit a BLM Information Access Center and perform the research themselves, (2) he/she can hire the services of a legal researcher, or (3) he/she can provide additional information (i.e., identifying the legal land description acquired from the county courthouse, etc., so that no further research is needed). See BLM Manual Section 1270-2 and Handbook H-1270-2, Cost Recovery, for current cost recovery rates for research when copies of records are provided.

.23 Office Hours. Public access to the BLM Information Access Center will be allowed to the maximum extent possible. States may adjust the hours of BLM Information Access Centers consistent with the requirements of the particular office. Notification of changes in office hours will be published in the Federal Register. In all instances, access for the filing of applications and other documents and inspection of records shall be provided no less than six continuous hours during the regular business hours of the particular office. The regulations in 43 CFR 1821.2-1 require that the hours during which the offices shall be open to the public shall be prominently displayed in each office. Applications and other documents cannot be received for filing by the Authorized Officer outside of office hours, nor elsewhere than at that office. Regulations require that applications, filings, assessments, etc., be dated and time received stamped in order to be deemed received within the required time. Employees shall not give official land and mineral information, either general or specific, to the public outside of official working hours or when away from the office and not on official business.

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A. Emergency Situations. When emergency situations (e.g., inclement weather) cause offices to deviate from the posted hours, a notice of the reason for closure should be prominently displayed in the office entrance area if possible. Also, the temporary closure may be announced on the radio and/or recorded on the BLM Information Access Center telephone number if possible. Situations requiring temporary closure of the BLM Information Access Center (e.g., internal office moves or office relocations which cause the records to be temporarily inaccessible) should be posted as soon as possible, but not less than 5 working days prior to the closure. By posting public notice, an office may extend staff processing time to accommodate customers who arrived at the BLM Information Access Center during official office hours. Unusual and unpredicted situations requiring extended hours (e.g., larger number of walk-in customers filing applications than can be processed during posted office hours) will be managed with discretion affording an equal opportunity to all applicants who arrive within official office hours.

.24 Conduct in BLM Information Access Centers. Under GSA regulations for conduct on Federal property, 41 CFR 101-20.300 et seq., agencies are authorized to control activities and admission on federally controlled property. This includes preservation and official use of property, including records and equipment; prohibiting solicitations; and requiring permission of the office head, or authorized official, for use of personal equipment, such as cameras, copiers, recording devices, and computers.

A. Emergencies. BLM Information Access Center staff are responsible for safe guarding and instructing the customers in case of emergencies such as bomb threats, fire, and earthquakes. Local policy will be established by the office head for security, e.g., how to handle individuals posing threats by phone, mail, or in person. Policy will be established for BLM Information Access Center staff for emergencies such as someone entering with a firearm or other weapon. Local offices will develop and post appropriate rules governing these situations.

.25 Official Posting of Notices. The object of posting notices affecting public lands is to notify all persons who are or who might be interested in the lands described. It is the responsibility of program specialists to provide to BLM Information Access Center staff copies of documents legally required for posting. Each BLM Information Access Center shall maintain an area for posting official notices. The area will be accessible to the public and clearly identified as an official posting area. Posted documents will be disposed of in accordance with approved records schedules (e.g., Notice of Mineral Patent Application that is posted in the BLM Information Access Center **MUST** be placed in the official case file after the 60-day posting period as proof to document the starting and ending dates of the posting period).

A. Advertising. Posting of non-BLM information is prohibited in BLM Information Access Centers.

.26 Cooperative Information Centers. Local office heads may enter into cooperative agreements with individuals, local governments (city, county, state), other Federal agencies, and other commercial organizations to develop joint information centers. Cooperative agreements will address and implement current BLM information access and records requirements.

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.3 External Access Categories Of Records. BLM information is reviewed and segregated into three records categories as follows: Category 1, Public Records (including traditionally available electronic records and/or computer-generated outputs); Category 2, Discretionary Records (nontraditional electronic records and outputs, and State-specific nonpublic information determined releasable to the public); and Category 3, Nonpublic Records. These category listings serve as a foundation for managing access to BLM information. See BLM Manual Section 1278, External Access to BLM Information, for further information regarding records access categories. Based on the historical right of public inspection, records contained within the BLM Information Access Centers generally fall within Category 1. These requirements are substantiated by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and other statutes that apply, which require all Federal agencies to make certain information available for public inspection, and other information exempt from disclosure to the public. It is the policy of the BLM to make records available to the public to the greatest extent possible, in keeping with the spirit of the FOIA, while at the same time protecting sensitive information. Refer to the most recent records category listings (Subject Code 1278).

.31 BLM Public Records - Category 1. Public Records (traditionally available records) are those BLM records for which the entities outside of BLM have the right to view and inspect without charge. A listing of Public Records will be prominently posted in BLM Information Access Centers and areas. Records in this category are not required to be physically maintained in the BLM Information Access Center; however, they must be available (brought to the BLM Information Access Center) for viewing upon request. Copies of public records are subject to current cost recovery rates. Refer to BLM Manual Section 1270-2 and Handbook H-1270-2, Cost Recovery, for additional cost recovery information and the current cost recovery rates.

A. Disclaimer Statements. Disclaimer statements are required for electronic records that are provided to anyone outside the BLM. The following language should be used with Category 1 records: "NO WARRANTY IS MADE BY THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT FOR USE OF THE DATA FOR PURPOSES NOT INTENDED BY BLM." The appropriate disclaimer will accompany products in digital form when there is no provision for including this information in the header file (e.g., label on disk or tape, separate sheet of paper, or stamp). The disclaimer statement should be placed where clearly visible on the first page of hard-copy products.

.32 Discretionary Records - Category 2 (Electronic records and outputs and State-specific nonpublic information determined releasable to the public). Printouts will be produced from electronic records placed in this category for viewing and/or purchase at current cost recovery rates. The electronic records placed in this category may be made available to the public for on-line viewing at the discretion of the State Director if the BLM office has the capability to do so. Cost recovery rates will be applied for this service. State-specific non-traditional electronic records and records from Category 3 Nonpublic Records which have been reviewed by the Records Administrator and approved by the State Director to be releasable without a FOIA request will be listed as Category 2 Discretionary Records and prominently posted in the local BLM Information Access Center. See BLM Manual Section 1278, External Access to BLM Information, for information on designating discretionary records.

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A. Disclaimer Statements. The following statement will be used with Category 2 computer-generated outputs: "NO WARRANTY IS MADE BY THE BLM FOR USE OF THE DATA FOR PURPOSES NOT INTENDED BY BLM." As with Category 1, the disclaimer statement will be placed where clearly visible on the first page of hard-copy products. The appropriate disclaimer will accompany products in digital form when there is no provision for including this information in the header file, e.g., label on disk or tape, separate sheet of paper, or stamp.

.33 NonPublic Records - Category 3. All records not designated in the publicly available Records Access Categories 1 and 2 are to be considered Nonpublic Category 3 Records. If the Information Access Center staff receives a verbal request for Category 3 Nonpublic Records, the requester shall be notified of the nonpublic record status and the requirement to request those records in writing under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). See BLM Manual Section 1278, External Access to BLM Information, for responding to requests for Nonpublic Records. (See BLM Manual Section 1278, External Access to BLM Information, for Disclaimer Statements required on copies of nonpublic records.)

.34 Freedom of Information Act Requests for Category 1 and Category 2 Records. Should external entities choose to request these records under the FOIA, the requester should be encouraged to use BLM Information Access Center procedures. If the requester insists on using the FOIA process, BLM must process those requests using FOIA procedures. Requests for public interest fee waivers under the FOIA will be reviewed on a case-by-case analysis. See BLM Manual Section 1278.22B.

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.4 Requests For Access To Publicly-Available Information. Sections 552(a)(1) and (a)(2) of the FOIA identify material which agencies are required to make available "for public inspection and copying". Information such as: (1) final opinions made in the adjudication of cases; (2) statements of policy and adopted interpretations not published in the Federal Register; and (3) administrative manuals and staff manuals that affect a member of the public are available for free inspection. External requests for Records Access Categories 1 and 2 Records may be either oral or in writing. If copies are requested by the public, cost recovery will apply.

.41 Level of Access Available to External Parties.

A. On-line Read Only Access. Read only access is the only option available for external access to BLM on-line records through BLM Information Access Centers. Each BLM site will develop procedures for managing use of BLM Information Access Center terminals and ports to ensure that requesters are afforded equal access.

B. Subscriptions to BLM Records. Requesters may subscribe (make ongoing requests) for BLM publicly available records (BLM Access Category 1 and Category 2 Records) on any media available, including on-line services, through BLM Information Access Centers. These subscriptions will be documented in writing and charged for in accordance with cost recovery and collection policies. Subscriptions will also be used to document remote on-line services.

.42 Special Formatting or Special Medium Services. Offices are not required to provide special formatting of data in response to requests from the public. However, if a State, the SC, NIFC or the WO chooses to perform those services, they must be consistent from one requester to another. Information may be requested in raw data file format or in special formats. The term "no formatting" refers to the raw data file with no manipulation and also includes low level formatting, i.e., breaking down a large file into segments to fit onto several diskettes. The term "special formatting" refers to the manipulation of data, i.e., changing character fields, or extracting out classes of data for a specialized report. Also, requests may be received for an electronic copy of a record traditionally available on paper. Refer to BLM Manual Section 1278, External Access to BLM Information, for guidelines on processing special requests.

.43 Access to Spatially Derived Public Information. States, SC, NIFC, and WO shall develop local policies for the production and distribution of spatially derived information products. Spatially derived information includes Geographic Information Systems (GIS), satellite imagery, autocad, cadastral plats, aerial photography, scanned graphics, etc. Requests for spatially derived information may or may not originate in the BLM Information Access Centers. Employees at all levels of the organization may receive these requests. It is the BLM's policy to create a means of fair and equal access to these public information products. See BLM Manual Section 1278, External Access to BLM Information. Local policies for production and distribution of these products will be consistent, and appropriate cost recovery applied.

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.44 Screening of Files for Sensitive Information. In the Records Access Categories 1 and 2 listings, those records noted with an asterisk must be screened for FOIA-exempt material. Public Records, as well as Discretionary Records, may contain some information concerning ongoing negotiations, financial information, business information, personal, privacy information, investigations, internal memoranda, drafts, and working documents, proprietary, geological and geophysical information relating to wells, or other sensitive information. See BLM Manual Section 1273, Vital Records, for mailing of proprietary/confidential information.

A. Segregating Information. Program specialists will make the determination to segregate sensitive information. This information, if it exists, shall be segregated either within or from the file. If segregated within the file, this information will be removed from the file before providing access to the public, and requests for this type of information must be made in writing invoking the FOIA.

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- .5 Certification Of Records. Copies of records are certified only upon request. The certification process involves certifying and embossing the official Bureau seal to attest that the document is an exact copy of an official BLM record (43 U.S.C. 1462). This certification does not attest to the accuracy of information contained therein. The fee for certification of records is \$0.25 per certification, plus the normal fees for record reproduction (43 U.S.C. 1460, Appendix A, Part 2). See Illustration 1, Sample Certification Statement/Rubber Stamp and Illustration 2, Imprint of the Bureau's official embossing seal. Requisitions for the BLM embossing seal should be coordinated through the BLM Records Officer. Whenever possible, consolidated orders will be prepared by the BLM Records Officer for consistency and cost effectiveness.
- .51 Designating Employees to Certify Copies of Records. Office officials may designate any permanent employee under their supervision to certify copies of records. Designations should be made at the lowest possible level. Designations should be in writing, and revoked when no longer necessary.
- .52 Multi-Page Documents. Multi-page documents can be certified with a cover sheet certification. A per page charge would not apply as a certification is not applied to each page. Multi-page documents certified with a cover sheet shall be bound and sealed to authenticate official certification. Refer to Illustration 3, Sample Cover Sheet Certification for Multi-Page Documents.
- .53 Single-Page Documents. A statement of certification may be typed directly, rubber stamped, or superimposed onto the document and then embossed to certify single-page documents. One certification may be used to certify double-sided documents.
- .54 Requests from other Federal Government Offices. There shall be no charge for the certification of copies required for official use by the officers of any branch of the Federal Government (43 U.S.C. 1460).
- .55 No Existing Records. A written statement may be prepared to certify, after a diligent search has been made, that a record cannot be found in official records of that office of BLM.
- .56 Notary Service. The certification of records provides the public with copies of official agency documents. If the BLM requires a document to be notarized before filing with the BLM, the BLM may provide this notary service.



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.6 Cost Recovery Fees. Authority to charge for copies of official books, records, papers, documents, maps, plats or diagrams within the custody of BLM is provided in 43 U.S.C. 1460. The BLM may charge the sum equal to the cost of production plus the cost of administrative services involved in handling the records for the purpose of providing copies. The BLM's Cost Recovery policy ensures that the BLM's charging system is equitably based on the costs of providing products and services to the public Bureauwide. All BLM offices will utilize the established Bureauwide rates. An updated products cost list should be posted in easy view of walk-in customers and available by mail to other customers. Each BLM office must develop procedures for tracking external requests to aid in calculating current Bureauwide cost recovery rates for these records. See the BLM Cost Recovery Manual, 1270-2; and Handbook H-1270-2 for current cost recovery rates.

.61 Collecting Fees. Providing copies of records in advance of payment (on a credit basis) to the general public (individuals, organizations, or businesses) is not allowed. (See BLM Manual Section 1278 for requests for publicly available records invoking the Freedom of Information Act.) Other Federal, state, and local government agencies may be billed (see BLM Manual Section 1371, Billings).

.62 Fee Waivers. Where specific BLM regulations require that copies will be provided without charge, e.g., Resource Management Plans and amendments, 43 CFR 1610.2, the provisions of the regulation should be followed. However, if additional copies are requested outside the scope of the regulation, the cost recovery policy applies.

A. Administrative Fee Waiver. Departmental Manual 383.DM4.13F allows for furnishing records to State, local, and foreign governments, public international organizations, and Indian tribes, when to do so without charge is an appropriate courtesy, or when the recipient is carrying on a function related to DOI and to do so will help to accomplish the work of the BLM. Discretion may be used in determining whether or not to charge fees to other Government entities for access to BLM records available in BLM Information Access Centers. Also see procedures for agreements to share data in BLM Manual Section 1278, External Access to BLM Information. Heads of offices are authorized to waive fees, including the charge for certifications, if the total charge for producing the copy is less than \$3.00 (see BLM Manual Section 1372, Collections).

.63 Copy Fee Account. The BLM will deposit all fees recovered from providing services, access to, and copies of records in BLM's no-year copy fee account, fund 14X5017, Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures, Subactivity 5700.

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.7 Accounting. Accounting personnel will receive and process all collections which come by mail, phone, or in person at their respective offices. These collections will be processed in accordance with Federal regulations and guidelines. Accounting personnel will assist the public with questions regarding financial matters (i.e., collections, bills, refunds, payment modes, filing fees, etc.). They will also provide technical guidance and assistance to their respective field offices.

.71 Collection Officers. Employees who regularly receive or process collections, or who open and process mail which includes collections, must be designated in writing as Collection Officers. All BLM collections will be processed efficiently and uniformly and adequate internal controls will be maintained in all phases of the collection program. See BLM Manual Section 1372, Collections, for procedures on designating Collection Officers and for procedures on documenting, controlling, and safeguarding all collections received by the BLM.

.72 Cashiers. An employee who is required to accept and make change shall be designated as a Cashier and maintain an authorized change-making fund (see BLM Manual Section 1385, Imprest Funds).

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.8 Official Filings. Each BLM office must have a main receiving point for applications, land, mineral, and resource payments, filing fees and other case documents. Receiving offices must be accessible to the public, neat and attractive in appearance, adequately identified by a sign, and arranged so that unauthorized entry/access to receiving office records and funds is prevented. In situations where the receiving office is off-site (i.e., Competitive Oil and Gas Sales, Wild Horse Auctions, etc.), the public should have access to the appropriate officials for filing applications, or purchasing maps. The locations of BLM offices will be listed in 43 CFR 1821. (See 43 CFR Subtitle B, Chapter II, Part 1820 et seq. for additional information regarding application procedures.)

.81 Serializing and Case Type Coding. Records to be serialized include all documents which are posted to the official land status records; and all filings which are processed on a case basis, including contest actions and mining claim recording documents. A case abstract shall be created for each serialized action. (See BLM Manual Section 1274, Serialized Case File System, for procedures for serializing and case type data entry.)

.82 Serialized Cases (Docket). Each Receiving Office maintains and controls all serialized cases. It docket, charges, counts, files, disposes of, and otherwise services cases. The case files contain all of the official documents required by the BLM in the normal processing of an application or filing (e.g., patents, deeds, leases, and grants).

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Glossary of Terms

-A-

access: the ability to view, inspect, or copy Bureau records.

assistance: assistance includes general assistance, or guidance to enable a customer to conduct research themselves. Interpreting regulations, looking for maps, explaining BLM programs, retrieving documents/records, and other similar public relations type work is defined as assistance.

-B-

BLM information access center/public room/access area: in the context of this policy, this terminology is used to describe the Bureau's primary areas for providing external access to BLM records. The terminology also describes centralized physical locations within BLM State, District or Resource Area offices that are designated as areas where the private sector or other external entities may obtain access to the Bureau's publicly available records and receive assistance in completing filing requirements. Includes reception areas.

BLM Information access center staff: area designated for public access to BLM information and assistance to completing filing requirements. The BLM Information Access Center includes reception areas, whether physically included in the same room or area or in another room or area.

BLM records: recorded information that is either created or obtained by the BLM and is in the control of the BLM at the time a request is made. BLM records include all books, papers, maps, photographs, machine readable materials, electronically stored data, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by BLM under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business. This also includes software created or enhanced by the BLM. Any recorded information within the BLM's custody that can be articulated by a requester (e.g. Legal Land Description, Status, or Automated Resources Data) falls into the category of an agency "record." This definition excludes library reference materials and museum exhibits.

-C-

cadastral survey plat: cadastral surveys create, restore, mark, and define boundaries of parcels of land for describing individual ownership. The official survey plat is a graphic representation drawn to scale depicting the actual survey as described in the official field notes. The plat illustrates lot sizes and locations, bearings and distances, and corners, courses and distances of surveyed lines for rectangular, mineral, and homestead surveys.

case files: records, regardless of media, documenting a specific action, event, person, place, project, or other matter, e.g. serialized land and mineral files, grazing files, etc.

case recordation (cr): an on-line automated case recordation system was developed and implemented in June 1982. The purpose was to track actions taken in reducing a large backlog of pending offers (applications) for oil and gas leases. All pending cases were entered by September 30, 1983. Since that time, all active mineral cases and all serialized land use cases have been entered in the automated system. Data from this system will be incorporated into ALMRS.

control document index (cdi): an index consisting of microfilmed copies of patents and deeds which convey title to and from the United States. It also includes microfilmed copies of documents which affect or have affected control, or limit or restrict the availability of right, title or use of federal lands. The CDI microfilm cards are arranged chronologically within townships by state, meridian, range and township.

copy: (1) a reproduction of the contents of an original document, prepared simultaneously or separately and usually identified by function or by method of creation. Copies identified by function include action copy, information or reference copy, official file copy, reading or chronological file copy, suspense or tickler file copy, and stock copy. Copies identified by method of creation include carbon copy, electrostatic copy, mimeograph copy, and ribbon copy. (2) In electronic recordkeeping, "copy" is the action or result of reading data from a source, leaving the source data unchanged, and writing the same data elsewhere on a medium that may differ from the source.

copy fee account: appropriation 14X5017, Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures, Subactivity 5700.

custodial offices: this term is defined as it relates to applying appropriate charges/fees for the on-line viewing or inspection of Bureau records within the custody of the BLM from one BLM jurisdiction to another. For the purpose of viewing electronic records, a custodial office is defined as all Bureau locations (Districts and Resource Areas) within the jurisdiction of a BLM State Office.

custody: guardianship, or control, of records, including both physical possession (physical custody) and legal responsibility (legal custody), unless one or the other is specified.

-D-

data sharing agreements: written agreements that document various types of partnerships the Bureau forms with other entities to trade or exchange records or information. The formal agreement must take the form of a data share agreement, memorandum of understanding, contract, assistance agreement (includes cooperative agreements and grants). Agreements must address issues of source identification, cost recovery, integrity levels, use of data, confidentiality statements, etc.

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discretionary records: a category of selected electronic records or electronically-generated outputs that enables the Bureau to begin to recover costs (line charges/CPU time) associated with: (1) the on-line viewing of nontraditional or enhanced records (ARD themes or various prototype products) either at a BLM Information Access Center/Public Room or from a remote site; or (2) viewing electronically generated hard copy outputs (batch reports from case recordation) that contain publicly available information but are not able to be viewed electronically in the BLM Information Access Centers/Public Rooms. Records in this category do not contain information which would be withheld under a FOIA exemption or violate Privacy Act provisions. Records in this category are not available for free inspection.

-E-

electronic records: any information that is recorded in a form that only a computer can process and that satisfies the definition of a Federal record in 44 USC 3301. Electronic records include numeric, graphic, and text information, which may be recorded on any medium capable of being read by a digital computer and which satisfies the definition of a record. This includes, but is not limited to, magnetic media, such as tapes and disks, and optical disks.

external access: access to Bureau recorded information by other Government (Federal, State, Local, or Foreign) agencies or organizations as well as private sector organizations or members which includes private industry, news media, special interest groups, private educational institutions, commercial entities and members of the public.

filings: all applications, payments, correspondence, and other documents which are processed on a case basis.

-H-

historical index (hi): the Historical Index is a chronological narrative of all past and present actions which affect the use of or title to public lands and resources. The Historical Index can be used to check title, but it was not designed for that purpose, nor is it necessary for use in making title determinations. The primary value of the Historical Index is its adaptability for abstract work.

-I-

information: (1) facts or data communicated or received. (2) in electronic recordkeeping, processed data.

inspection: the opportunity to view records and to use records to conduct research. Records may not be altered, removed or destroyed.

-L-

land records: any file documenting an activity on Federal lands or information about that activity. Includes lands and minerals case files, grazing case files, temporary use permit files (including vegetative and material permits), and mining claim assessments, etc.

life cycle management (lcm): the process of cradle to grave management of a project, system or record. The life cycle itself is the time span between the establishment of a need for a system or record and the end of its operational use. The LCM process is a step-by-step planning process that assures systems implemented meet user needs, that are within management priorities and that are the most cost-effective for the Government.

-M-

master name file: an electronic data file designed to interface with other data bases to eliminate redundant entry and storage of name and address data. Currently, each new bond principal is assigned a Name Identification Number (NID). This system interacts with the ABSS and will become a part of ALMRS in the future. It is maintained by the Service Center.

master title plat (mtp): a composite of the survey plats of each township on which is shown the ownership and land status.

medium: the physical form of recorded information. Includes paper, film, disk, magnetic tape, and other materials on which information can be recorded.

microfiche: miniaturized images arranged in rows that form a grid pattern on card size transparent sheet film. Usually contains a title readable without a magnifying device. Sometimes abbreviated as fiche.

-N-

no formatting: refers to the raw data file with no manipulation of data and also includes minimal low level formatting (e.g., taking an existing MOSS file to ADS or transforming an ADS file to DLG3 format, or breaking down a large file into segments to fit onto several diskettes.) This is minor work and often a required task.

non public records: a limited access record category which includes all records not designated in publicly available records categories such as internal administrative records or those records that must be reviewed prior to release because: (1) a FOIA exemption may apply to all or portions of the record; or (2) the Privacy Act or other statute is applicable which may restrict access. A FOIA or Privacy Act request must always be made in order for the private sector to obtain access to any releasable portions of these records.

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-P-

patent: a document transferring or confirming legal title to public land from the United States to the recipient (patentee). It contains all the conditions, reservations, and exceptions for easements, rights-of-way, and other interests in the land provided by or imposed on the land by applicable law.

printout: output produced by a computer printer.

proprietary/confidential information: for the purposes of this Manual, proprietary/confidential information is information submitted to the Government in expectation of confidentiality, the release of which would result in substantial competitive harm to the submitter.

public information: (1) records access category for which the private sector has the right to view/inspect without charge. Records in this category are not required to be physically maintained in the BLM Information Access Center; however, they must be available (brought to the BLM Information Access Center) to view/inspect upon request. (2) records open to public inspection by law or custom.

publicly available records: comprises BLM records listed in Records Access Category 1, Public, and Category 2, Discretionary. This terminology refers to all the Bureau records that may be made available via the BLM Information Access Centers.

-R-

read only access: records that can only be viewed and/or copied onto some medium. There is no capability to enter, edit or delete data.

receiving office: the BLM office having administrative jurisdiction. In addition to State Office jurisdictions, the BLM has redelegated authority to District and Area Offices for processing certain types of public land disposal and use authorization applications. Applications, payments, and documents shall be filed in the appropriate office to be considered officially received.

records: according to 44 USC 3301, the term "includes all books, papers, maps, photographs, machine-readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency of the United States Government under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of data in them. Library and museum material made or acquired and preserved solely for reference or exhibition purposes, extra copies of documents preserved only for convenience of reference, and stocks of publications and of processed documents, are not included."



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records access categories: the division and designation of records series into distinct categories that establishes specific access rights and procedures. Three categories exist in BLM: Category 1--Public Records, Category 2--Discretionary Records, and Category 3--Non-Public Records.

records disposition schedules: NARA-issued authority for the disposition of records. Includes both the General Records Schedule for records common to several or all government agencies and the BLM Records Schedule for records unique to BLM.

remote on-line: means access to BLM records in electronic form from a location other than a BLM site or transmitting records electronically from one BLM custodial office to another.

research: research time includes situations where a BLM employee actually conducts an examination or analysis of records necessary to locate specific information/record which has been requested by a member of the public.

-S-

screening: reviewing files to apply access restrictions or to identify FOIA exemptions or Privacy Act protection requirements.

sensitive information: information or data that requires protection due to the risk and magnitude of loss or harm which would result from inadvertent or deliberate disclosure, alteration, or destruction. The term includes information or data whose improper use or disclosure could adversely affect the ability of an agency to accomplish its mission, privileged data, records about individuals requiring protection under the Privacy Act, and data protected from release under the Freedom of Information Act.

serial number: a number used for identification of all lands and minerals case files. Prefix for a serial number positions 1 through 6 identifies the Federal Land Office which took the action. The geographic state and local office abbreviation, where the land in the case is located, uniquely identifies the case to state and office.

serial register: a case-control record, consisting of serial pages bound in volumes, on microfiche, or in a computer data file.

serialized case file system: a standardized system for receiving, docketing, and managing cases pertaining to land and mineral actions on Federal lands by assigning a unique reference consisting of a prefix, number, and sometimes a suffix. Each state office manages its own numerical system, differentiated from other states by the prefix.

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spatial data: any element in a data base that has some form of spatial identifier. Spatial data associates features to their exact geometric placement. Features more common to many agencies include those related to cultural resource planning, geology, hydrology, oceanography, and meteorology. The spatial identifier related to spatial data base element can be coordinates, site address, geographical area identification codes (geocodes), and parcel identifiers. There are eight general classes of spatial data: point attribute, linear network, aerial coordinate, aerial grid cell, terrain, geocoded tabular, parcel attribute, and address based.

special formatting: the manipulation or changing of data, e.g., changing character fields, extracting out classes of data, or preparing a special report, etc.

subscriptions: refers to ongoing requests for publicly available BLM records made through BLM Information Access Center procedures. This term is used to distinguish ongoing requests from one time requests for BLM records or from ongoing requests for data share or exchange of information.

survey field notes: The official written record of a cadastral survey, certified by the field surveyor and approved by proper authority.

-T-

tract books: ledgers maintained by the BLM and its predecessor agency, the General Land Office, to record actions affecting the disposition of the public domain. In 1950, the BLM began to abandon the tract book ledgers in favor of a better system. Though most ledgers are no longer kept current, tract books continue to be a valuable and useful reference source. (Note: The Eastern States Office and parts of North and South Dakota still actively use the Tract Books.)

-V-

vital records: records containing information that is essential for:

- (1) emergency operations during a disaster or a national emergency;
- (2) resumption and/or continuation of operations; (3) reestablishment of the legal, financial, and/or functional status of an agency; and
- (4) determination of the rights and obligations of individuals and/or corporate bodies with respect to an agency.

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<p>_____ (Office Location) Date</p> <p>I hereby certify that this reproduction is a copy of the official record on file in this office.</p> <p>_____ Authorized Signature</p>
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Imprint of the Bureau's official embossing seal:



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COVER SHEET  
SAMPLE CERTIFICATION FOR MULTI-PAGE DOCUMENTS

All documents should be hole punched. The cover sheet certification should be the top document. Lace ribbon through the hole with the ends on the top side. Affix ribbon ends to cover sheet by placing adhesive round seal over ends. Be sure to place adhesive seal so that the official seal can be imprinted over it.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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