

## Cooperative Landscape Conservation

**Research on Establishing Native Vegetation** – The BLM is working in partnership with North Dakota State University at the BLM's Schnell Recreation Area, researching the best methodology for establishing native vegetation on lands that were previously agricultural fields or tame grass fields. Most research of this nature has been done in the eastern part of the state where precipitation is much greater. Current and future research will also focus on the grazing of native pastures to help agencies obtain a better understanding of the effects of grazing on native grasslands that have been invaded by tame grasses.



**Greater Sage-grouse Conservation and Sagebrush Restoration** – An interagency partnership among the BLM, Natural Resources Conservation Service, North Dakota Department of Game and Fish, and local conservation districts is producing widespread benefits for sagebrush habitat and the species it supports, including sage-grouse. It started in 2009 when the NRCS grew native big sage seedlings in its Bismarck greenhouse using seeds collected from BLM-managed lands. The



following spring, the BLM and NRCS had more than 2,500 seedlings to plant in Bowman County. So far, the success rate has been holding at 90 percent. This partnership is one of many which complements the BLM's national Greater Sage-grouse Planning Strategy. Under this effort, greater sage-grouse habitat conservation measures are being incorporated into BLM land use plans.

**Antelope Migration Study** – Seasonal antelope migration patterns and obstructions in Valley and Phillips counties are being documented through a cooperative effort among the BLM, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the University of Alberta, and the World Wildlife Fund. The information garnered will help resource managing agencies make more informed land use decisions and could contribute to more stable antelope populations.

## Fuels/Forest Management

The Montana/Dakotas BLM has undertaken a number of forest treatment projects across the three states that will improve forest health, enhance wildlife habitat, and reduce the chance of undesired wildland fires. These efforts include:

- The removal of both commercial and non-commercial timber in and around the communities of Lead and Deadwood, S.D. The BLM has also provided funding to decrease fuel loading on private land in the area.
- A fuels reduction project at Fort Meade near Sturgis, S.D., which had the added benefit of enhancing scenic views from the Centennial Trail.
- At Miller Creek, the Miles City Field Office is working with a private landowner on a prescribed fire project on the downwind side of a large subdivision in a wildland-urban interface zone.
- In the Scratchgravel Hills near Helena, workers are cutting and processing trees that will be used for biomass.
- Future projects are slated for the Ekalaka Hills area in Carter County, Mont., in a partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, and in the Knowlton area southeast of Miles City, Mont.



The Montana/Dakotas BLM manages about 8.3 million acres of federal lands and about 47.2 million acres of federal mineral resources in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. These lands provide habitat for wildlife, forage for domestic livestock, forest products ranging from Christmas trees to commercial timber, and a wide range of recreational opportunities. The federal mineral estate, which includes oil, natural gas and coal, is a critical source of energy as our nation works to develop domestic resources while creating jobs.

Our mission is to sustain the health of the land while making the resources available for public use and enjoyment. Following are some examples of how Montana/Dakotas BLM directly benefits local economies across Montana and the Dakotas.



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# A Sound Investment for America



## America's Great Outdoors

Recreation opportunities abound on BLM-administered public land in Montana and the Dakotas. In 2011, BLM hosted more than 4.3 million public visits and collected more than \$392,000 in recreation fees, which are used to improve facilities and visitor services.

- **Visitor Building Constructed at Coal Banks Landing** – A new visitor building at this popular launch and take out point on the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River provides visitors with a variety of information to enhance their safety and enjoyment of the river. Funding was made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).



- **Judith Landing Boat Launch Replaced** – ARRA funding also made possible a new concrete boat launch at Judith Landing on the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River. The new launch corrects safety hazards and makes it easier for boaters to put in and take out.

- **Pipestone OHV Area Improvements** – Through a cooperative management agreement, the BLM and the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council are working on a long-term plan to improve resource protection and maintenance of the trail system in the Pipestone area just east of Butte, Mont. In the coming years, they will improve the trailhead parking lot, make maps and signs easier to understand and follow, and increase efforts to educate users on responsible behavior while on public lands. Pipestone is the most heavily-used OHV area in Montana, with about 75 miles of designated ATV and motorcycle trails on public lands.



## Infrastructure

**Water Saver Improvements** – The Malta Field Office will bury four 25,000-gallon fiberglass tanks to store the rain and snowmelt captured by existing water savers. The current bladders on these water savers have rotted and collapsed, greatly reducing their holding capacity. Water savers provide water for both livestock and wildlife; their placement encourages the animals to graze over a larger area, contributing to rangeland health. Installation work will be contracted in fiscal year 2012.

**Road Repairs** – The Malta, Havre and Glasgow field offices quickly responded to numerous road and culvert damages across public lands as a result of 2011's historic rain and runoff events. These offices secured the help of BLM crews to make immediate repairs to the Cow Creek Road, the Beauchamp Creek Road, the TC Access Road, and the Dry Fork Road. In turn, these repairs immediately provided for public safety and commerce, and will maintain important hunter access.

## Energy Development

The BLM plays a key role in developing and delivering energy to meet the needs of America's homes, businesses, and communities. Promoting dependable and environmentally sound energy production on federal public lands can help the U.S. achieve energy independence. About half of the royalties collected are returned to the state where the lease is located.



- **Oil and Gas Leasing** – The four competitive oil and gas lease sales held in fiscal year 2011 generated nearly \$110 million. Oil and gas royalties totaled more than \$246 million.
- **Coal** – In 2011, 14 federal leases covered nearly 30,000 acres in Montana and North Dakota. Mining operations on these leases produced more than 25 million tons of coal and generated nearly \$43 million in royalties.
- **Renewables and Transmission** – BLM Montana/Dakotas is taking a proactive stance in the development of wind energy on BLM-managed lands in the state of Montana. The BLM is the lead federal agency and co-lead with the state of Montana in preparing an EIS for the Mountain States Transmission Intertie Project, a proposed 500-kV electric transmission line that would move power generated from existing generation and forthcoming renewable energy generation to load centers of the western U.S.

## Abandoned Mine Lands

The Butte Field Office is working with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality to encapsulate contaminated tailings and waste rock from historic mining activities at the Great Divide Ski Area and nearby Bald Butte in a lined landfill. The three-year cleanup project which began in 2010 assists in protecting human life, providing jobs, and stimulating the local economy. In addition, roads that were improved for the project will continue to provide better access to local homes and resources, and promote economic growth by facilitating industries such as mining and forestry.

## Cultural Resource Management

The BLM and the U.S. Forest Service have formed a partnership to share responsibilities and costs while upgrading the historic Gilmore Cabin in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. The goal is to make it available to the public as a rental.



## Youth – Future Public Land Stewards

**Environmental Education** – The BLM offers a variety of educational programs throughout the year for students young and old, touching on topics such as fire, history, archaeology, wild horses, and careers in natural resource management. Some programs involve short presentations by specialists while others are educational kits or extensive field trips. Some examples:

- Kids' fishing day events held across the three states where students learn skills they can enjoy for a lifetime.



- The *South Dakota is PlantTastic* outdoor education curriculum was developed through a 2011 Take It Outside grant.
- *Bridging the Divide* is a summer school course and week-long field camp that helps Native American youth experience the connections between their traditional ways and modern science.

**Volunteers** – Through volunteer events such as National Public Lands Day, youth engage in activities on public lands, gaining practical work experience and a sense of stewardship while completing needed projects on public lands.

**Work Crews** – In fiscal year 2011, the BLM employed more than 160 youth through partner organizations such as the Student Conservation Association, Montana Conservation Corps, Ravalli County Weed District, Chicago Botanical Garden, and the Backcountry Horsemen Association.

- Interpretive programs offered at the Missouri Breaks and Pompeys Pillar interpretive centers draw hundreds of students each year.
- History Mystery educational kits, available for checkout, lure students to research a topic and draw their own conclusions.
- Students in after school programs in South Dakota can complete BLM-designed courses in GPS/orienteering and range plants.
- The *Journey through the Monument* program takes seventh graders on a 2-1/2 day float trip down the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River, bringing them face-to-face with natural and cultural treasures.
- South Dakota's Youth Range Camp provides hands-on experience for young adults with interest in pursuing a career in range management.



**Student Employment** – More than 40 students filled temporary positions ranging from office clerk to forestry tech in fiscal year 2011. Four more students who worked for the BLM while completing degrees were converted into full-time employment in their fields of study.