

Northwest Passage Volume 1, Issue 4 – March/April 2009

Cover

Take It Outside!

blm.gov/or

The Bureau of Land Management Magazine for Oregon and Washington

Mar/Apr 2009

Wild Northwest: The BLM's Annual Photo Contest

We'll Be Your Huckleberry: Preserving Sustainability Through Stewardship

Creatures of the Night: Up Close and Personal with BLM Bats

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[Photo of Fire Fighters in the Foreground of Plateaus, Blue Skies, and a Rainbow]

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[Photo of two cyclists riding bicycles down a two-lane road with in a valley]

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Letter from Edward W. Shepard, State Director, Oregon/Washington, Bureau of Land Management

Greetings and hope you’re enjoying these first days of spring!

Once the temperatures start to rise, we’ve got a whole new variety of outdoor activities and natural wonders beckoning us to get outside and enjoy all that Oregon and Washington have to offer. And we imagine our friends and partners who share our love for the public lands are looking forward to the change of seasons as much as we are.

Speaking of experiencing the marvels of Oregon and Washington, our theme for this installment of Northwest Passage is the Wild Northwest. Wild, you say? Absolutely. As the seasons change and life returns from hibernation, we took this issue to explore all the awe-inspiring wildlife native to Oregon and Washington. And we’re happy you’re here to join us.

First we’ll take you on a visit to an Extreme Mustang Makeover, one of the nation’s preeminent venues to increase awareness about America’s cherished symbols of courage and freedom. The BLM is proud to partner with the Mustang Heritage Foundation to present these events. And during our most recent Mustang Makeover, the first ever in the northwest, more than 3,500 spectators watched us help place 28 mustangs with families who love them.

Then, if you dare, travel with us on a midnight trip to visit BLM scientists who study bats after twilight. We’ll learn all about how the BLM tracks these nocturnal creatures to better understand their behavior and the land they inhabit in order to manage for long-term sustainability.

We also pay tribute to the legacy of a BLM canine agent who served with honor. Gunner, a beloved member of the Salem District force, is fondly remembered by all who knew him to include his partner, Ranger Mike Roop.

Throughout this issue we feature fantastic photos shot by BLM employees on public lands. Not only do our multifaceted folks serve as biologists, firefighters, accountants, cartographers, and more, they also share their skill through their incredibly artistic photographs. And we present a special layout of the first place winners from our employees' 2008 Photo Contest!

Plus we've got our District Round-Up with great news from around Oregon and Washington.

Finally, I'd like to echo the sentiment of President Obama and end my column with a call for volunteers. The BLM lives in the communities where we work. We thrive on a spirit of cooperation that inspires us to continually reach out to our neighbors. We're currently looking for new volunteers to join our Resource Advisory Councils (RAC). I hope you'll be excited by this issue's article on RACs to come out and help us as we manage the public lands.

So with all that inspires you, let's get out there and enjoy this spring!

Edward W. Shepard State Director Oregon/Washington Bureau of Land Management

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Take it Outside!

Volume 1, Issue 4

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mission

The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In Oregon and Washington, the BLM provides innovative leadership in managing natural resources of the Pacific Northwest.

This Month's Cover

[Reproduction of Magazine Cover Photo]

This month's cover was provided by the First Place winner of the Fire Category from the 2008 BLM Photo Contest. Photographer J.T. Sohr, an Engine Boss with six summer's experience fighting fires, snapped this shot while his fatigued crew was taking a well-deserved break.

“We’d just finished a long period of putting out fires and saw some more storms on the way,” said J.T. “Everybody knew we’d be busy, so I took this photo of us taking a breather. It was the calm before the storm.”

Right after this photo, J.T. and his crew got up and went back to work.

“Hey, you’ve got to respond to the fires. And we all worked together and took care of them.”

When asked how the rainbow affected their mood, J.T. laughs, “That wasn’t usual. We’d never seen a rainbow that strong. And I can tell you we all appreciated it that day.”

Photographer J.T. Sohr began fighting fires for the Oregon Department of Forestry while still in high school. Both of his parents also worked fire with his dad retiring from the U.S. Forest Service and his mom continuing to volunteer as a fire lookout.

PHOTO BY J.T. SOHR

Our Contributors

[Five Photos of Contributors on Image of Corkboard]

1: Volunteer Ethan Schowalter-Hay recently moved to Oregon City from the beautiful eastern side of the state and is enjoying the wet wilderness of the Cascades and coast. Although he studied wildlife and geography in college, Ethan most recently worked as a newspaper reporter in La Grande. Ethan's next career is to become an explorer-in-residence with National Geographic (or the BLM...) with an extremely lucrative side gig as a world-renown recording artist. Enjoy his article on Mustangs (Page 8) now so you can say you read him before he was famous!

2: Right after taking this photo, Spokane Public Affairs Specialist Cheyne Rossbach challenged Smokey Bear to an arm wrasslin' match. Channeling the great Lincoln Hawk, Cheyne went "over the top" to defeat the pride of the U.S. Forest Service. And how did he celebrate? By flexing his brain next! Cheyne displays his equally prodigious mental skills in writing about the BLM's continuing efforts to partner with local communities and contractors and serve as a steward managing to a sustainable future for public lands. (Page 18). And speaking of the future, should Smokey ever want a rematch? Cheyne's ready!

3: Are you afraid of ghosts, monsters, and robot zombies? Then you may want to read Scott Stoffel's article on the BLM's Bats (Page 16) with the lights on! Scott, a Public Affairs Specialist from Lakeview, spent some time with scientists who were studying these legendary creatures to determine their habits as well as to ensure the BLM can provide the best resource management possible to keep our nocturnal friends healthy and flyin' after midnight for a long, long time.

4: Making her first appearance in Northwest Passage is Trish Hogervorst of Salem, Oregon. Trish has served the BLM in Public Affairs under five different U.S. Presidents! And so with her background and knowledge, we're honored to count her among our contributors. Given her deft touch and experience, it's fitting that Trish write a moving tribute to Gunner, a BLM K9 Ranger who recently passed after many years of distinguished service (Page 26).

5: Writer and Public Affairs expert Pam Robbins makes her triumphant return to Northwest Passage with a plea! The BLM is reaching out to our neighbors to help us manage the public lands in our communities. Want to join us? Check out Pam's article on the BLM's Resource Advisory Councils (Page 24) and contact us to start making your voice heard!

Public Lands Live

[Background Photo of Green Leafy Foliage]

I Shot That! 2008 BLM Photo Contest Winners Show Off their Blue Ribbons

Each year, the BLM holds a photo contest open to all employees across seven categories. These shots are just a sample from the many talented and creative photographers who work at the BLM. To see the rest of our amazing employees' art, please visit the BLM Photo Library at blm.gov and do a search for "2008 Photo Contest!"

[Photo of Colorful Mushrooms]

Artistic: Ron Exeter, Salem District

[Photo of a Man Standing at the Edge of a Mountainous Elevation with Forests in Background]

BLM at Work: Terry Fennel, Salem District

[Photo of a Fire Fighters in the Foreground of Plateaus, Blue Skies, and a Rainbow]

Fire: J.T. Sohr, Vale District

[Photo of Large Mushrooms Growing on a Tree in the Foreground of a Green Forest]

Landscape: Ron Exeter, Salem District

[Photo of Four Rafters Submerged in a White-Capped River]

People/Recreation: Billy Brown, Prineville District

[Photo of a Cougar Standing Before a Blue Sky]

Wildlife/Plants: Kathy Bertalotto, Vale District

[Photo of Archeologists Working at a Dig in a Desert-Like Area]

Cultural: Diane Pritchard: Vale District

[Image of the State of Oregon]

Oregon Is For Lovers (of Public Lands!)

Extreme Mustang Makeover!

By Ethan Schowalter-Hay

[Photo of a Mustang on a Plateau Before Blue Skies]

They are foaled in some rimrock valley, under hard sun and wind. They are familiar with coyotes, ravens, pronghorn, golden eagles, badgers, and great flocks of migrating fowl. They are adept at gracefully negotiating the rough terrain of shrub-steppe, juniper savanna, ponderosa pine, and white fir forests. They are eastern Oregon's untamed horses – the wild mustangs. And this March they showed off their stuff at the first-ever Northwest Extreme Mustang Makeover in Albany, Oregon.

[Photo of a Lone Mustang Running]

Two years ago, the Bureau of Land Management partnered with the Mustang Heritage Foundation, a non-profit organization that promotes the adoption of wild horses and burros, on the initial round of Mustang Makeovers. As you might guess, the name is a nod to the popular ABC television franchise. And trainers apply to compete in a variety of horsemanship contests with mustangs fresh off the range, culminating in the animals' adoption by successful bidders.

"The Makeovers have gone really well ever since our first competition in 2007," said Tara Martinak, a public affairs specialist with the BLM's Burns District who's heavily involved in the agency's mustang adoption programs. "The general idea was to create an event that demonstrates the trainability (of wild horses)."

The Albany event, held March 20 – 22 in conjunction with the Northwest Horse Fair & Expo, reflected Oregon's renown for wild horses: Around 1,200 roam the open country east of the Cascades. And most famous of all are Steens Mountain's Kiger mustangs, a striking breed strongly reminiscent of the Spanish ponies from which they are thought to have descended. The name "mustang" derives from the Spanish, "mesteno," which originally referred to an "unclaimed sheep" and later to a free-range horse.

Because younger horses with flashier coats like paints or the patterned Kigers have little trouble finding willing adopters, the Mustang Makeover features mustangs of blander color – brown, black, and gray. "They are all about the same age as well – between three and four years old – which is the age where adoption rates generally start to decline," Martinak noted.

[Photo of Five Mustangs]

Over 33,000 wild horses and burros inhabit BLM lands in the United States, and the agency manages the animals to maintain the health of the rangeland and the herds themselves. The public adoptions and sales of mustangs and burros brought into captivity are a fundamental component of that process.

Seventeen designated mustang herds are managed in Oregon. Thirty four horses participated in the Albany Makeover this year, and they hail from three bands: Jackies Butte, not far west of the Idaho border in southeastern Oregon; Beaty Butte, along Highway 140 at the Nevada line; and Murderers Creek southwest of John Day, jointly managed with the U.S. Forest Service.

Trainers competing in the Makeover have 100 days to transform their charges into obedient, cooperative, and domestic creatures. “The very first thing they try to do is establish trust with the animal,” said Martinak. “That then determines how far they can go with the training.”

The contest evaluates trainers based on the physical condition of their horse and a variety of exercises from picking up the animal’s hoof and loading it into a trailer to steering it through obstacles. The top 10 finalists compete in a freestyle event.

[Photo of a Woman Viewing a Mustang]

Prizes aren’t the only reward for the trainers’ impressive labor. The culmination of the event is, of course, the adoption of newly trained mustangs – the successful transfer from Oregon’s wide open spaces to the welcoming pastures of its ranches and farms.

As this issue went to print, the BLM received fantastic results from this most recent Extreme Mustang Makeover. The largest-ever turnout of over 3,500 attendees showed up to cheer on and adopt 28 Mustangs into enthusiastic families, homes, and farms. Laird McCabe of Yamhill, Oregon and his Mustang “Sally” were crowned competition champions at the event. Trainer Jani Mari Zigray-Cochran of Rogue River, Oregon found her mustang “Cayuse” at the top of the bidding list bringing \$5,000 to the Mustang Heritage Foundation and the BLM’s Wild Horse and Burro Program. The program hopes to bring the Extreme Mustang Makeover back to Albany in 2010. Watch for updates!

For more details and to learn how you can attend a future Extreme Mustang Makeover, please visit www.blm.gov/or/index or call 1-866-FORMUSTANGS for more great mustang information.

District Round-Up

Welcome to news from around the BLM's Districts of Oregon and Washington! Please join us for an update on all of our community happenings!

Burns, Oregon: blm.gov/or/districts/burns

- Burns welcomed its new District Manager Kenny McDaniel with an official ceremony on Wednesday, February 18. After 21 years in Medford in addition to working in both Washington D.C. and Gunnison, Colorado, McDaniel says he's happy to return to Oregon and pleased to be working with the unique resources and relationships in the Burns District.

[Photo of Ed Shepard, Oregon and Washington BLM State Director, and Kenny McDaniel, BLM Burns District Manager, Shaking Hands]

- Two employees from the Burns Interagency Fire Zone are among 63 firefighters nationwide who traveled halfway around the world to Australia to assist with managing and suppressing wildfires that have burned more than 1 million acres. Burns firefighters Steve Morefield and Jeff Whalen may be in Australia for up to five weeks under an international mutual-aid agreement.
- Burns District Three Rivers Resource Area recently received the Harney Soil and Water Conservation District's 'Agency Partner of the Year' honor for 2008. The award recognizes the "tireless efforts to coordinate resource management activities for the benefit of both public and privately managed lands in Harney County."

Coos Bay, Oregon: blm.gov/or/districts/coosbay

- Hundreds of southwest Oregon kids descended on the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve in March to participate in the annual Forestry Education Days. The students rotated through stations taught by BLM staff, members of the Society of American Foresters, private industry foresters, and researchers to learn about tree growth, plant identification, ecology, soils, and wildlife habitat.
- With the advent of spring on the Oregon coast comes the start of the western snowy plover nesting season. The snowy plover is a federally listed threatened species that lays its eggs and raises its young in the open dry sand. The Coos Bay District manages snowy plover nesting sites at Coos Bay's North Spit and New River Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. March 15 marks the start of the beach access restrictions that provide protection for the nesting plovers. During this time only the wet sand portion of nesting beaches will be open to the public. All of the work is paying off! Last year the BLM-managed North Spit was the most productive nesting site for the western snowy plover, producing 40 of the 71 total birds hatched last year.

[Photo of a Snowy Plover]

Eugene, Oregon: blm.gov/or/districts/eugene

- Progress continues on the new office building for the Eugene District. The main building was completed in January and two of the BLM's office mates have already moved into the facility. The Willamette National Forest Headquarters and the Oregon National Guard moved into the building in February and are getting settled into their space. The BLM is awaiting completion of the warehouse prior to moving to the new site which is located in Springfield, approximately five miles east of the existing District office. The current plan is for the warehouse addition to be completed in May and actual move-in to occur in early June. The new office is a beautiful facility with many high-tech amenities for employees and visitors to utilize. The BLM and U.S Forest Service will share a spacious public room which should provide improved customer service for the public.
- In addition, Eugene resident Greg Poitra just celebrated his 10th year as a volunteer at the West Eugene Wetlands! Thank you, Greg!

[Photo of BLM Volunteer, Greg Poitra]

Lakeview, Oregon: blm.gov/or/districts/lakeview

- State Director Ed Shepard visited the Lakeview District on February 19 for Carol Benkosky's formal reception as the new Lakeview District Manager. The morning swearing-in ceremony included all Lakeview District employees. Following this event, a public open house introduced Shepard, Benkosky, and other BLM officials to the community to discuss local issues. The day's activities ended with Benkosky and several Lakeview District staff guiding Shepard on a tour of the new Warner Wetlands pump and fish screen.

[Photo of Ed Shepard, Oregon and Washington BLM State Director, and Carol Benkosky, BLM Lakeview District Manager, and Others]

- Lakeview Resource Area Archaeologist Bill Cannon is passionate about promoting public awareness of the historical and cultural significance of early Native American rock carvings and paintings. To that end, he has collaborated over the last several months with the High Desert Museum to create an exhibition titled Rock Art Perspectives: Pictographs and Petroglyphs. On display are various sculptures, paintings, photographs, and archeological findings. Biographies of each participating archaeologist, photographer, and Native American artist are portrayed, offering varying perspectives on the importance of rock art and the impact it has had on their work.

The purpose of the exhibit is to inform visitors of the value of this art form and the need to conserve and protect America's archaeological resources. Cannon is designated as the guest curator of the exhibition which will run through May 31 at the High Desert Museum located south of Bend, Oregon.

[Photo of Bill Cannon's Rock Art Exhibit at the High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon]

Medford, Oregon: blm.gov/or/districts/Medford

- On Saturday, May 16, the public is invited to celebrate 30 years of partnership at the Table Rocks as well as Take Care of Oregon Day by joining a volunteer work party, participating in interpretive activities, and honoring cultural heritage through a Native American ceremony. Visit our website for more details.

Prineville, Oregon: blm.gov/or/districts/Prineville

- Prineville firefighters left from their hometowns and rendezvoused in Los Angeles with other firefighters before heading to Melbourne to help with fire suppression and related activities in the State of Victoria.
- The BLM transferred approximately 640 acres to the State of Oregon as part of the celebration of Oregon's Sesquicentennial! This land is located in Crook County about six miles south of Prineville and is commonly referred to as the Juniper Canyon parcel. "Continuing with our commitment to the State of Oregon we thought this land would be a nice way to say 'Happy Birthday' to the State," said Oregon/Washington BLM State Director, Ed Shepard.

[Photo of Beautiful Flower]

Roseburg, Oregon: blm.gov/or/districts/roseburg

- The 13th annual Douglas County Sportsmen's and Outdoor Recreation Show was held at the Douglas County Fairgrounds from February 13 – 15, 2009. Roseburg Recreation program specialists planned and built the exhibit highlighting this year's theme: What's New For You – Discoveries Close to Home. This booth was a joint effort by the Roseburg BLM, the Umpqua National Forest, and the Douglas County Parks Department. Some of the highlights were the new interpretive panels installed at recreation sites; the Comstock Day-use Area open at the North Bank Ranch; the new online reservations going live for Millpond, Tyee, and Rock Creek pavilions and for Lone Pine and Millpond Group Campgrounds; and the new Tioga Bridge Project in planning stages. Over 1,800 attendees visited the BLM's Douglas County booth.

[Photo of BLM Booth at the Douglas County Sportmen's and Outdoor Recreation Show]

Salem, Oregon: blm.gov/or/districts/salem

- The advent of the internet has brought together like-minded people from around the world! In December 2006, Salem District Botanist Ron Exeter, professional mycologist Lorelei Norvell, and senior research assistant professor at Oregon State University Efen Cazares, published a scientific mushroom book entitled Ramaria of the Pacific Northwestern United States.

Upon publication, Ron received emails from the international mycological community requesting copies be sent to far-away places such as Australia, Italy, Spain, and the Philippines as well as Canada and the eastern United States.

The book has been reviewed in several mycological publications to wide acclaim. The September issue of Inoculum, the newsletter for the Mycological Society of America, said, "The authors have struck a fine

balance between the needs of taxonomists and the professionals charged with managing these species by packing in an impressive amount of detailed information in a carefully organized and usable format that should prove useful to experts and generalists alike.”

Fungi Magazine writes “...this book should be on the shelf of any serious field mycologist in North America who enjoys these coral fungi.”

And Ron isn't sitting on his laurels! He's already teamed up with Lorelei Norvell for another fungal publication, *Phaeocollybia* of the Pacific Northwest, currently at press. He is also working with plant ecologist Reid Schuller in publishing guidebooks to the Salem BLM's Lost Prairie and Rickreall Ridge Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. Copies of the *Ramaria* publication can be obtained by contacting the Salem District Bureau of Land Management at (503) 375-5646.

[Photo of Mushrooms from Ron Exeter's Book]

Spokane, Washington: blm.gov/or/districts/lakeview

- Debbie Plummer, Kyle Dashiell, and Cheyne Rossbach of the Spokane District Office participated in Adventures in Reading at Progress Elementary School in Spokane Valley. The school went all out decorating the gym like a forest with tents and camping props – even Smokey Bear made a special surprise appearance! Then BLM employees read to students and parents in small groups. The evening was a huge success as children of all ages got excited about reading!

[Photos of BLM Employee Debbie Plummer Standing Alongside Smokey Bear]

Vale, Oregon: blm.gov/or/districts/vale

- Andy Bumgarner, Rangeland Management Specialist in the Jordan Field Office, was recognized at the 62nd meeting of the Society of Rangeland Management in Albuquerque, New Mexico, as the Outstanding Rangeland Management Specialist for 2008. Congratulations, Andy! Additionally, District Ranger Lynn Miracle was recognized as 2008 Field Training Officer.

- A number of Vale District employees participated in the 2008 Human Resources Development Committee Photo Contest by submitting over 90 creative and artistic photos! So how'd they do? They took three first places across the seven categories, that's how! Diane Pritchard took first place in the Cultural category while Kathy Bertalotto received first place in Wildlife and Plants. And J.T. Sohr snagged first in Fire. Kathy also received third place in People and Recreation while Bob Williams grabbed a third place in Landscapes. Plus Dan Thomas achieved honorable mention in People and Recreation. Congratulations to all who submitted their fantastic photos!

- Finally it is with great sadness that we let everyone know Jim Johnson, Vale District Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, passed away February 27th from complications resulting from a brain aneurysm and stroke. Jim had been the District Wild Horse and Burro Specialist since 1999 and worked in Vale for over 17 years. Jim also served on several national teams to provide input on issues critical to the program.

Jim conducted several gathers and adoptions and was willing to share his knowledge and expertise with the public and employees. He is greatly missed.

[Photo of Jim Johnson]

[Illustrated Map of Oregon & Washington with all ten Districts Identified]

Your Oregon & Washington BLM Districts

Creatures of the Night: Tracking the BLM's Midnight Aviators After Twilight

Story & Photos by Scott Stoffel

[Photo of a Bat Perched on a Human Hand]

Even adorable bats are shy around the paparazzi.

Up Close and Personal with the BLM's Bats...What Music They Make.

[Photo of the Moon]

[Illustration of a Bat]

[Photos of a Bat Having its Teeth Measured]

And you thought you didn't like going to the dentist?

As the sun sinks into the horizon on a warm August afternoon, BLM Wildlife Biologist Glenn Lorton and his summer work crew depart the Lakeview District Office for the field. After a 45-minute drive through the high desert landscape, they arrive at an unassuming pond in a meadow surrounded by a ponderosa pine forest. At the scene, crew members emerge from their vehicle, inhale the sage-infused air, and initiate setup of their night operation. Three mist nets are stretched across the pool of water, a data collection table is assembled amongst the brush at the pond's edge, and instruments and equipment are prepped.

After setting the stage for the night's impending performance, the team members assume their positions in a makeshift observation post and direct their gaze towards the heavens. At twilight, the sky becomes alive with the subject of their investigation, multiple species of bats.

A big brown bat is among the group of acrobats playfully maneuvering through the air in pursuit of insects. After completing several minutes of gymnastic feats, it approaches the surface of the water in an attempt to quench its thirst. Within seconds of decreasing its elevation, the bat is captured in one of the mist nets set by the crew.

Lorton wastes no time responding to the entrapment. He wades knee-deep through mud, water, and aquatic plants to free the captive animal. Gripped gently in his hand, he carefully releases the big brown bat from the woven mesh and brings it to the data collection station. In accordance with strict protocols, the team records various measurements including the bat's weight, sex, and reproductive status. A light is held under the animal's wing to assess bone formation in order to determine the bat's age. A DNA sample is collected to genetically differentiate species and provide a reference sample of the bats inhabiting the region. This process is repeated throughout the night for multiple bats captured.

Around midnight, the operation's activities come to an end. The temperature has now dropped significantly, crew member fatigue is beginning to set in, and the bats have completed their closing act. Final entries are entered into the data log, the field laboratory dismantled and packed into the vehicle, and the trip home commences. It has been a successful night. Significant information has been gathered that will increase human knowledge of the habits and characteristics of local bat colonies.

The crew's monitoring and inventorying efforts will continue to be conducted as long as program funding is available. Their efforts are part of a collaborative BLM, U.S. Forest Service and Humboldt University project. They are one of several teams located throughout Oregon and Washington tasked with collecting and entering bat measurements into a database for scientific analysis. The final outcome of this regional effort will be threefold: (1) data will be utilized to develop a bat species identification software program, (2) study records will be entered into a database for the purpose of tracking bat species distribution and relative abundance throughout the area, and (3) research findings will be used to assess the impacts of resource management practices upon bat species.

This study promises to enlighten us with regard to the full impact our actions have upon the natural world. It will bring a deeper level of awareness to our decision making and the long-term consequences of our choices. It will help us prepare balanced resource management strategies that consider all plant and animal needs, including those whose existence is enshrouded in darkness.

For more on the BLM's bats, please visit us at blm.gov/or and do a search for "bats!"

[Photo of a Bat]

[Photos of a Bat Perched on a Human Hand]

Hey, can you hold this for a second?

Looking to the Future: The Bureau of Land Management Huckleberry Stewardship Project

Story by Cheyne Rossbach

[Photo of Tree-Covered Mountains and Valleys]

[Photo of Lumber Being Sorted to go to a Mill]

Logs are sorted at the landing by species and size for different mills on the Huckleberry Stewardship

I'm standing with Al Gardner, forester for the Spokane District BLM, on a dirt road within the Huckleberry Stewardship Project area in northeastern Washington.

Gardner points out stands of treated timber and masticated brush. Trees on the north side of the road are thinned and have about 10 feet of crown spacing. Brush growing under the canopy is sparse, and ladder fuels are minimal. Scattered throughout the treated areas are small spots of brush left for wildlife habitat and cover.

In contrast, Gardner points out a stand of trees to the south side of the road that have not received fuels treatment. A wall of vegetation is all that can be seen. At closer inspection the south-facing slope has ninebark, oceanspray, vine maple and alder. The brush and trees are in heavy competition, and trying to make your way through the wall of vegetation would be a daunting task. With such high vegetative competition, trees are stressed and many are susceptible to disease and insect attack.

To a forester like Al Gardner, this situation shows the stark contrast of how comprehensive stewardship management is improving forest health in areas that have suffered from the absence of fire. It is also the dividing line between a forest capable of surviving fire and one that would leave little more than matchsticks in the wake of flames.

The BLM, like many forest landowners and land management agencies in the Pacific Northwest, is dealing with a legacy of 100 years of fire suppression. Heavy fuel loads and dense understory of vegetation have primed conditions in the Huckleberry Mountains that could lead to a catastrophic stand-replacing wildfire.

The Goal for the Long Term is to Eventually Have an Old-Growth Forest

The Huckleberry Stewardship Project was developed to restore tree stands to a condition that could withstand wildland fire. According to Gardner, the goal for the long term is to eventually have an old-growth forest reminiscent of what existed prior to European intervention in the fire cycle. In the short term, an intense regime of stand thinning and biomass removal is giving the forest a second chance.

The Spokane BLM District manages about 4,800 acres within the project area north of Fort Spokane, Washington. Forest stands consist mainly of south-facing slopes with ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir

with a Douglas-fir/ninebark association. Stands on north-facing slopes consist of Douglas-fir, western redcedar, and grand fir.

The Spokane Tribe Has Been Working Closely with the BLM

The BLM project area is bordered by Spokane Tribal lands and private homes. For years these neighboring forest landowners have recognized the need for fuels management, and they, according to Gardner, “have been very cooperative. They want this done; they wanted it done yesterday.”

The Spokane Tribe, whose lands border four miles of the southern project boundary, has been working closely with the BLM to manage hazardous fuels. During our tour through the project, the Spokane Tribe was busy performing controlled burns on their forestlands a few miles to the south of the project area. This burning is occurring in concert with the Huckleberry Stewardship Project to increase the total area treated for fuels reduction and to create buffers for residential housing areas on reservation lands.

Another advantage of this comprehensive approach to forest management is that the project is creating a great deal of biomass, and the BLM is finding ways to use this renewable energy source. In the 2007 to 2008 operating season, 5,900 tons of biomass was removed in the form of clean chips that were marketed to the paper making industry. Over the length of the project, hog fuel – bark, tops and branches – will be ground and hauled to a cogeneration facility in Kettle Falls, Washington. Cogeneration is the use of a heat engine or a power station to simultaneously generate both electricity and useful heat.

[Photo of a Crane Carrying Lumber]

Stewardships benefit greatly from the use of technology to prepare and sort lumber

Stewardship contracting was first authorized for federal land management agencies back in 2003 by Congress as part of President Bush’s Healthy Forests Initiative. This initiative allows the BLM to use revenues from forest products to offset the cost for treatments, like hazardous fuel reduction and restoration of wildlife or fish habitat. It also authorized the formation of contracts and agreements with public or private entities to further management goals.

For the BLM, the Huckleberry Stewardship Project is an example of how timber can be a by-product of forest restoration and hazardous fuel reduction treatments. Combining timber harvest and service work into one stewardship contract is improving the health and vitality of forestlands in a more efficient and collaborative manner.

Stewardship Goals Revolve Around Land Health and Community Needs Rather Than Commercial Products

[Photo of a Healthy Forest]

The forest stand received thinning but no brush mastication. Having the flexibility to adjust treatments based on ground conditions is a benefit of stewardships.

As a rule, stewardship goals revolve around land health and meeting community needs rather than focusing on the removal of commercial wood products. In the Huckleberry Stewardship Project area, surrounding landowners and the BLM were highly concerned about the risks of fire so a focus on fuels reduction has been the primary interest with restoration and wildlife habitat improvement being secondary but fully integrated management objectives.

The Huckleberry Stewardship operates on a performance-based contract. According to Gardner, "Our role is to describe what we want, and it is up to the contractor to tell us how they are going to do it. We tell them what we want it to look like and they prepare a prescription for BLM approval."

This is a large departure from the traditional process of timber sales where contractors were given specific direction with pre-marked trees and the primary concern was extracting the timber. Any restoration work was accomplished through separate projects. With the focus on fuels reduction and forest health, the contractors have more responsibility and ownership of the end result.

Most BLM and U.S. Forest Service stewardship projects require appropriated funds to complete service work. They are focused on restoration, and many are too small to be economically viable when timber sales are balanced against the cost of restoration. The Huckleberry Stewardship Project is one of the few that is self-sustaining; the money that comes in through timber harvest removal exceeds the cost for restoration.

The BLM is working closely with forest contractors, private landowners, and local communities to manage forestlands in a comprehensive manner through the use of stewardship projects. The partners are already seeing progress in restoring forestlands to a sustainable condition.

The BLM Manages for Multiple Use

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for some of the most beautiful landscapes in the West, including forests and rangelands, beaches and mountains across more than 16.1 million acres in Oregon and over 400,000 acres in Washington. These public lands contain more than 800 miles of wild and scenic rivers, hundreds of opportunities for camping, hiking, fishing, and hunting, and a landscape full of diverse plants and ecosystems.

The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

In western Oregon, the BLM manages two million acres of forest in a checkerboard ownership pattern. These forests provide important habitat for many threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species and are considered some of the most productive forests in the world.

The public land found in eastern Oregon is characterized by large swaths of basin and range topography. These dramatic, semi-arid landscapes provide a wide variety of recreation and commercial opportunities while also proving habitat for a diverse array of fish and wildlife species.

In Washington, the BLM lands are found predominantly east of the Cascade Mountain Range, but can be visited as far west as the San Juan Islands. Habitats include the maritime Puget Sound lowlands, the central Columbia Basin sagebrush regime, many riparian zones, and the coniferous forest and sub-alpine areas of northeast Washington.

The BLM's roots go back to the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. These laws provided for the survey and settlement of the lands that the original 13 colonies ceded to the federal government after the War of Independence. As additional lands were acquired by the United States from Spain, France, and other countries, Congress directed that they be explored, surveyed, and made available for settlement.

In 1812, Congress established the General Land Office in the Department of the Treasury to oversee the disposition of these federal lands. As the 19th century progressed and the nation's land base expanded further west, Congress encouraged the settlement of the land by enacting a wide variety of laws to include the Homesteading Laws and the Mining Law of 1872.

These statutes served one of the major policy goals of the young country – settlement of the Western territories. With the exception of the Mining Law of 1872 and the Desert Land Act of 1877 (which was amended), all have since been repealed or superseded by other statutes.

The late 19th century marked a shift in federal land management priorities with the creation of the first national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges. By withdrawing these lands from settlement, Congress signaled a shift in the policy goals served by the public lands. Instead of using them to promote settlement, Congress recognized that they should be held in public ownership because of their other resource values.

In the early 20th century, Congress took additional steps toward recognizing the value of the assets on public lands and directed the Executive Branch to manage activities on the remaining public lands. The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 allowed leasing, exploration, and production of selected commodities such as coal, oil, gas, and sodium to take place on public lands. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 established the U.S. Grazing Service to manage the public rangelands. And the Oregon and California (O&C) Act of August 28, 1937, required sustained yield management of the timberlands in western Oregon.

In 1946, the Grazing Service was merged with the General Land Office to form the Bureau of Land Management within the Department of the Interior. When the BLM was initially created, there were over 2,000 unrelated and often conflicting laws for managing the public lands. The BLM had no unified legislative mandate until Congress enacted the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

In FLPMA, Congress recognized the value of the remaining public lands by declaring that these lands would remain in public ownership. Congress also gave the BLM the term "multiple use" management, defined as "management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people."

The BLM Today

Increasingly, the BLM has had to address the needs of a growing and changing west. Ten of the 12 western states with significant proportions of BLM-managed lands have among the fastest rates of population growth in the United States.

The American public values balanced use, conservation, environmental management, recreation and tourism. Public lands are increasingly viewed from the perspective of the recreational opportunities they offer, their cultural resources, and—in an increasingly urban world—their vast open spaces. However, against this backdrop, the more traditional land uses of grazing, timber production and mining are still in high demand.

The BLM's task is to recognize the increasing new demands of public land users while addressing the ongoing needs of traditional user groups. Perhaps one of the Bureau's greatest challenges today is to develop more effective land management practices, while becoming more efficient at the same time.

BLM Facts

The BLM is responsible for carrying out a variety of programs for the management and conservation, of resources on 258 million surface acres, as well as 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate. These public lands make up about 13 percent of the total land surface of the United States and more than 40 percent of all land managed by the federal government.

Most of the lands the BLM manages are located in the western United States, including Alaska.

The BLM administers public lands within a framework of numerous laws. The most comprehensive of these is the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). All bureau policies, procedures and management actions must be consistent with FLPMA and the other laws that govern use of the public lands.

Under its multiple-use management mandate, the BLM administers more than 18,000 grazing permits and leases and nearly 13 million authorized livestock animal unit months on 160 million acres of public rangeland. BLM manages rangelands and facilities for 57,000 wild horses and burros.

BLMeetup

Howdy Neighbor! Building Communities Where Everybody Knows Your Name

By Pam Robbins

[Photo of Two People Standing Together Looking Out Over a Forest]

[Illustration of a Loud Speaker]

The BLM is reaching out to our fellow champions of public lands to join us on Resource Advisory Councils

Who Is My Neighbor?

There are neighborhoods where the only thing shared is their street name. In other places, everybody knows everybody. Your neighbors keep an eye on your house when you're away, visit with you as you shovel snow or pull weeds, and generally treat you like a, well...like a neighbor. In the Western United States, the BLM administers lands that belong to everybody, and our neighbors can be found across all ranges and townships.

With about 16 million acres of public lands mingled across most of Oregon and parts of Washington, there's plenty to take care of. What the BLM does can affect our neighbors. And activities on their land can impact public lands. That's why it's so important for us to include our fellow stewards and neighbors in the decision-making process of our collective backyard.

Resource Advisory Councils (generally known as RACs) have been a great avenue for sharing the viewpoints and experience between the BLM and our neighbors as we start new projects or change the way we administer the public land.

In order to reach out to the widest neighborhood as possible, one third of the volunteer positions on each RAC expire every year. Thus the BLM is constantly recruiting new residents to share their knowledge and opinions about the management of our shared legacy of land.

So, who are these people weighing in on your behalf?

Well, they're people just like you. They might be you! They care about what happens to their favorite fishing hole or want to make sure they can still take their off-road vehicle to a place away from highway traffic to have fun. They're the rancher who donates beef to the school district to help extend their budget. They're the go-getter searching for a new way to use the old mill to bring gainful employment to his or her hometown.

You may not know it, but you've probably seen your hometown RAC members coaching youth soccer or bumped into them at the town store. You've rooted with them or against their team at football games

or worked alongside them at your annual festivals. Just like you, they know a little something about a great many things – and a whole lot about what they do for a living or really care about.

And most importantly, they know the territory. Whether it's the Christmas Valley Sand Dunes, the ruts of the Oregon Trail, Washington's Inland Empire, or any of the places in between, RAC members know this country and its role in the lives of their neighbors and visitors.

If you'd like to help Federal managers shape resource policy and you can invest a small amount of time for the greater good, NOW is the time to take action.

Terms will expire in all three of the RAC category areas: commercial, conservation, and community interests. The BLM will appoint 17 members to these councils in the fall of 2009, but the process to solicit new members starts now. The BLM will take nominations until May. To find out more, visit blm.gov/or/rac/index

or call Pam Robbins, the RAC Liaison, at (503) 808-6306. Or send an e-mail to pam_robbsins@blm.gov. This could be your big chance to help shape your community's "public backyard!"

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Pioneers

Gunner, January 2003 – December 2008, Police K9, Badge #909

A K9 Ranger Says Farewell

Beloved BLM K9, Gunner, Answered the Call of Duty

“Gunner evened up the numbers for us,” says his partner, Salem BLM Ranger Mike Roop.

By Trish Hogervorst

[Photo of Mike Roop & Gunner]

Salem BLM Rangers Mike Roop & Gunner

[Photo of Mike Roop & Gunner]

[Illustration of a U.S. Department of the Interior Law Enforcement Badge]

Last spring, Salem BLM Rangers Mike Roop, Phil Rheiner, and Adam Sulley approached a group of 120 people in the Molalla River Corridor. “As we approached this large group, people were very aware of Gunner and much more willing to comply. If you have a barking dog in your truck, people tend to do what you ask” said Roop.

In addition to patrolling the Salem District’s public forests looking for marijuana gardens and special forest products theft, Roop, who was recently promoted to State Staff Ranger, and Gunner lent their expertise to a number of out-of-state events such as off-road vehicles at Dumont Dunes, California and the Glamis Sand Dunes east of San Diego, Burning Man in Nevada, and the annual Sturgis motorcycle rally in South Dakota.

“At these large events, Gunner and I focused on narcotics detection, crowd control, and officer safety,” said Roop. “We also went on search warrants. At a site in Tacoma, Washington, Gunner kept high scenting (pointing his nose at the ceiling). When we climbed into the attic, we found 68 pounds of processed marijuana.

Gunner lived in his kennel at the Roop family home when he was not in the BLM ranger truck. Every Wednesday was training day – Roop and Gunner reviewed all they had learned in training and while working. Training was a fun-filled day where Gunner and Roop worked with eleven other K-9 Teams.

On December 27, 2008, Roop and Gunner drove to the Glamis Sand Dunes. Gunner became sick, and Roop took Gunner to a veterinarian in El Centro. The vet thought Gunner might be dehydrated and

asked to keep him overnight. That evening when the vet checked on Gunner to change the IV, Gunner had died. An autopsy showed a cancerous tumor in his lower intestine.

Gunner was cremated in Palm Desert, and his ashes were sent home with Roop. Salem BLM employees plan to plant a tree and post a plaque in honor of their K9 Ranger. Gunner is greatly missed by Salem's Law Enforcement Program and all who knew him.

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BackCountry

Every Picture Tells a Story

[Photo of a Cougar]

2008 BLM Photo Contest Winner: Wildlife/Plants

Photo by Clifford R. Johnson

[Painting of the Cougar Photo]

Oil Painting of Photo by David Garcia

This photo of a cougar was taken in May of 1971 by my brother, Clifford R. Johnson, a smokejumper out of Missoula, Montana. He was on a raft trip down the Owyhee River enjoying a break from jumping out of airplanes to fight fires.

Cliff, an avid photographer, happened to spot this cougar lying on a ledge. So while the cougar was watching him with great interest, Cliff moored his raft in a quiet eddy on the opposite side of the river. Then, before the cougar could leap up to the top of the rimrocks, Cliff snapped this photo.

On this trip Cliff also got some excellent shots of Big Horn Sheep. But we never got to see all the photos. You see, Cliff took two cameras on this trip, but only one survived – the other one is lying somewhere at the bottom of the river.

After a fire in Alaska during August of 1971, Cliff returned to Missoula where he gathered at the Bitterroot River with some friends. Sadly, Cliff drowned on August 4th, 1971.

It's a great honor for my family that Clifford can live on through his photographs. Thank you to the BLM for helping keep his memory alive!

And now I'm taking photos, too! But I'm not too sure about jumping out of airplanes.

Kathy Bertalotto, Vale BLM