



THE PUBLIC LANDS Monitor

P.O. Box 7226, Arlington, VA 22207
703-935-0916

www.publicland.org
info@publicland.org

VOLUME XXXVI No. 4

WINTER QUARTER 2023/2024

MATURE AND OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

BY ED SHEPARD, PLF OREGON

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On Earth Day 2022, President Biden issued Executive Order 14072, Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities and Local Economies. The purpose of the EO is to conserve and restore old-growth and mature forests on Federal forests managed by the Forest Service and the BLM. It directed the agencies to develop a national definition of Mature and Old-Growth forests (MOG), conduct and inventory these forests, analyze risks to MOG, and develop guidelines for their management. The effort was led by the Forest Service with cooperation and input from BLM.

This effort was no small task and consumed considerable resources from both agencies since 2022. Forest practitioners and scientists worked diligently over many months to meet the tight deadlines of the EO. Their work was informed by input by the public, tribes, and stakeholders.

The first step of the effort was to develop a definition of old-growth and mature forests at a nationwide scale. Previous efforts to come up with one definition



Old-growth ponderosa pine forest, Oregon
US Forest Service photo

of old-growth across the diverse geographical areas and forest types has proven to be nearly impossible and of little use. Regional definitions were developed for planning and management purposes in the 1980s and 1990s and have been incorporated into forest plans for the Forest Service and BLM Resource Management Plans for the past 30 years. The team decided to use these regional definitions as a starting point for the inventory. Although there are many differences in the definitions across the forest types, there is enough overlap in the structural attributes of old-growth definitions to allow for some consistency across the BLM and National Forest System lands, such as age classes, tree size, species composition, canopy layers, accumulation of large dead and down wood, and others. Mature forests are even harder to define at a national scale. For this exercise *(continued on page 4)*

The Public Lands Foundation advocates and works for the retention of America's Public Lands in public hands professionally and sustainably managed for responsible common use and enjoyment.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Mary Jo Rugwell

As my second year serving as your President ends and the third year begins, I want to wish you all a safe, healthy, and happy 2024. I fear the credo that time passes more quickly as we age is true.

With the departure of two of our long-standing Director-at-Large Board members (George Stone

and Van Manning), we have successfully recruited and elected / approved three new Directors-at-Large; John Ruhs, Paul Summers, and Johanna Munson. We also had several vacant State Representative Board positions. Nancy Haug has joined the Board as the new Idaho State Representative to replace Jenna Whitlock. In addition, current Board members did some excellent outreach after our December Board meeting to fill other vacancies. I am pleased to announce that Mike Haske has agreed to be the Oregon/Washington State Representative and Meg Jensen has agreed to serve as the Alaska State Representative. We are still looking for State Representatives for New Mexico and Nevada. Please join me in thanking and welcoming John, Paul, Johanna, Nancy, Mike, and Meg for agreeing to serve as PLF Board members.

With George Stone's departure, we have enlisted the help of Bill Disbrow on an as-needed paid basis to handle website administration, Google workspace management, and Mail Chimp administration. We appreciate Bill reaching out to PLF to offer his services as we work on this transition. We are still in need of help to administer Survey Monkey (the platform we use for elections), Little Green Light/Stripe (handles membership and payments), Archives/DropBox, and Social Media platforms. Unless we can find PLF members with the skills and desire to assist with these platforms, we will need to pay to perform these functions as well or discontinue their use.

In 2023, the PLF was successful in working with David Pitcher, BLM Communication Lead for the National Training Center, on a series of three articles about the PLF. These articles were published on the BLM Daily platform which comes up on BLM employees' computers when they log in each day. The first article was an introduction to PLF, the second article discussed the George Lea Founder's Scholarships which are awarded to deserving students each year, and the third article was about the Student Congress which the PLF co-sponsors with the Andrus Center for Public Policy and the National Association of Forest Service Retirees. I am hoping to work with David on a fourth article to discuss PLF's desire to assist BLM with mentoring career employees. If any members are interested in getting a copy of these articles, please let me know.

The PLF is awaiting information regarding future dates for Board calls with the BLM Director. We try to get on her calendar at least a couple of times each calendar year for these conversations.

I recently had a productive introductory call with I Ling Thompson, the new Chief Executive Officer for the Foundation for America's Public Lands. I Ling's resume includes experience working for the Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Lands. Per a great suggestion from Ray Brady, I shared PLF's 2022 Annual Report and the Fall edition of the Monitor with I Ling in advance of our conversation so that she could familiarize herself with the workings of the Public Lands Foundation. She expressed interest in collaborating with us to take advantage of the hundreds of years of experience that our members possess. I also mentioned that we are eager to work with the newly formed BLM Foundation and that we would be willing to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to identify ways that we can work together for the benefit of BLM and the public lands. I will update you as we progress in our efforts.

The PLF's next Annual Meeting is set, so please mark your calendars, and make every effort to join us. The meeting will be held at The Orleans Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, October 8-9, 2024. We are meeting a bit later in the fall so that our

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN *(continued)*

gathering coincides with the 2024 Student Congress which will also be held in Las Vegas that week. Preliminary information on the Annual Meeting is included in this edition of the Monitor, but more details will be forthcoming in future editions and registration will be made available online as we get closer to the meeting date.

Since we are embarking on a new year, I wanted to mention that I would love to hear from our members. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for improving the PLF, please feel free to e-mail me at mrugwell@publicland.org.

Take care and talk to you again soon!

PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION GOALS

- Keep lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in public ownership and open to use by the public.
- Support the long-term protection, conservation, and restoration of units of the National Landscape Conservation System, as distinctly unique among the public lands managed by BLM.
- Support multiple use management under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.
- Encourage professionalism by BLM employees.
- Increase the public's understanding of and support for the proper management of the public lands.

MATURE AND OLD-GROWTH FORESTS *(continued)*

they are defined as the entire stage of forest stand development from the re-initiation of understory vegetation to the onset of old-growth characteristics. These definitions allowed the team to use existing data from forest inventories.

The project team used the Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis data to inventory the acres of mature and old-growth forests on BLM and Forest Service lands. Across the Federal forests managed by the two agencies there are 112 million acres of MOG, 32 million acres in old-growth and 80 million acres in mature. This represents 63 percent of the forested land base with 18 percent in old-growth and 45 percent in mature. BLM-managed lands include nearly 12.7 million acres of old-growth and nearly 8.3 million acres of mature, the majority being pinyon-juniper woodlands, out of a total of approximately 58 million acres of forest and woodlands. It is noted that not all the BLM forestland in Alaska is included in the inventory as the FIA data base does not include that land currently.

The initial analysis of threats to MOG were determined by reviewing the changes in forest area between 2000 and 2020. Wildland fire is the greatest threat causing a change of -3.2 percent in mature and -2.2 percent in old-growth acreage in that two-decade time frame. Insect and disease are the second greatest threat with a change of -2.3 percent of mature and -0.4 percent of old-growth acreage. Harvesting accounts for nearly insignificant changes, -0.3 percent mature and nearly no change in old-growth acreage as nearly all the land use plans for both agencies restrict harvest in the older forests. There is a net increase of 1.9 percent in mature and 6.2 percent in old-growth acreage over the 20 years from ingrowth.

The next step is to develop guidance on how these forests will be managed into the future to conserve and manage MOG considering warming climate,

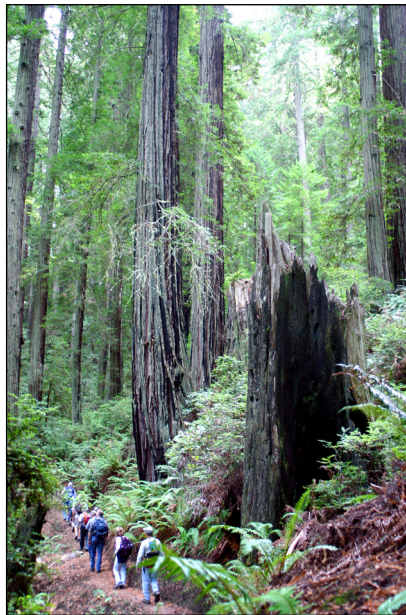
the role these forests play in sequestering and storing carbon, the value these forests have for ecological, economic, and cultural values, and the need to restore resiliency in the forests to adapt to changes in wildfire behavior, drought, and insects and disease. Management strategies will be developed and analyzed through the agencies' planning processes with collaboration with the public, stakeholders, and tribes.

The BLM will be using the Landscape Health and Conservation Rule when it is finalized to set their strategy. In December 2023, the Forest Service announced a proposal to amend all 128 of its forest land management plans with one decision to set a consistent management direction while place-based strategies are developed at appropriate regional levels.

Controversy over old-growth forests is not new. Executive Order 14072 for the first time has led to an attempt to classify mature and old-growth forests nationwide and develop strategies to manage and conserve these forests so that they continue to provide the many benefits derived from them. As the agencies go through the process of amending their land

use plans the controversy over their management will continue, but with more current data and science.

The BLM and Forest Service scientists and resource professionals are to be commended for getting the discussion to this point. They were given a tough assignment to complete on a tight deadline. The people that spent the past two years working on this project have done some impressive work, and it is not yet completed. They will be the first to say that this is a first iteration, it is not perfect, and their result will be critiqued and adapted through the public involvement process and the evolution of science. Stay tuned for the next stage as this work is incorporated into forest and land use plan amendments. The controversy is not over.



Headwaters Forest Reserve, CA
BLM photo

OUTSTANDING PUBLIC LANDS PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEE AWARD

MANAGERIAL/ADMINISTRATIVE CATEGORY LANCE PORTER

The Public Lands Foundation is proud to present the 2023 Outstanding Public Lands Professional Employee Award in the Managerial/Operational Category to Lance Porter, Green River District Manager, Utah.

Mr. Porter has been an exceptional leader for more than thirty years, championing the BLM mission of sustainable multiple use throughout the Canyon Country and the Green River District as District Manager of the all-inclusive 10.2 million acres.

'Leading together' since 2013, planning and design have been achieved with no one left behind, no voice dismissed, no idea insignificant. Employees found encouragement, assessment and gentle direction under Lance's guiding hand. His employees are high on his list of favorite people and he has witnessed their growth, development, and dedication to the goals of BLM. Working together with other leaders, they designed the first BLM Line Officer training, which seeks to help aspiring leaders be more prepared to take on new and challenging positions.

The Bear Ears National Monument Management Plan, the Moab Master Leasing Plan and the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and

Recreation Act – Public Law 116-9 were all successfully implemented under Lance's watchful eye – guiding employees, stakeholders, partners, and the public through fruitful discussion and decision-making to achieve outstanding results.

Always a collaborator, Mr. Porter has fostered healthy working relationships with all stakeholders and partner agencies. He has recognized the impacts of changing use, visitation, and policy changes and has had the foresight to address these challenges proactively to protect and conserve public lands for future generations and enhance visitor experiences.

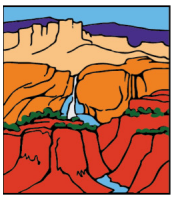
As Associate State Director for BLM in New Mexico and Utah his vision and work for the public lands were to protect while at the same time use and enjoy!

The Public Land is well protected under Lance Porter's leadership. His love for the mission to preserve the land, enjoy the land, and support respectful changes in minerals, recreation and use has left its mark and it is truly remarkable to witness the energy of one person – Lance Porter, and what an impact one person – Lance Porter can make.... and has made!

Because of his commitment to public land management, the Public Lands Foundation recognizes Lance Porter with its Outstanding Public Lands Professional Award in the Managerial/Administrative category for 2023.



Presentation of Outstanding Public Lands Professional Award to Lance Porter – l to r: Bill Lamb (PLF Utah), Greg Sheehan (BLM Utah State Director), Lance Porter (BLM Utah), Mary Jo Rugwell (PLF President)



GRAND STAIRCASE ESCALANTE PARTNERS

FRIENDS GROUP CELEBRATES 20 YEARS BY CAROLYN Z. SHELTON, PLF UTAH

In 2024, Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners (GSEP), a BLM “Friends” organization, celebrates its official 20 years as the 501(c)3 non-profit for BLM’s Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM). The GSENM was designated as BLM’s first National Monument in 1996. The GSEP began as a group of local citizens in Kanab, Utah in 2002, who were trying to figure out how to support BLM and the public lands they loved in the midst of great controversy over designation of the Monument. The nonprofit has evolved into a successful, locally-based citizens organization, with offices in Kanab and Escalante. In fact, a generous board member contributed funds to buy a permanent “headquarters building” for GSEP in 2018.

The GSEP was one of the first six “Friends” groups focused on community-led organizations supporting BLM National Monuments and National Conservation Areas. The GSEP website can be accessed at gsenm.org. Today, there are over 80 such local place-based “Friends” organizations. This concept, like the National Landscape Conservation System was part of Bruce Babbitt’s vision in 1996 for a successful system of protected BLM lands for the next century.

A BRIEF HISTORY

In the first couple years, Dave Hunsaker, then GSENM Monument Manager, and I met with Kanab’s concerned citizens to lay out the difference between them forming officially as a “Friends” group or an “advocacy” group. After much discussion, they chose “Friends,” formed a 501(c)3 nonprofit in 2004, and over the following years helped GSENM staff increase their capacity to protect, conserve, and restore the Monument in many ways. The primary sources of funding for GSEP included BLM funding through a Cooperative Agreement, grant funding, and individual donors.

Some of GSEP’s most successful programs over the years include:

- GSEP co-sponsored a highly successful “Walks & Talks” educational series, offering as many as 100 programs per year conducted at Monument visitor centers and in the field, mostly led by scientists doing research at the GSENM and BLM science staff.
- GSEP collaborated with Monument staff to conduct an intensive citizen volunteer program; cosponsoring and organizing the Archaeology/Paleontology Site Steward Program. The Site Steward Program continues to this day. Additionally, GSEP trains volunteers to serve as “Trail Ambassadors.” These ambassadors speak to visitors in the field about the magnificence of the GSENM and how to recreate responsibly. They also do mitigation work like graffiti removal on cultural sites.



Trail Ambassador volunteers doing graffiti removal on Slot Canyon walls in GSENM.
GSEP photo

- Every ten years, the GSENM holds an intensive Science Symposium; with presentations by researchers and staff in the disciplines for which the GSENM was established. The GSEP played a critical role as a co-sponsoring organizer.
- In a collaborative effort, GSEP, GSENM, and Southern Utah University worked together to create a digital library, free to everyone, of published papers, theses, dissertations, over 350 oral histories, Science Symposia proceedings, and more. It is still functioning, and hopefully films will be added soon.
- Through a Cooperative Agreement, BLM transferred funds to the GSEP to increase capacity in many programs and projects, including outdoor education.



GSEP Education Director Neak Loucks teaching outdoor education on GSENM with local youth.
GSEP photo

Thousands of students in communities surrounding the GSENM learned about paleontology, ecology, archaeology, history, biological soil crusts, geology, and more – all focusing on objects and values for which the GSENM was designated a National Monument.

- In a collaborative effort, GSEP, GSENM, and Southern Utah University worked together to create a digital library, free to everyone, of published papers, theses, dissertations, over 350 oral histories, Science Symposia proceedings, and more. It is still functioning, and hopefully films will be added soon.
- Beginning in 2009 a group of over 30 “partners” (government, non-government, and private individual stakeholders) came together to form the Escalante River Watershed Partnership (ERWP), facilitated by The Nature Conservancy. The goal was to restore this watershed primarily through Russian olive removal along 90 river miles of the Escalante River Watershed (mostly public lands – BLM, Forest Service, and National Park Service, with a small number of private lands in the headwaters). During an intensive ten years, this group met and successfully accomplished their task under a near-constant shadow of climate crisis and controversy. They restored and/or treated over 1.3 million acres within the watershed, created over 400 jobs for youth and locals, and raised over \$10 million for removal, monitoring, and restoration efforts. The ERWP website can be accessed at escalanteriverwatershedpartnership.org.

In 2012 the group was awarded President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Keystone

Conservation Project, celebrating “partnerships and collaboration that resulted in significant habitat protection and restoration throughout the Escalante River Watershed.” The Russian olive removal program is still functioning today and continues to evolve its approach towards the management of healthy river ecosystems. The GSEP was instrumental in managing funds used in this project, including obtaining a Walton Family Foundation grant that provided the bulk of funds for the work. The GSEP also hired numerous staff to supervise the Youth Conservation Corps that did the hard work in the canyons along the Escalante River.



Conservation Corps members preparing to hike into the Escalante Canyons to remove invasive Russian olive.
ERWP photo

In 2017, after the reduction of the GSENM boundaries, the GSEP shifted its focus to advocacy and tried to target the National Landscape Conservation System mission of protection, conservation, and restoration of the GSENM, continuing education and volunteer programs, support of the digital library, and continued work on ERWP. Following restoration of the Monument boundaries in 2021, GSEP has worked hard to re-establish a strong relationship with BLM staff and move forward as a more traditional Friends group once again.

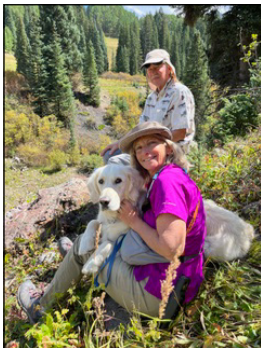
The GSEP also plays a key supporting role to the many Tribes who call this region their ancestral homelands, and as such, wish to be further involved with land management in a significant way. The GSEP has organized calls and meetings between Tribal representatives and collaboratively with BLM

at all levels. They hired Tribal liaisons to coordinate this work between the Tribes and BLM. The GSEP supports the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge alongside Western scientific knowledge, and a form of co-management or co-stewardship that will benefit the Tribes and improve how BLM manages our public lands.

Perhaps the most important lesson to take away from this effort, is that place-based “Friends” groups are local citizens who care deeply about their public lands, and want to see these national treasures protected, conserved, and restored now and for future generations. It is important for BLM staff to understand that this is in concert with BLM’s role, as directed by the Omnibus Bill of 2009 that established into law the National Landscape Conservation System. In some cases, there is actually more continuity in the mission of a Friends group, than in the actual managing Federal agency. For example, political upheaval led to high BLM staff turnover and a wide variety of management approaches, indifference, and sometimes neglect at the GSENM.

It is important to support the work of “Friends” organizations and advocacy work of the Public Lands Foundation, the Conservation Lands Foundation, and the new BLM Foundation for America’s Public Lands in the future management of National Landscape Conservation System public lands.

Carolyn Z. Shelton worked for BLM for 30-years in California, Oregon/Washington, Alaska, Colorado, and Utah, and had a private consulting business mid-career for 10-years. Her last 15-years with BLM were at the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in southern Utah. She currently lives in Kanab, UT, and serves on the Board of Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners, but will be moving in mid-2024 to Paonia, CO.



SCHOLARSHIPS

The Public Lands Foundation will again be awarding two George Lea Founder’s Scholarships for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year. The two \$5,000 scholarships are provided annually to junior, senior, and masters-level students studying natural resources management or public land policy. Information about the scholarships and a link to the application form are on the PLF’s website under the “Programs” tab. Applications are due on or before March 31, 2024. For further information on the Scholarship program feel free to contact Dave Stout at dstout@publicland.org.

The scholarships assist awardees in successfully completing their studies and encourage them to seriously consider future employment with BLM or other Federal land management agencies. Scholarship funds will be applied to tuition and related expenses, beginning in the Fall of 2024. The scholarship awards also include paid attendance at the PLF’s 2024 Annual Meeting and a “shadow” opportunity with a BLM manager. PLF member support is critical to the Scholarship program! If you would like to support the Scholarship program you can donate on the PLF website.

2024 PLF ANNUAL MEETING LAS VEGAS, NEVADA OCTOBER 8 – 9, 2024

Mark your calendar and save the dates. The 2024 PLF Annual Meeting will be held at The Orleans Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada on October 8 and 9, 2024. To accommodate those who would like to also enjoy Las Vegas a little longer, we have reserved a few rooms from October 5 through October 12, 2024. This will also provide PLF members an opportunity to attend the last day of the 2024 John Freemuth Student Congress, on October 10, when the students participating in the Student Congress will be presenting their recommendations on “a climate change-driven transition to renewable energy.”

The Annual Meeting will include a Board of Directors meeting on Tuesday, October 8. On Wednesday morning, October 9, there will be a general meeting open to the public. The theme for this meeting is yet to be decided. A PLF Board and Member meeting will be held on Wednesday afternoon. It will be followed by a no host bar and a banquet in the evening. After dinner, we will have our annual

Remembering BLM speaker, awards presentations, and our silent auction and raffle.

If you plan on attending the Student Congress close-out on October 10, please let Beau McClure know so that arrangements can be made for your attendance.

You are encouraged to book your hotel reservations at The Orleans Hotel and Casino early through the PLF website or online using the following Passkey link: <https://book.passkey.com/e/50725137>

You may also call the hotel's Room Reservation Department direct at 1-800-675-3267, and identify yourself as a member of the Public Lands Foundation with Reservation ID: **PLFJ24C**. Without this reservation ID, you will not receive the PLF special rate and may be advised the hotel is sold out. The deadline for making room reservations is September 9, 2024.

Additional registration information for the PLF Annual Meeting will be provided in a subsequent edition of the *Monitor*. If you have any questions, please contact Beau McClure by e-mail at vpops@publicland.org, or by phone at (623)587-7883.

STUDENT CONGRESS – 2024 BY JENNA WHITLOCK, PLF IDAHO

The sixth biennial Student Congress will be held October 7 – 10, 2024 in Las Vegas, Nevada and will focus on the transition to renewable energy on public lands. Once again, the PLF is partnering with the Andrus Center for Public Policy at Boise State University and the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) to host the forum.

The Congress is an opportunity for college students who might not otherwise be exposed to public land management and provides the Federal agencies with a valuable youth perspective on public land issues.

The PLF is excited to have two outstanding keynote speakers, Dr. Steven Running and Dr. Grace Wu, participate in this session of the Student Congress. Dr. Running is Professor Emeritus of Ecosystem and Conservation Sciences at the University of Montana and shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 for his work on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Dr. Wu is an Assistant Professor in the Environmental Studies Program at U.C. Santa Barbara and the Smith Conservation Fellow at The Nature Conservancy (TNC). She and others authored TNC's Power of Place report. Students will tour the Nation's largest solar production and storage facility, Primergy's Gemini project which was commissioned in 2023 and is expected to produce 790 MW of power on 7,100 acres of public land. The Student Congress participants will also get tribal perspectives and see solar projects on the Moapa Band of Paiute Reservation. As with past Student Congresses, participants will develop recommendations to the land management agencies. Student recruitment will begin in January with participants selected by March.

The Student Congress is free for participants. PLF member support is critical to the Student Congress program! If you would like to support the 2024 Student Congress you can donate on the PLF website where you can also find more information on the event. For further information on the Student Congress feel free to contact Jenna Whitlock at jwhitlock@publicland.org or Mike Ferguson at mferguson@publicland.org.



Red Rock Canyon NCA, Las Vegas
BLM photo

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY UPDATE

The PLF continues to monitor Congressional legislation, rulemaking activities, and Executive Orders pertaining to the Department of the Interior, BLM, and public lands management. The PLF, as an advocacy organization for the public lands, is actively engaged in providing our perspectives on a wide range of issues including the annual BLM appropriations, any program oversight hearings, proposed amendments to FLPMA and other major statutes affecting public lands management, and proposed regulations regarding BLM resource programs. Reviewing legislation and proposed rules and preparing comments and testimony, when appropriate, is an important part of our advocacy work. We update our Position Statements and Letters & Testimony webpages on our website under the “Advocacy” link and provide legislative and regulatory updates in the *Monitor* on significant actions.



Photo by Ray Brady

MINING LAW REFORM – 1872 MINING LAW

STATUS: A Federal Register Notice announcing formation of a Mining Law Reform Interagency Working Group was published March 31, 2022. The Department on September 12, 2023 released the Final Report from the Interagency Working Group. *Senator Heinrich (NM) introduced S.1742 on May 18, 2023 and Senator Cortez Masto (NV) introduced S.1281 on April 25, 2023 to address mining law reforms. A Hearing before the Senate Public Lands, Forests, and Mining Subcommittee on both bills was held on December 12, 2023. Steve Feldgus, Interior’s Deputy Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management, provided testimony on behalf of the Interior Department, BLM, and the Interagency Working Group.*

SUMMARY: The Department released a Final Report from the Interagency Working Group on September 12, 2023 that included some 65 recommendations for improving the mining law program, although many of those recommendations would require Congressional action. *S.1742, the Clean Energy Minerals Reform Act, would establish a royalty of five percent to eight percent of gross income for hardrock minerals production from mining claims on Federal land, establish a new permitting process for exploration and mining, enact environmental and reclamation reforms to protect special areas from mining, and establish a funding source for remediation of legacy hardrock mining pollution. S.1281, the Mining Regulatory Clarity Act, would expand the rights of mining claimants to include various ancillary activities and facilities required to conduct operations related to mining operations, with or without the discovery of a valuable mineral deposit.*

This legislation is an attempt to address issues related to the recent Ninth Circuit Court “Rosemont” decision – a proposed Rosemont copper mine on Federal land in southern Arizona – that questions the authority to place mine waste rock and other related facilities on mining claims under the Mining Law.

PLF POSITION: The PLF on April 24, 2022 provided a copy of a Position Statement, in response to the Federal Register Notice, on recommendations for amendments to the 1872 Mining Law. The PLF and the National Association of Forest Service Retirees on August 29, 2022 provided joint supplemental comments on the hardrock abandoned mine lands program in response to a Departmental request for comments. The PLF on March 24, 2023 signed onto a joint letter, with several other organizations, to both Senate and House Appropriations Committees to provide funding of \$287 million as a budget line item in the FY 2024 appropriations bills for the Section 40704 abandoned hardrock mine reclamation program in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The PLF also on March 24, 2023, forwarded to the Interior Mining Law Reform Interagency Working Group a copy of comments prepared by Bob Anderson on the Small Miners mining claim assessment waiver program. *The PLF attended the Senate Hearing on mining law reform legislation on December 12, 2023. The PLF also provided a follow-up letter to Interior, BLM, and the Office of the Inspector General on December 15, 2023 requesting BLM proceed ahead with the promulgation of regulations to eliminate the discretionary Small Miners waiver program. The PLF will continue to track mining law reform initiatives and provide comments as appropriate.*

SOLAR AND WIND ENERGY REGULATIONS – 43 CFR 2800

STATUS: The BLM on June 16, 2023 published a Proposed Rule for solar and wind energy right-of-way authorizations on the public lands under the 43 CFR 2800 regulations. *The Final Rule is still pending.*

SUMMARY: The Proposed Rule would adjust rental fees for solar and wind energy authorizations, provide BLM with more flexibility in processing applications for solar and wind energy development in designated leasing areas, and update criteria on prioritizing solar and wind energy right-of-way applications.

PLF POSITION: The PLF in February 2022 provided comments to BLM on draft policy guidance to promote solar and wind energy development on the public lands. The PLF submitted comments on the Proposed Rule to BLM on August 9, 2023. Those comments are posted on the PLF website.

OIL AND GAS REGULATIONS – 43 CFR 3100

STATUS: The BLM on July 24, 2023 published a Proposed Rule to revise the oil and gas leasing regulations to reflect provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. *The Final Rule is still pending.*

SUMMARY: The Proposed Rule is the first comprehensive update of the BLM onshore oil and gas leasing regulations since 1988 and would modernize the program, ensure a balanced approach to public lands management, ensure a fair return to the public, codify new provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and implement reforms from the Interior Department Report on the Federal Oil and Gas Leasing Program (November 2021). The Proposed Rule would increase royalty rates to 16.67 percent, increase rental rates to \$15 per acre, increase minimum lease bids to \$10 per acre, eliminate non-competitive leasing, reduce the nonoperational period for idle wells to four years, increase minimum lease bonds to \$150,000, increase minimum statewide bonds to \$500,000, eliminate nationwide bonds, and include other provisions to ensure responsible oil and gas leasing and development on the public lands.

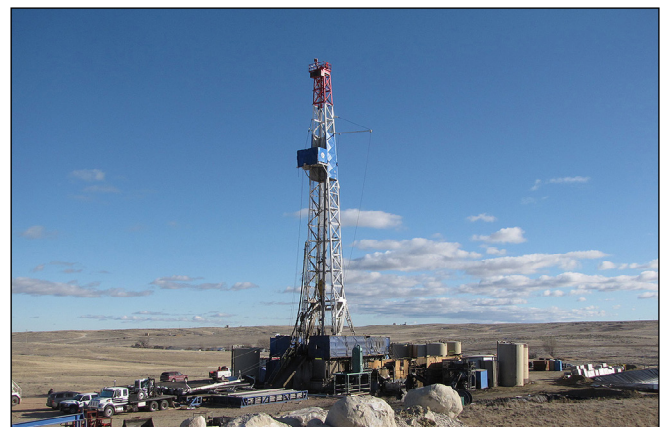
PLF POSITION: The PLF submitted comments on the Proposed Rule to BLM on September 8, 2023. Those comments are posted on the PLF website.

CONSERVATION REGULATIONS – 43 CFR 1600 AND 6100

STATUS: The BLM on March 30, 2023 announced the release and publication of a Proposed Rule on Conservation and Landscape Health under the 43 CFR 1600 and 6100 regulations. *The Final Rule is expected to be released in early 2024.*

SUMMARY: The Proposed Rule would clarify and support the principles of multiple use and sustained yield in the management of the public lands, restore degraded habitat, and apply land health standards to all BLM-managed public lands. This rule would incorporate climate resiliency and restoration through conservation and preservation in the management of the public lands pursuant to FLPMA and other relevant authorities. This rule within 43 CFR 6000, which includes Conservation and Preservation, would also revise existing regulations to prioritize designating and protecting Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and provide an overarching framework for multiple BLM programs to promote ecosystem resilience on the public lands. The Proposed Rule would also provide for the use of “conservation leases” to support mitigation efforts and promote the protection and restoration of public lands.

PLF POSITION: The PLF submitted comments on the Proposed Rule to BLM on June 15, 2023 and those comments are posted on the PLF website.



Oil and Gas Drill Rig – WY
BLM photo

GRAZING REGULATIONS
43 CFR PART 4100
Work Suspended

STATUS: On January 17, 2020 BLM announced the intent to prepare an EIS to consider proposed revisions to the grazing regulations to improve and streamline the grazing permit process, improve the administration of grazing permits, and also potentially consider the adoption of outcome-based grazing authorizations. However, in August 2023 BLM decided to abandon work on the update of the grazing regulations and instead focus efforts on implementing management changes to the grazing program through policy updates and internal guidance to BLM Field Offices. At the same time, a lawsuit has been filed by Western Watersheds Project and PEER that asserts BLM has failed to comply with NEPA in the renewal of grazing permits on the public lands. *The release of BLM policy updates and internal guidance is pending.*

SUMMARY: The proposed revisions are intended to update, modernize, and streamline the current grazing regulations and provide for greater

flexibility in land and resources management. The BLM seeks to improve land-use planning and grazing permitting procedures, strengthen controls to prevent unauthorized grazing, enhance environmental protections, and improve public input opportunities.

PLF POSITION: The PLF on February 24, 2020 provided comments to BLM in response to the



Grazing on the Public Lands – Oregon
BLM photo

Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS to support proposed revisions to the grazing regulations. The PLF on June 18, 2020 also co-signed a collaborative letter with other organizations to BLM providing comments on proposed revisions to the

grazing regulations. The PLF updated a Livestock Grazing Position Statement in May 2023 and posted the Position Statement on the PLF website. The PLF will continue to track the development of updated grazing program policies and guidance and provide comments as appropriate.

BLM LAW ENFORCEMENT REPORT

On October 27, 2023, BLM and the Department of the Interior released the “Law Enforcement Task Force Report” that identifies opportunities for improvements in the Interior law enforcement programs



BLM Ranger
BLM photo

of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, BLM, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service. The Law Enforcement Task Force was established by Secretary Haaland in July 2021 to strengthen trust in the Interior law enforcement programs, ensure appropriate policy and oversight is implemented, and ensure appropriate resources are available for officer mental health, wellness, and safety. The BLM in 2022 had 295 full-time law enforcement officers, which represented a 2.6 percent decline in positions from the 15-year high. This compares to 358 BIA positions, 413 positions in FWS and 1,854 positions in NPS. Across the Department there was a 14.7 percent decline in positions from the 15-year high.

**BLM PROGRAM EXECUTIVE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
JOHN GALE**

On October 23, 2023 BLM announced the selection of John Gale as the BLM Program Executive for Intergovernmental and External Affairs, as the senior executive for the BLM



**John Gale
BLM Program Executive**

Western Headquarters office located in Grand Junction, CO. Gale will serve as a liaison between BLM, other Federal agencies, and western state and local governments and report directly to the BLM Director. Gale will serve as the principal advisor to BLM senior leadership on intergovernmental and external affairs policies and issues, develop Bureau plans on highly visible intergovernmental programs, support-

ing partnerships between the BLM, the Department of the Interior, Congressional, State, local and Tribal officials, and stakeholder and constituency groups and organizations. Over the past eight-plus years, Gale has served as the Vice President of Policy and Government Relations at Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and most recently as Interim CEO. Prior to his work with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, he was the Director for Public Lands Policy and Regional Partnerships at the National Wildlife Federation in Denver, CO. He started his career in natural resources management as the manager for volunteer operations at Trout Unlimited where he directed grassroots conservation programs.

BLM LEADERSHIP

With the continued changes in the leadership positions of BLM, we would like to provide an update on the current BLM Leadership, including the State Directors that provide the day-to-day on-the-ground management for the public lands. The following are the current Director, Deputy Directors, and the State Directors for each of the BLM State Offices:

Director	Tracy Stone-Manning
Deputy Director, Policy and Programs	Nada Culver
	Michael Nedd
Deputy Director, Operations	Steven Cohn
Alaska State Office	Raymond Suazo
Arizona State Office	Gordon Toevs (<i>Acting</i>)
California State Office	Doug Vilsack
Colorado State Office	Mitchell Leverette
Eastern States Office	Karen Kelleher
Idaho State Office	Sonya Germann
Montana State Office	Jon Raby
Nevada State Office	Melanie Barnes
New Mexico State Office	Barry Bushue
OR/WA State Office	Greg Sheehan
Utah State Office	Andrew Archuleta
Wyoming State Office	

PLF MEMBERSHIP

PLF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Date _____

Amount Enclosed _____

PLF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

Regular	\$50
Contributing	\$100
Sponsoring	\$200
Patron.....	\$500

IN MEMORIAM

Barry Ashworth on December 4, 2023, in Redding, CA. Barry was one of the original 13 Desert Rangers to be delegated law enforcement authority on April 7, 1978. He originally served as the Chief Ranger in the El Centro Resource Area Office of the California Desert District until transferring to the Visitor Services Supervisor position in El Centro. He later transferred to the Folsom Resource Area of the Bakersfield District where he reentered the Ranger workforce. In 1989 he transferred to the Redding Resource Area of the Ukiah District where he served as a Ranger until his retirement in December 1995.

Jack Lee Belmain on November 2, 2023, in Alexandria, MN. Jack worked for Wyoming BLM in several different positions, including the Wild Horse and Burro program, and retired in 1990.

Peter Daniel Doran on September 9, 2023, in Littleton, CO. Peter earned a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from Metropolitan State College in Denver, CO. He worked for BLM in Denver as a Supervisory Information and Communications Specialist and retired after 37 years of service.

James Roy Evans on August 2, 2023, in Citrus Heights, CA. James was a highly respected BLM Geologist, with many technical publications to his credit.

Pamela Mae Ganong on November 15, 2023, in Bakersfield, CA. Pamela graduated from the University of California – Berkeley with a degree in Urban Planning. She worked for BLM in California and was a member of the California Desert Conservation Planning team.

Paul Karl Hansen on July 5, 2023, in Arvada, CO. Paul worked for BLM for 24 years in Denver, initially being hired for the Y2K effort and then moving on to the National Help Desk team and Network Operations. He ultimately became the Audiovisual and Collaboration Systems Engineer for the Bureau.

James Roger Kor on September 4, 2023, in Custer, SD. James graduated from South Dakota State University with a degree in Civil Engineering. He was a U.S. Army veteran. He began his career with the South Dakota Department of Transportation but then moved to the Department of the Interior, first with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and then BLM. He retired in 2003, after 30 years of service, as the State Engineer for BLM in the Wyoming State Office.

Gary Kenneth Leppart on October 1, 2023, in Billings, MT. Gary began his professional career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in North Dakota and Montana and was a U.S. Army veteran during the Vietnam War. He began his career with BLM in 1977 in Lewistown, MT where he directed a planning team responsible for writing the first management plan for the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River. Gary worked 22 years for BLM in a number of capacities in Lewistown, Butte, and Billings, retiring in 1999.

Connie Lynn (Baski) Lewis on October 8, 2023, in Colorado Springs, CO. Connie worked for the Bonneville Power Administration and BLM in Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska; Beaverton, Oregon; and Boise, Idaho. Before her retirement she worked at the BLM Idaho State Office and the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise.

Billy (Bill) Gardner McIlvain on November 10, 2023, in Huntley, MT. Bill earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Soils and Crops from Texas Tech University and a Masters degree in Rangeland Management from the University of Idaho. Bill worked 45 years for BLM and was an Area Manager in Belle Fourche, SD and in Billings, MT. In 2008, he retired from BLM as the Rangeland Program Leader in the Montana State Office. An important part of Bill's life was the rodeo which began at an early age. For 61 years he was a card carrying member of the Rodeo Cowboys Association and the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

The PLF is committed to never forgetting the dedicated employees of BLM who have left us. We do so on our website's Memorial Wall and by publishing names of those who passed away in the *Monitor*. If you have a death to report, please e-mail us at obits@publicland.org, preferably with a link to or copy of an obituary. You can rely on the PLF to keep you informed of topical news on the public PLF Facebook page, our website, other social media sites, and the *Monitor* newsletter.

Note: Putting together the Memoriam list in the Monitor and maintaining the Memorial Wall on the PLF website takes a lot of work by PLF volunteers. If you find errors, or if you know of something we may have missed, we apologize, and will correct the record. If you have concerns, please let Ray Brady know at rbrady@publicland.org.

IN MEMORIAM

John "Steve" Parrish on October 2, 2023, in Carson City, NV. Steve began his career as a land surveyor with the Forest Service in 1963, transferred to BLM in 1985, and was selected as the BLM Nevada Cadastral Survey Chief in 1989. He left the Federal government in 1995 and began land survey work in the private sector. He was licensed as a surveyor in 10 states.

Demiles "Pete" Pedersen on December 28, 2023, Billings, MT. Pete was a U.S Air Force veteran and later attended the University of Montana and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. Pete began his BLM career as a Realty Specialist, moving through many administrative positions and finally retiring as the Assistant Service Center Director in Denver. His 32-year career

with BLM included assignments in Billings, Lewistown, Cheyenne, Washington, D.C. and Denver. He retired in 1990.

Gary Kenneth Reimer on January 1, 2024, in Eagle River, AK. His career included work with BLM and the Joint Pipeline Office in Alaska.

Cheryl "Cherry" Ferguson Weber on December 5, 2023, in Lubbock, TX. Cheryl was a graduate of the University of New Mexico and a dedicated scholar of anthropology, medicine, and religion. Cheryl began her career as an archaeologist with BLM in New Mexico. She later completed a medical degree at the University of New Mexico and spent 28 years in rehabilitation medicine.

DONATIONS*

MEMORIAL DONATIONS	
RECEIVED FROM	IN MEMORY OF
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Dean Bibles	Henri Bisson
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MEMBERSHIP DUES ABOVE \$50.00		
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SPONSORING MEMBER		
Johanna Munson		

Reminder: The PLF is a benefiting non-profit organization under the Kroger Community Rewards Program. Customers with a Kroger rewards card can register and designate the Public Lands Foundation (number DN597) on their rewards card account and purchases will benefit the PLF. Participants just swipe their registered Kroger rewards card when shopping for each purchase to count. We would like to get more members to participate in this program and generate more donations to the PLF. Just 20 households could potentially generate some \$1,000 per year of donations to the PLF.

The PLF continues to request donations to support the George Lea Founder's Scholarship fund. We hope members will make a special contribution to the scholarship fund. The PLF awarded two \$5,000 scholarships in 2023 to deserving students. The fund needs to be replenished to be able to continue to offer these scholarships each year.

You can make a designated donation by credit card on our website at www.publicland.org, or by check sent to the Public Lands Foundation, P.O. Box 7226, Arlington, VA 22207. In your transmittal, please make sure to mention if your donation is for the **PLF General Fund**, **George Lea Founder's Scholarship**, or the **Student Congress Fund**. Remember, if you are making a donation in memory of someone who has passed away, you can designate your donation to go to one of these funds. The PLF has also established a **PLF Endowment Fund** to support the long-term purposes and mission of the organization. The PLF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization. Your donations are tax-deductible to the maximum extent permitted under the law.

* This list reflects donations received during the period of October 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023. Donations received after this period will be reported in the next edition of the Monitor.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The *Monitor* is what we make it and we encourage you to provide Letters to the Editor or provide other reviews and comments on articles included in your newsletter. It is important to hear from our membership, and if you like something or don't like something, let us know. If you do send an e-mail to the Editor, don't be surprised if it winds up as a Letter to the Editor in the next edition of the *Monitor*. Please provide your comments to rbrady@publicland.org. Comments should be limited to no more than 500 words in length. In addition, members are encouraged to use the bod@publicland.org e-mail address to communicate with the PLF Board.

The *Monitor* generally reflects ongoing PLF activities, events, updates, awards, and information on former BLM employees. We encourage articles and discussions of issues by posting quality content that also provides a positive exposure of the goals, objectives, and mission of the PLF. However, we need to take some precautions when posting information to the newsletter and other forms of social media to ensure appropriate rules of behavior. In keeping a positive experience for our members, we reserve the right to publish only comments, photos, and other material deemed appropriate by the PLF. We intend on maintaining a friendly and professional tone in the articles in the *Monitor* and any Letters to the Editor.

ELECTRONIC MAILING ONLY

The PLF has gone to an all digital distribution of the quarterly *Monitor* newsletter to save on printing and mailing costs of our newsletter. All editions of the *Monitor* are distributed electronically to PLF members and are available on the PLF website.

DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT CONTACT INFORMATION?

Please help us keep our records current and ensure we have your current e-mail address on file. Message us at info@publicland.org, or call at 703-935-0916.



THE PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION IS A TAX EXEMPT 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION