

Activity: Communication Site Management

SUBACTIVITY SUMMARY (\$000)

	2002 Actual Amount	2003 Estimate Amount	Uncontrollable & Related Changes (+/-) Amount	Program Changes (+/-) Amount	2004 Budget Request Amount	Inc(+) Dec(-) from 2003 Amount
Fee Collection \$(000)	1,997	2,000	0	0	2,000	0
Offsetting Fees \$(000)	-2,000	-2,000	0	0	-2,000	0
FTE	30	30	0	0	30	0

2004 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The 2004 budget request for the Communication Site Management program is \$2,000,000 and 30 FTE. This request is to be offset by \$2,000,000 in rental fees which are collected in 2004 from the holders of right-of-way leases for communication uses and facilities sited on public lands.

The Communication Site Management program supports the Resource Use mission goal of the Department's Draft Strategic Plan, and the end outcome goal to manage the public lands and resources to enhance public benefits and promote responsible use. A key intermediate outcome goal is to effectively manage the public lands, providing access and incentives for development. The Communications Site Management program provides access to the public lands for commercial, private and governmental entities that need to site transmission towers and other communications equipment on the public lands. (See the "Communication Site Management Performance Summary" at the end of this subactivity discussion.)

Communication sites on public lands are used for the equipment for the transmission of television and AM/FM radio broadcasts, cellular and mobile telephone service, mobile radio service, and common carrier and private microwave transmissions. These sites are generally located on areas of higher elevations such as mountain tops, hills, or buttes. Equipment at a communication site generally consists of a tower structure for placement of antennas to receive and transmit a particular frequency, and a building or shelter to house other types of equipment. Other improvements may include fuel tanks, utility lines, roads, and perimeter fences. A typical lease for one facility may encompass a 60 foot by 60 foot area for self-supporting towers, or a 300 foot by 300 foot area for towers requiring the use of guyed wires. A communication site generally accommodates multiple facilities and a variety of different communication uses, and often has multiple users at the site.

BLM processes applications for communications sites from commercial, private, and governmental entities under Title V of the *Federal Land Policy Management Act*, and issues a right-of-way use authorization for the communication site. To date, BLM has authorized over 3,300 separate rights-of-way for communication sites. Prior to 1996, each user had to have a separate authorization, even when users shared a site. In response to the *Telecommunications Act of 1996*, BLM implemented new regulations and policies in 1997 that greatly simplified and streamlined the authorization and administration of these uses. BLM now requires only the owners of the towers and facilities to have right-of-way authorizations, while other users of the site can collocate in these facilities without further approval from the BLM.

Both the *FLPMA* and the *Telecommunications Act of 1996* require holders of communication rights-of-way (unless specifically exempted by statute or regulation) to pay a fair market value rent for locating communications equipment on the public lands. Of the 3,300 total authorizations, nearly half are exempted from the payment of rental fees. Rent is assessed to the holder of the lease based on the highest value use in the facility, plus 25% of the scheduled rent for all other uses (unless the use is exempted from rent by statute or regulation). A national rent schedule has been adopted based on the type of use and the population of the community being served by the facility or site. Separate appraisals, which are time consuming and expensive, are no longer used to establish rent for those uses covered by the schedule. As a result of these changes, rental fees from authorized public land communication site users have increased from under \$2,000,000 in 1996, to over \$3,800,000 in 2002.

Since 1996, Congress has authorized the BLM to retain \$2,000,000 of the total rent fees collected, to be used specifically to improve the management and administration of the communication use program. Prior to 1996, BLM had implemented very few communication site management plans, had a significant backlog of pending applications to process, and was collecting rent based on outdated appraisals. By appropriating a portion of the total rent funds collected in the program, Congress has provided the BLM with the necessary funds to greatly improve the overall management and administration of all communication uses located on public land.



Communication site right-of-way in Montana. The right-of-way grant allows the building and the tower.

In 2004, the BLM expects to continue these improvements by providing excellent customer service to current and potential holders of communication use authorizations. Major priorities that will be addressed in 2004 by the Communications Site Management program include the following:

Communication Site Management Plans - BLM anticipates completing 25 draft communication site management plans, and 15 final communication site management plans.

Right-of-Way Grants - BLM anticipates that the number of new rights-of-way grants and leases issued, as well as other related actions, such as assignments, amendments, and renewals, will continue to decrease to a total of 75. This reduction is due to the preference of new users to collocate in existing facilities, bypassing the authorization and approval process of the agency. This results in the need for fewer new sites and facilities.

Training Opportunities —BLM will continue to offer training to agency and industry personnel on the administration and siting of communication uses on public land. Additional training will be directed to line managers and emphasize the tools available, as well as, the role and responsibilities of these decision makers in the communication site management program.

2002 PROGRAM PERFORMANCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2002, the major accomplishments in the Communication Site Management program included the following:

- Administered over 3,300 communication use authorizations, including the inventorying of the types and number of communication uses within each authorized facility.
- Collected \$3,810,651 in rental fees from 1,700 holders of communication use leases and rights-of-way that are subject to the payment of rent.
- Initiated programs in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Utah to develop, over a 5 year period, site management plans on all high-priority sites in these States. These States completed 12 draft communication site management plans, which will be finalized in 2003.
- Completed and implemented 10 final communication site management plans, which significantly exceeded the planned target number of completing six communication site management plans.
- Processed 146 right-of-way actions, including issuance of new leases and rights-of-way to new holders, amendments to and renewal of existing authorizations, and assignments of authorizations from one holder to another. This exceeded the planned target of 110 right-of-way actions.
- Completed 91 compliance inspections of new and existing communication sites. Several of these inspections were accomplished in cooperation with the Federal Communication Commission, as well as the users of the facilities and sites. This exceeded the planned target of 79 compliance inspections.
- Trained 54 agency and industry employees on communication use policy and wireless system technology, and trained nearly 200 BLM and U.S. Forest Service line managers on their role and responsibilities in the communication site management program.

2003 PROGRAM PERFORMANCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The number of right-of-way actions processed may continue to decrease as a result of regulatory changes the BLM made in 1995 and 1996. Under these regulations, a new communication site user may locate in an existing communication site as a tenant to the existing holder of the right-of-way authorization, rather than acquiring a new, individual right-of-way authorization. Therefore the BLM anticipates a reduction in right-of-way applications as

prospective communication site users exercise their right under agency regulations to become communication site tenants. The BLM will place more emphasis on site administration and management and therefore expects the number of compliance inspections to increase. In addition, programs to develop communication site management plans for high priority locations will be initiated for Alaska, Arizona, California, New Mexico, Colorado, and Nevada, with the goal of completing communications site management plans in these States within 5 years. The BLM expects to complete twenty draft communication site management plans and ten final communication site management plans in 2003. BLM will also train 60 agency and industry personnel on the siting and administration of communication uses on public land, plus train 50 BLM line managers on their role and responsibilities in the communication site management program. In 2003, the BLM expects to collect \$4,000,000 in rental fees.

COMMUNICATION SITE MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

DOI Strategic Goal: Resource Use						
End Outcome Goal: Manage or influence resource use to enhance public benefit, promote responsible use, and ensure optimal value.						
Intermediate Outcome Goal 1: Effectively manage and provide incentives for access and development.						
Intermediate Outcome Measures:	2001 Actual	2002 Plan	2002 Actual	2003 Plan	2004 Proposed	Change in Performance (2003 to 2004)
Permit Processing: Minimize the backlog of use authorizations exceeding regulatory time-frames for processing – report actual number of pending cases of permits and lease applications that are in backlog status for communication site rights-of-way. (BLM Measure)	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	Establish Baseline	Establish Initial Target	N/A
Intermediate Outcome Goal 4: Improve information base, resource management and technical assistance.						
Satisfaction Rating: Improve stakeholder satisfaction rating with rights -of-way permitting process. (BLM Measure)	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	Establish Baseline	Establish Initial Target	N/A
Primary Outputs:	2001 Actual	2002 Plan	2002 Actual	2003 Plan	2004 Proposed	Change in Performance (2003 to 2004)
Rights-of-Way Grants. (# actions)	204	110	146	107	75	-32
Conduct Realty Inspections. (number)	105	80	90	100	100	+0