

AMERICAN FRONTIERS: A PUBLIC LANDS JOURNEY

BACKGROUND

Public lands are one of America's great treasures. Nearly one-third of the Nation belongs to its citizens, a national inheritance unparalleled in the world. As the Nation's urban and suburban populations expand, public lands and open spaces become ever more important to our quality of life.

In spite of the importance of public lands, they are unknown to millions of urban Americans. *American Frontiers: A Public Lands Journey* will attempt to remedy this by focusing national attention on our public estate through the adventures of two groups of trekkers who will traverse the public lands north to south, staying on public lands for the entire way. Media attention generated with the Trek, as well as associated educational components, will provide an opportunity for large-scale educational outreach about the role of public lands in our lives.

The concept for the event originated with and was developed by the. The Association's mission is to support public lands and the agencies that manage them through education, interpretation, and service. Formal partners in the project include the National Geographic Society (NSG) and the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF). In addition, PLIA is coordinating closely with state and Federal land managing agencies as well as many outside organizations such as Leave No Trace, Tread Lightly, American Recreation Coalition, and others.

Overall Objectives of *American Frontiers*:

- Create national awareness of the public lands and waters
- Educate all Americans about the history, geography, natural history, recreation opportunities, and values of public lands and the agencies that manage them
- Leave an enduring public lands educational legacy
- Foster a sense of stewardship and community among all public land users and supporters

THE TREK

In late July of 2002, two teams of four to six people each, representing the diversity of the populace, will start simultaneously from the Mexican border in New Mexico and the Canadian border in Glacier National Park. Jointly, they will traverse more than 2,600 miles through some of the most spectacular lands of the West. They will travel on foot, horseback, mountain and road bicycles, ATVs and off road motorcycles, in canoes, whitewater rafts, motorboats, and four-wheel drive vehicles.

The Trek crosses six states including New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana. The majority of the route (90 Percent) is on existing roads and trails, 4 Percent on rivers and lakes, and 6 Percent cross-country. Two-thirds (66 Percent) of the mileage is on United States Forest Service (USFS) managed lands, with 18 Percent on BLM, 14 Percent National Park Service, and the remaining 2 Percent divided between lands managed by United States Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Reclamation, and States. Each team will be accompanied by a small support crew who will follow them as they move along, providing all necessary logistical support. The entire group will camp along the way and will be self-contained. Along many sections of the route, the teams will also be supported by the services of permitted professional outfitters and guides.

Kick off activities and media coverage will mark the beginning of the Trek; however, the Trek itself is not a spectator event. In appropriate locations along the way, special media activities may be planned and will be carefully managed. The route location and itinerary will be kept as quiet as possible to discourage spectators.

A celebration complete with dignitaries and the unveiling of a small monument will take place when the two teams meet on September 28, 2002, National Public Lands Day, on the Mirror Lake Scenic Byway in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest near Salt Lake City. A large National Public Lands Day celebration is also planned at a nearby community.

The Trek will be recorded through the filming of an on-site documentary (Documentary 2). The film crew will consist of approximately three individuals. It is hoped the documentary will be shown on public television to reach as broad an audience as possible.

EDUCATION

Education is the most important aspect of *American Frontiers*, and it is through education that the event will leave an enduring legacy that will continue long after *American Frontiers* has ended. The educational outreach will draw heavily on the resources and expertise of PLIA and the supporters of the event, among them the public land agencies, NEETF, NGS, and others. The educational outreach will target the widest possible youth and adult audiences and is planned to include:

Geography Awareness Week 2002 – November 2002; curriculum based educational materials for teachers; theme: public lands; contains poster, print materials, web materials

Geo-Kits – theme: public lands; contains CD Rom, video, teachers guide, posters, print materials.

American Frontiers Web Site - includes:

- updates on *American Frontiers* activities;
- special features;
- links to agencies, organizations, and other appropriate sites;
- Public Lands Information Center link;
- Public Lands Museum: web based virtual museum;
- web following: web site developed to follow the progress of the teams;
- web based en-route classrooms;

Filmed Documentary (Documentary 1) – public lands theme; includes land profiles, history, and issues; one to two hour special targeted to PBS or similar.

Symposium – Large conference to be held in the Salt Lake City area culminating on National Public Lands Day at the end of the Trek, 2002.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

A media/public relations strategy will be designed to maximize exposure for *American Frontiers*. National magazines such as Outside, National Geographic Adventurer, Backpacker, Wilderness, Sierra, and others will be targeted for feature articles. In addition, both regional magazines such as New Mexico Magazine, Arizona Highways, and AAA Travel along with state-wide and local newspapers such as the Salt Lake City Tribune, Arizona Republic, Albuquerque Journal, and club and organizational newsletters will be targeted for short news stories and possible feature stories. TV and radio media will be sought to provide national, regional, and local coverage before, during, and after the event.

FUNDING

Funding for *American Frontiers: A Public Lands Journey* will come from a variety of sources including agencies, private corporations, organizations, and individuals. Resources will be generated through sponsorships, grants, donations, and value-in-kind contributions. All funds will be administered by the PLIA. All funds raised will be used to offset project expenses. Any funds raised over and above operating expenses will be used by the PLIA to further the Association's mission and goals to support agency educational and interpretive programs.

BENEFITS

The direct benefits to BLM from the *American Frontiers* include:

An increased awareness of the importance and value of BLM-managed public land and water resources

A greater public understanding of the need for resource conservation and protection

Positive exposure for the BLM and its mission both nationally and internationally

Increased understanding and public support for the BLM mission and agenda

Increased public support for the BLM at the local level through involvement of local interest groups, organization, and individuals in the on-the-ground event through BLM lands

Availability to the BLM and its partners, of the many educational materials produced to support the educational component of the event to be used in our long term educational efforts, saving the BLM considerable resources

Increased opportunities for partnerships as a spin off from relationships established through the project