

Karen Tucker
Legends Honoree
Bureau of Land Management

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proud of its outstanding 2002 Legends Honoree, Karen Tucker, the Manager of the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area and Wilderness, in Gunnison, Colorado.

For over 16 years, Karen has worked tirelessly to ensure quality recreation opportunities for the American public on the BLM public lands and waters. She has been able to foresee the need for both primitive and developed recreation sites and facilities, particularly in an area whose population continues to expand, as well as its demand for quality and challenging recreation opportunities and visitor services and amenities.

In the last 14 years, Karen has been instrumental in providing the BLM's support for the Gunnison Gorge NCA legislation, which became a reality in 1999. She organized field trips, worked with local groups, and provided much of the details for the formation of the National Conservation Area and Wilderness Area. Karen was instrumental in nominating the Gunnison Gorge as Fee Pilot Demonstration Recreation site in 1998. With the additional fee revenue, Karen has been able to provide for resource management projects, such as infrastructure improvements, campsite clean up, weed control, trail maintenance, and updated visitor brochures.

Karen has worked with many groups to provide environmental education and encourage the implementation of outdoor stewardship principles on the BLM public lands and waters. In the early 1990's, Karen worked with local schools to establish a "living classroom site" on BLM public lands in the San Miguel Watershed. Karen helped organize school outings, provided educational information and resources for the area's school children. Since adopting the site, the school children have picked up trash, built and signed a nature trail, planted riparian wood species, conducted water sampling. Karen initiated a volunteer program in the Gunnison Gorge where public services are traded for a year long day use pass. Volunteers sign up for clean-up or repair work sessions and in return are issued a day use pass for the Gunnison Gorge. Karen has also worked with local mountain biking and motorcycle trail groups to organize trail maintenance events and trash clean-ups on public lands in the Uncompahgre Valley.

Karen has worked with and formed many successful partnerships and collaborative efforts. She cooperates with the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Association and the Montrose Trail Riders in developing and maintaining trails on BLM public lands. She has been involved with local Scenic Byway Committees working to obtain grants for improvements and interpretative sites and trails along the Unaweep/Tabeguache Scenic Byway, and the San Juan Skyway. She collaborated with the San Miguel County Trails Committee to secure grants and develop hiking and biking trails along the San Miguel River. Karen was the BLM's lead in developing the San Miguel Watershed Coalition's Watershed Plan in 1998. This collaborative planning and management effort has been under way for the past ten years and helped develop public support for the BLM management in the San Miguel Special Recreation Management Area and Area of Critical

Environmental Concern. Karen has worked with San Miguel County, the Towns of Telluride, Nucla, Norwood, and Naturita, as well as other groups in the Watershed to request grants for trails and open space projects. She developed a partnership with Arizona State University to help the BLM obtain better visitor information for the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area.

This partnership includes supporting a graduate student who works on the project during the school year as part of the graduate studies program. During the summer, the student works for the BLM as a seasonal recreation technician.

Karen is an enthusiastic ambassador for the proper use of the BLM public lands and waters. From working with the local Boy Scout Troop, to hosting field trips for the Colorado Congressional Delegation, Karen consistently exhibits professionalism and foresight. Her continued and tireless efforts for the BLM public lands, the Gunnison Gorge Community, and her colleagues, have won her high praise from Government officials, recreation and tourism industry leaders, and from those who use and enjoy their public recreation heritage.

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