



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management • Arizona

Congressional Staff Briefing
Wednesday, December 7, 2005 • 9 a.m.

Agenda

Welcome and Comments

Elaine Zielinski
BLM Arizona State
Director

Land Use Planning Updates

Scott Florence
Arizona Strip District
Manager

Julie Decker
Lands, Recreation, and
Planning, Group Leader,
Resources

Teri Raml,
Phoenix District Manager

Energy Act

Al Burch
Renewable Mineral
Resources, Group Leader,
Resources

National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS)
Update

Ken Mahoney
NLCS and Wilderness
Program Lead, Resources

Information Sharing

Congressional Staff

Bureau of Land Management • Arizona State Office

Congressional Briefing
Wednesday, December 7, 2005 • 9:00 a.m.

SIGN-IN SHEET

File
1781

Name (please print)	Affiliation
Bruce Raden	Shadegg
Kay J. McLoughlin	Kolbe
Julie Decker	BLM
Ken Mahoney	BLM
Dana Hogan	BLM
Al Burch	BLM
Teri Raml	BLM
Scott Florence	BLM

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Name (please print)	Affiliation
Andy Jacobs	Jon Kyl
CARLOS SIERRA	Sen. John McCain
Bill Civus	BLM
Brian Murray	Rep. Hayworth
KEITH ALEXANDER	REP. RICK RENZI
BRYAN BOWKER	BLM
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LEWINE ZIELINSKI	"

Joann Lesaca

Congressional Staff Briefing
Wednesday, December 7, 2005
9:00 a.m.
Arizona State Office
Phoenix A&B Conference Room

Table of Contents

Agenda Handouts

1. Arizona Land Use Planning Update
2. Energy and the Environment, Energy Transmission Corridors
3. State of the National Landscape Conservation System
 - Arizona Republic Editorial News Clip

Other Handouts

4. Antiquities Centennial
5. BLM and Northern Arizona University, School of Hotel and Restaurant Management Partnership
6. BLM Arizona FY 2005 Fire Accomplishments
7. Gila Chub listed by Fish and Wildlife Service as Endangered with Critical Habitat
8. Hurricane Katrina Support
9. Increase in Exploration for Uranium on the Arizona Strip
 - Salt Lake Tribune News Clip
10. News Release: BLM State-Specific Web Site Reconnected in Arizona
11. News Release: Secretary Norton Announces New Appointments to BLM Arizona Resource Advisory Council in Arizona
12. Saginaw Hill Update



Bureau of Land Management • Arizona

Arizona Land Use Planning Update

December 2005

Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw - Harquahala Land Use Plans

- BLM staff addressed 19 community association meetings and special interest groups between February 6 and June 11, 2002. Additional meetings were also conducted in September 2002 to highlight the planning schedule and effective strategies for collaboration.
- Ten (10) scoping meetings were held between September 28 and October 16, 2002.
- The scoping report was approved in February 2003. First round of Alternative Formulation workshops (five) were held the week of March 3. Approximately 50 participants attended each meeting. A second round of public workshops on alternative formulation was conducted during the first week of April 2003. The alternative formulation and impact analysis stages are nearing completion. **The Draft RMP/Draft EIS was reviewed by the State Office resources staff in February and July 2005. The NOA for the Draft RMP/Draft EIS should be published in January 2006.**
- Over 200 Cooperating Agency invitation letters were sent out statewide to local, county, state and federal government entities. Cooperating Agency memorandums of understanding (MOUs) are being developed with the City of Phoenix, City of Peoria, U.S. Forest Service, Luke Air Force Base, ADOT, FHWA, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department.
- A contract to help the Phoenix Field Office complete this planning effort was awarded to Jones and Stokes in May 2002. Due to a budget shortfall, this contract was terminated in June 2004.
- Major issues include: diverse recreation impacts and increased demand for casual and commercial recreation; increased demand for sand, gravel, and decorative rock, and municipal infrastructure; protection of fragile resources, i.e., riparian habitat and cultural sites; concern for public health and safety, i.e., hazardous materials and abandoned mines; access to public lands and transportation planning; land tenure and intermixed management jurisdictions; open space; and trash.

Sonoran Desert National Monument and Phoenix South Land Use Plans

- The initial scoping phase has been completed. The scoping report was approved by the State Director on September 25, 2003. The planning effort is scheduled to be complete in 2006.

- Eleven (11) public scoping meetings were held between February 10 and March 6, 2003. Preliminary meetings were held in August and September 2002, with the Hopi Tribe, the Ak Chin Indian Community, and the Tohono O'odham Nation to discuss consultation and cooperating agency status. BLM is working to schedule additional meetings with other Tribal Nations with interest in the public lands.
- Over 200 Cooperating Agency invitation letters were sent out statewide to local, county, state and federal government entities. Cooperating Agency memorandums of understanding (MOUs) are being developed with the Tohono O'odham Nation, U.S. Forest Service, Luke Air Force Base and Barry Goldwater Range, ADOT, FHWA, INS and Border Patrol, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department.
- A contract to help the Phoenix District Office complete this planning effort was awarded to URS Corporation in June 2003.
- Public meetings to develop alternatives were held during January and February 2004. State Office review of preliminary alternatives began in December 2004. Public meetings on preliminary alternatives were conducted during March 2005.
- **The RMP/EIS planning effort is nearing completion of the preferred alternative development and impact analysis stages. The Draft RMP/Draft EIS should be reviewed by the State Office resources staff in January 2006. The NOA for the Draft RMP/Draft EIS should be published in May 2006.**

Lake Havasu Land Use Plan

- Five (5) open house meetings were held during November 2001. In addition, a series of community-based partnerships and ecosystems meetings were held in Lake Havasu City, Parker and Bullhead City to foster collaboration. The BLM Lake Havasu Field Office (LHFO) coordinated with federal, state, city, and county agencies and tribes.
- LHFO has received several hundred comments. Comments were grouped into four areas: 1) access to public lands; 2) additional boat ramps on the south end of Lake Havasu; 3) request for a trail around the Lake; and 4) no additional wilderness designations.
- August 13, 2002, the BLM Arizona State Office approved the Scoping Report for the Lake Havasu Field Office Resource Management Plan. The alternative formulation stage began in September 2002.
- Six (6) public meeting were held between February 15 and February 24, 2003, to involve the public in formulating alternatives. The alternative formulation stage should be completed by late June 2003.

- LHFO did not receive any requests from agencies or tribes to be considered as a Cooperating Agency.
- **The Draft RMP/Draft EIS was sent to the printer on August 26, 2005. The NOA for the Draft RMP/Draft EIS was published on September 30, 2005.**

Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument/Vermilion Cliffs National Monument/Arizona Strip Field Office Land Use Plans

- The scoping period was conducted April 24, 2002 through July 31, 2002. Ten (10) public scoping open houses were held from May 28 through June 13, 2002.
- On July 22, 2002, a public scoping open house was held at Peach Springs, Arizona, at the request of the Hualapai Tribe. BLM also met with the tribal councils of all tribes in the Grand Canyon Region before the planning process began.
- Several community-based partnership and stewardship workshops were held in Arizona Strip communities by the BLM National Training Center and James Kent Associates to establish local collaboration.
- The Scoping Report was approved September 24, 2002.
- **The Draft RMP/Draft EIS has been reviewed by the State Office resources staff. The NOA for the Draft RMP/Draft EIS was published on November 25, 2005. Public meetings will be held in January 2006.**
- Over 200 Cooperating Agency invitation letters were sent out statewide to local, county, state and federal government entities. Cooperating Agency memorandums of understanding (MOUs) are being developed with the Hopi Tribe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Flagstaff, Arizona, Arizona State Game and Fish, State Land Department, ADOT, FHWA, and Mohave County. Coconino County is also interested, but has not responded formally.
- Access and transportation are the major issues for the planning effort, particularly OHV use. Other issues include wilderness and protection of the resources.
- There is overwhelming public response to leave the area as it is today - remote and isolated, with no services and diverse recreational experiences away from civilization.
- The planning effort is partially contracted. National Park Service and BLM staffs are primarily completing it, with assistance from Lake Mead National Recreation Area staff.

Ironwood Forest National Monument Land Use Plan

- The Notice of Intent to prepare a RMP for the Monument was published in the Federal Register on April 24, 2002. Nine (9) public scoping meetings were held in communities surrounding the Monument between July 10 and July 30, 2002.
- Over 10,000 comment letters were received, and the scoping report was developed. The scoping report was approved February 12, 2004.
- A contract to help the Tucson Field Office complete this planning effort was awarded to URS Corporation in July 2003.
- Over 200 Cooperating Agency invitation letters were sent out statewide to local, county, state, tribal and federal government entities in September 2002. Another round of 90 invitation letters was sent out in December 2003. Pima and Pinal Counties are considering formal cooperating agency status. Many of the contacted entities expressed interest in remaining engaged in the planning process, but are not prepared to enter into a formal cooperating agency agreement at this time.
- Major issues include: OHV use, grazing, target shooting, undocumented immigrants, transportation, user conflicts, and public contact and visitor expectations.
- **State Office review of preliminary alternatives began in February 2005. The Draft RMP/Draft EIS should be reviewed by the State Office resources staff in the winter of 2005/2006. The NOA for the Draft RMP/Draft EIS should be published June 2006.**

Las Cienegas National Conservation Area Land Use Plan

- The BLM completed the RMP with the help of the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership (SVPP), through a five-year collaborative planning effort. The SVPP is a voluntary association of federal, state, and local agencies, organizations, and private citizens who share a common interest in the resources and management of the public lands within the Sonoita Valley, including the upper watershed of Cienega Creek.
- The Approved RMP and Record of Decision were signed on July 25, 2003 by the Arizona State Director. An Implementation Strategy is being developed with the assistance of the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership (SVPP) and others.

Arizona LUP Amendment for Fire, Fuels and Air Quality Management

- The National Fire Policy needs to be incorporated into all of Arizona BLM's Land Use

Plans (LUPs) by the 2004 fire season. The most recent comprehensive land use plan evaluations in Arizona indicated a need to update the fire decisions in every LUP. The proposal to amend the LUPs has been analyzed through an Environmental Assessment (EA). The proposal incorporates adaptive fire management into the LUPs and provides a consistent approach to incorporating the National Fire Policy.

- A contract for the preparation of the Arizona Statewide LUP Amendment was awarded to the Dynamac Corporation in September 2002.
- The Notice of Intent (NOI) to amend all of Arizona's land use plans was published in the Federal Register on January 27, 2003. The public comment period on the NOI ended March 14, 2003. Two planning bulletins were mailed to over 4,000 individuals and public groups. Over 70 responses to the letters or planning bulletin worksheets were received. Overwhelming amounts of the responses support the amendment effort (90%). Concerns focused mostly on reduction of rangeland forage for cattle and logging large diameter trees.
- Letters extending cooperating agency status were sent to federal, state, county governments and Tribal contacts. The Prescott and Tonto National Forests, and the Grand Canyon National Park specifically asked to be kept informed of our efforts. Most of our Tribal partners have responded favorably and would like to be kept informed of the effort as well.
- The preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and supporting EA was released to the public on September 26, 2003, and was available for public review and comment until Monday, October 27, 2003. Seven (7) comment letters were received.
- The notice of availability (NOA) for the Proposed LUP Amendment, Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment was published April 9, 2004. Release of the NOA began the 30-day protest period on the Proposed LUP Amendment, which closed on May 10, 2004. No letters of protest were received.
- Arizona BLM received the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Biological Opinion on September 3, 2004. The Statewide LUP Amendment and Decision Record was approved by the State Director on September 28, 2004.

Yuma Land Use Plan

- The Yuma Field Office manages public lands under three (3) land use plans and eight (8) LUP amendments. The comprehensive land use plan evaluation was completed in December 2000.
- Fiscal year 2004 was the initial year of funding for the Yuma RMP revision. The Preparation Plan, which guides the development of the RMP, was approved on April 30, 2004.

- The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare the land use plan was published in the Federal Register on March 30, 2004. Four (4) public scoping meetings were held during the first week of June 2004. These meetings were held in Yuma, Quartzsite, and Wellton, AZ and Blythe, CA. The scoping report was approved on September 28, 2004.
- This planning effort is being contracted, and the contract was awarded to Tetra Tech, Inc. in August 2004.
- State Office review of preliminary alternatives began in May 2005. Five (5) public meetings were held during the week of July 25-29, 2005, on the preliminary alternatives. These meetings were held in Yuma, Quartzsite, Tucson, and Wellton, AZ, and Blythe, CA. Development of the preferred alternatives began during the week of August 22-26, 2005.
- **The Draft RMP/Draft EIS is scheduled to be reviewed by the State Office resources staff in February 2006. The NOA for the Draft RMP/Draft EIS should be published in May 2006.**

San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area and Tucson Field Office Land Use Plans

- The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (San Pedro RNCA) is located within the Tucson Field Office. Public lands in the San Pedro RNCA are managed under the Safford RMP (1992, 1994) and San Pedro RNCA Management Plan (1989).
- Fiscal year 2004 is the initial year of funding for this planning effort. The San Pedro RNCA RMP will be combined with the Tucson Field Office RMP (Tucson RMP) under one planning effort. The Tucson RMP will address all remaining BLM administered lands not covered by the Las Cienegas NCA, Ironwood Forest National Monument, and San Pedro RNCA RMPs. **The Preparation Plan, which guides the development of the RMP, should be approved in December 2005.**
- **The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare both land use plans was published in the Federal Register on September 2, 2005. The scoping report should be approved in late spring/early summer of 2006.**

Energy and the Environment

Environmental protection is an integral part of energy production, and safeguarding the environment has been a goal and requirement of the President's Energy Policy since its inception in 2001.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 addresses the Nation's need for ensuring greater security and affordability in our energy supply while also protecting the environment.

Any steps the BLM takes to implement the Energy Policy Act will continue to include thorough environmental review and analysis.

Nothing in the Energy Policy Act changes the requirements of environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act.

In addition, the BLM remains committed to the principles of cooperative conservation and community collaboration with the many groups interested in environmentally responsible management of the public lands.

Public Involvement

Public involvement in the review of energy projects initiated on public lands under the Energy Policy Act will continue under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).

All energy development on the public lands is conducted within the guidelines of the authorized land-use plan covering the area where a lease or other use-authorization is located.

The BLM develops and revises land-use plans in a public process that encourages expression of all views on how the BLM should manage the land encompassed by the particular plan.

Currently, 162 land-use plans are the basis for every approved use of the lands the BLM manages, including energy leasing, exploration, production and transmission.

Specific parcels of land made available for energy development have been previously identified through the land-use planning process. Energy companies or other members of the public request, or nominate, parcels that lie in areas identified for leasing in land use plans that determine what lands will be available for specific uses.

Policy guidance issued following passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 creates additional opportunities for public involvement in the BLM's review of proposed oil and gas projects on public lands.

The BLM now requires a greater range of implementation alternatives in Environmental Impact Statements for oil, gas and geothermal development projects.

Having more alternatives provides a broader basis for discussing environmentally responsible energy development, and so encourages more public input in planning and environmental assessment.

The BLM will continue to prepare, at minimum, an environmental analysis (EA) for each Application for Permit to Drill (APD) package, but the agency will increasingly use a single environmental analysis for proposed oil and gas activities to provide a broader review of the entire project area. For example, a single review may now include roads, wells, pipelines, compressors, and on-site storage facilities.

Minimizing the “Footprint”

The BLM analyzes potential environmental effects of energy exploration and development before offering any leases for sale.

In addition, every lease comes with general requirements or stipulations designed to protect the environment. Stipulations on oil and gas leases are developed during land use planning.

Before approving an energy development project, the BLM also determines the need for various impact-limiting mitigation measures on each project site.

Leaseholders may be required to re-vegetate, reduce visual impacts by carefully placing and painting above-ground structures, create buffer zones around wildlife habitat, and bury powerlines and pipelines.

BLM policy also requires the agency to review and apply environmental best management practices (BMPs) when analyzing and approving APDs and rights-of-way for oil, gas and geothermal energy development.

The BLM has developed BMPs to ensure the highest environmental standards for conducting energy development on the public lands.

Coordinating Environmental Review of Oil & Gas Development

The Energy Policy Act establishes a Federal Permit Pilot Project in selected BLM Field Offices to better coordinate the process of permitting oil and gas projects on public lands.

Staff with expertise in the regulation of energy development from the USDA Forest Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be designated to work with BLM specialists in the BLM Field Offices that process the greatest number of oil and gas permit applications.

The Act also allows additional staff from state agencies such as State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), game and fish departments, oil and gas commissions, and environmental quality departments to also be assigned to the Pilot Project as needed, under agreement with their respective State.

Pilot Project offices have been designated in five States: New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, and Utah.

Interagency personnel working with the Pilot Project offices will complete environmental analyses required by NEPA; develop necessary clearances for threatened and endangered species and cultural resources; respond to legal challenges and protests; conduct monitoring and compliance activities; and establish mitigation and reclamation requirements for individual projects.

Combining interagency staff expertise with additional hiring of BLM staff will allow the agency to create a more integrated and effective process for completing the steps necessary to ensure environmentally responsible oil and gas development.

Energy Policy Act of 2005 — Energy Transmission Corridors

The Energy Policy Act requires the BLM – in cooperation with the Forest Service and the Departments of Commerce, Defense and Energy – to designate new right-of-way corridors on Federal lands for electricity transmission and distribution facilities and oil, gas, and hydrogen pipelines.

An energy corridor is a parcel of land, either linear or aerial, identified through land use planning as a preferred location for existing and future rights-of-way, and suitable to accommodate one or more rights-of-way for similar, identical, or compatible uses.

A right-of-way (ROW) grant is an authorization to use a specific piece of public land for specific facilities for a specific period of time.

A coordinated system of energy corridors across the West is comparable in scope and importance to the Interstate Highway system.

Energy corridors are one way to improve distribution and, in turn, increase supply. Increasing energy supplies helps keep the price of energy stable and affordable.

The BLM grants rights-of-way under two existing laws. Grants for electrical power generation, transmission and distribution systems, and hydrogen pipelines are made under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The Mineral Leasing Act (MLA) authorizes the agency to grant ROWs for oil and gas distribution pipelines.

More than 89,000 rights-of-way exist on BLM-managed public lands –
13,400 of these are linear grants for electric power lines, crossing 71,613 miles.
25,401 involve oil and gas pipelines, which traverse 36,310 miles.

The average width of a right-of-way on public land is 100 feet.

ROWs exclusively for oil and gas pipelines are limited to widths of 50 feet.

Coordinated Corridor Designation

Because corridor designation represents a major Federal action that may have significant environmental impact under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an interagency Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) covering eleven Western States will be completed before corridors are designated in the region.

After the PEIS is complete, the BLM will amend relevant land use plans as necessary to implement corridor designation on lands it manages.

The PEIS was begun in October 2005 with a series of public scoping meetings in the eleven Western States affected by the initial round of corridor designations.

The PEIS will analyze several options, including:

- increasing utilization of existing energy corridors by applying new technologies and operational techniques;
- identifying and designating new corridors;
- combining new and existing corridors to optimize energy distribution and the transmission of electricity.

Federal partner-agencies, including the BLM, have until August 2007 to revise management plans and regulations as necessary to implement any corridor designations that result from the West-wide PEIS.

The agencies then have another two years – until 2009 – to complete a similar process for the remaining States in the continental U.S.

Other provisions of the Energy Policy Act involving rights-of-way call for a unified ROW application procedure among all Federal agencies and cooperation to identify and alleviate congestion in electricity transmission.

The BLM will be a full partner in these efforts with the Departments of Energy, Commerce and Defense, and the USDA Forest Service.

An Opportunity for Collaboration with Stakeholders

Energy corridor designation is an excellent opportunity to continue cooperation and collaboration among the BLM and an array of state, Tribal and local governmental agencies as well as other groups and individuals interested in energy transmission.

The BLM invites and urges local and state officials to become active partners in corridor designation by obtaining formal status as Cooperating Agencies in NEPA planning.

Cooperating Agencies assist in the scoping, execution and analysis of land-use decisions. They may contribute staff, data, and expertise, to help ensure that States and local governments are partners in planning and decision-making that affects them.

Participation by a Cooperating Agency allows the BLM to benefit from the knowledge and perspective of those who live and work closest to the land. These contributions help ensure that the agency makes land-use decisions that are sound and sustainable.

More information about energy transmission corridors in the West is available on the Website for the Programmatic EIS -- <http://corridoreis.anl.gov>.



State of the National Landscape Conservation System

December 2005

ISSUES:

A report titled "State of the National Landscape Conservation System: A First Assessment" was issued by The Wilderness Society and World Resources Institute on October 26, 2005. The report authors have also referred to it as the NLCS Report Card and sent the report with a press release to media outlets around the country. Three Arizona NLCS areas were addressed in the report, Agua Fria and Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monuments and Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. A total of 15 NLCS areas from around the West were assessed in the report. The report authors concluded that inadequate funding and staffing have put the NLCS lands at risk and left the BLM ill-equipped to manage these areas.

SUMMARY:

The report grades the NLCS overall and by individual areas in seven categories, 1) Leadership, empowerment, and accountability, 2) Planning for resource conservation, 3) Protecting wild and primitive character, 4) Visitor management and law enforcement, 5) Natural resource monitoring, 6) Ecosystem and species health, and 7) Cultural resources management. Several indicators were developed for assessment purposes in each category and the grades are considered in the context of the indicators used. For example, a "D" or "F" in "Leadership, empowerment and accountability" does not mean a manager is a "bad" leader. Rather, the grade is a reflection of a Monument or NCA without a manager, or one that lacks a manager with line authority, i.e. a seat on the State Director's team, and an annual report. While overall grades are no higher than a "C" in any category, various NLCS areas score better in some circumstances. Las Cienegas NCA is cited as a "Best Practice" example of a voluntary association of agencies, groups, and individuals helping BLM with erosion control along Las Cienegas Creek. In addition, BLM Arizona is commended for publishing an excellent set of maps that makes exploring its five National Monuments and three NCAs easy, appealing, and safe.

BLM PERSPECTIVE:

BLM is required, by law, to manage for a range of activities on the public lands, including NLCS areas. BLM manages the NLCS units for conservation under our broader multiple use mandate. BLM has achieved many accomplishments in the NLCS since its creation just over five years ago: There is an NLCS representative on the BLM's senior management team; Resource Management Plans have been initiated and completed for many areas; over 1 million acres in designated areas and nearly 900 miles of National Historic Trail have been recently added to the NLCS; a draft National Scenic & Historic Trails Strategy and Work Plan and a draft Science Strategy have both been released in the past year; new advisory councils to guide management of NLCS areas have been established; numerous closed vehicle routes and disturbed sites have been restored to more natural conditions; and thousands of acres of private inholdings have been acquired from willing owners to reduce management conflicts and enhance natural resource management. As with any new venture, there are challenges to overcome and opportunities to be taken with the National Landscape Conservation System. It has been a learning experience for the BLM and its partners, but everyone involved is proud of the progress to date and believe that the future of the NLCS is secure.

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State *of the* National
Landscape
Conservation
System

A First Assessment



The Wilderness Society



World Resources Institute

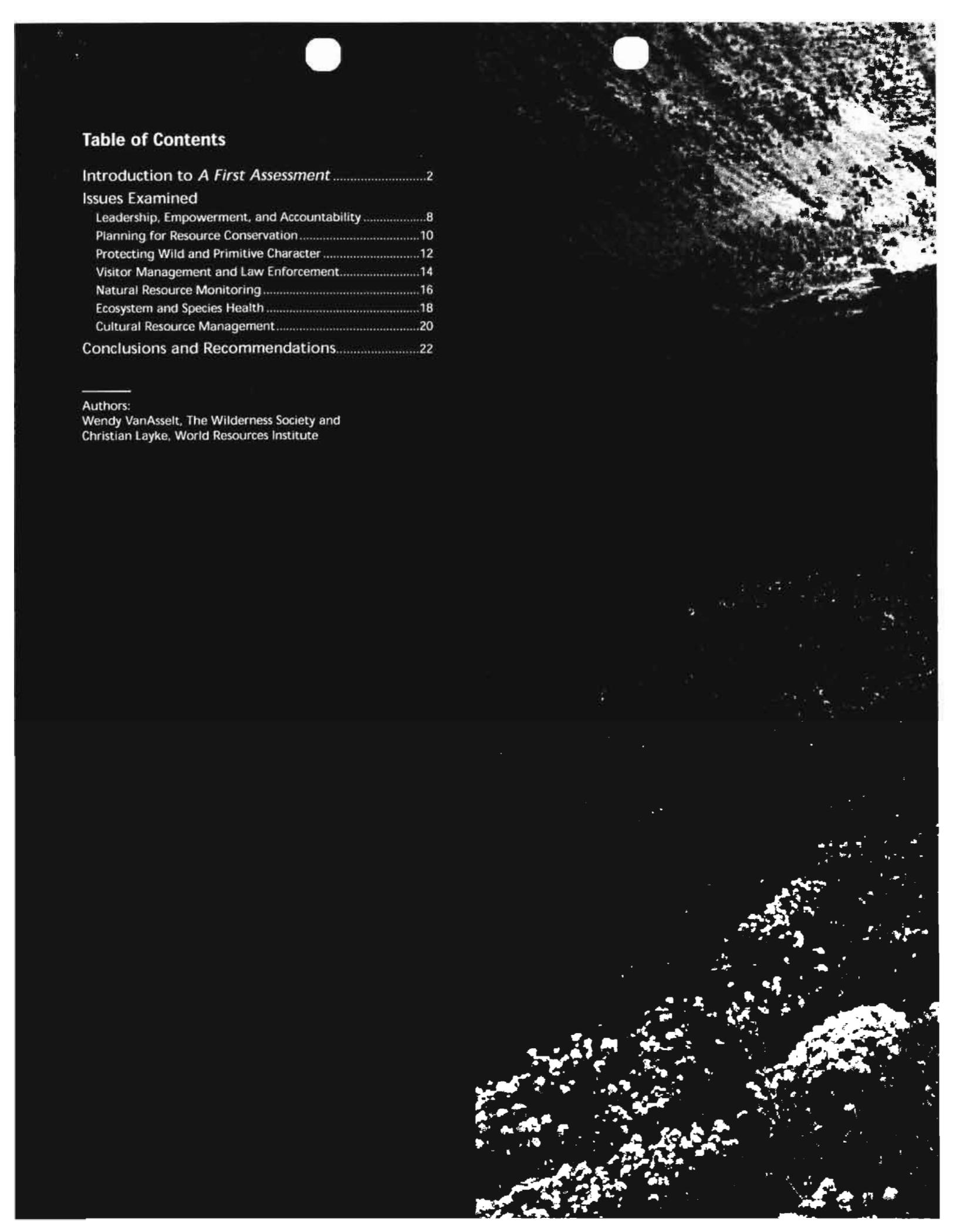
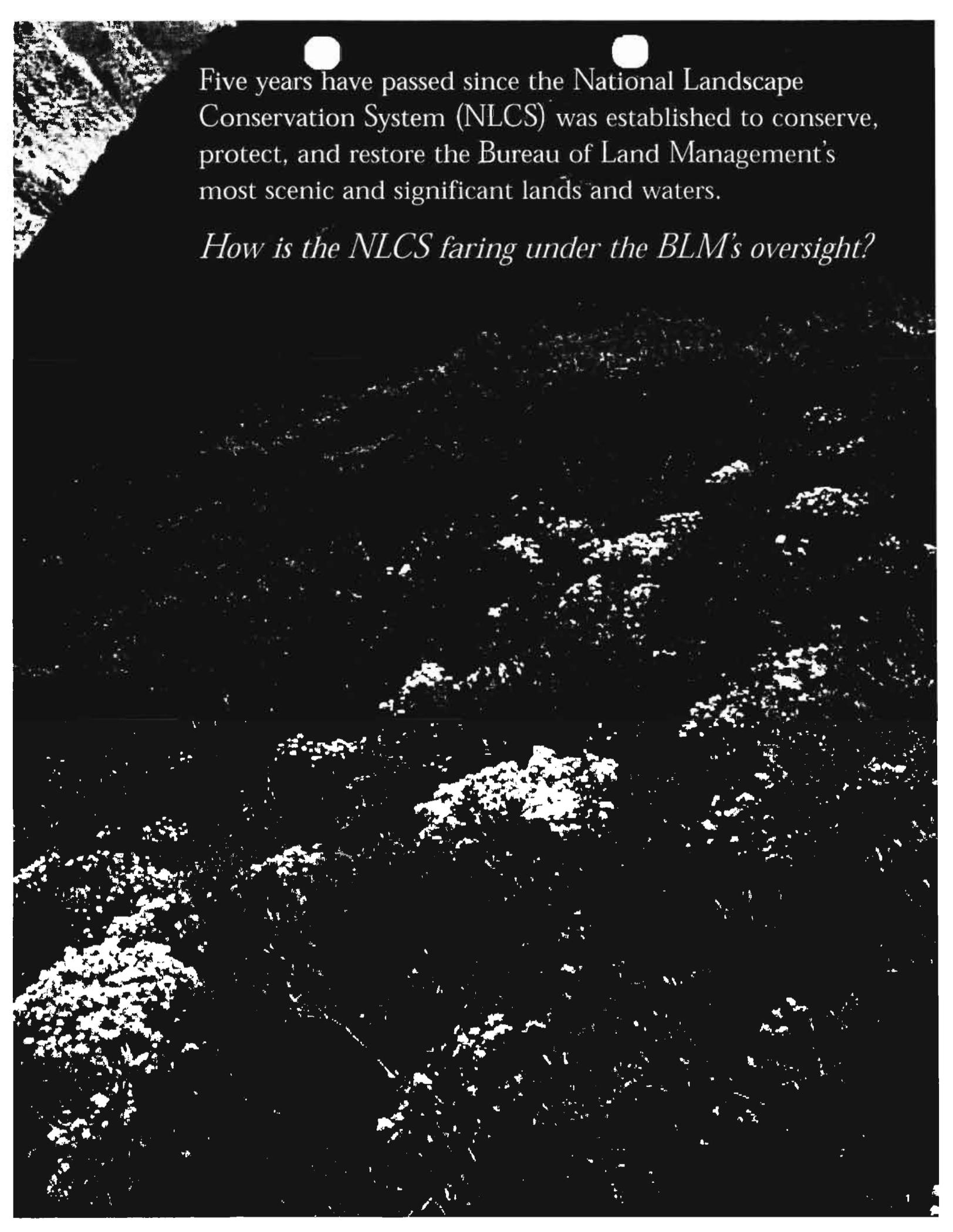


Table of Contents

Introduction to <i>A First Assessment</i>	2
Issues Examined	
Leadership, Empowerment, and Accountability	8
Planning for Resource Conservation	10
Protecting Wild and Primitive Character	12
Visitor Management and Law Enforcement	14
Natural Resource Monitoring	16
Ecosystem and Species Health	18
Cultural Resource Management	20
Conclusions and Recommendations	22

Authors:

Wendy VanAsselt, The Wilderness Society and
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Five years have passed since the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) was established to conserve, protect, and restore the Bureau of Land Management's most scenic and significant lands and waters.

How is the NLCS faring under the BLM's oversight?

A First Assessment of the National Landscape Conservation System

THIS FIRST effort to assess the condition and stewardship of the Bureau of Land Management's 26 million acre NLCS spotlights the difficulty of stretching limited staff and funding to adequately protect a diverse American treasure. To evaluate the System at the five year mark, we examine issues ranging from accountability and resource monitoring to cultural site protection and visitor management. We reviewed the stewardship and condition of 15 National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, and other special places or "units" in the System, and we determined grades on the basis of more than 35 indicators.

cultural resources. On average, 50 percent of land in NLCS Monuments and Conservation Areas is within one-half mile of a road or travel route. Ninety percent is within 2 miles of a road or route.

- ❖ Incomplete information-gathering. Inadequate monitoring of species, water quality, and unique cultural resources, in turn, hinders assessment of ecosystem and cultural site condition in the NLCS. For example, in 8 of the 15 units assessed, less than 10 percent of the area has been inventoried for cultural resources; monitoring programs are equally deficient.

- ❖ Satisfactory efforts to educate visitors who call for information, but a glaring lack of field staff to address illegal off-road vehicle use, vandalism, and other problems that accompany increasing public access and recreational use. Of the 15 units we assessed, one ranger patrols, on average, 200,000 acres—and in some cases he or she works just half-time in the area.
- ❖ An absence of public reporting on NLCS management, condition, successes and needs. There is no annual report for the NLCS with narrative and financial information; reports on individual units are also lacking.

Table 1

NLCS Issue Examined	System Score
Leadership, Empowerment, and Accountability	D
Planning for Resource Conservation	Insufficient Data /Not Assessable
Protecting Wild and Primitive Character	C
Visitor Management and Law Enforcement	C
Natural Resource Monitoring	C
Ecosystem and Species Health	Insufficient Data /Not Assessable
Cultural Resource Management	D

Notes: For individual grades for each of the fifteen NLCS units assessed, see the inside back cover or the topic-specific analyses in this report. For details on the indicators and data, see the data appendix at www.discoverNLCS.org.

Despite underlining the need for improvement in many areas, this assessment also offers some encouraging words. Nearly all units in Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah offer some "best practice" examples of stewardship that we highlight.

With Agency leadership to replicate best practices across the National Landscape Conservation System, and to focus additional staff and funding on the System's needs, perhaps at the ten year mark the BLM can be proud of its role in protecting America's great western landscapes, wilderness, and ecosystems. At the same time, they will enhance recreational, educational, and scientific opportunities for students of all ages.

Grades of "C" and "D" dominate the report (see Table 1), although some units of the NLCS scored very well in specific areas, such as leadership and empowerment or visitor management.

Overall, we found:

- ❖ Committed and passionate NLCS managers who are hobbled by a lack of empowerment and inadequate or unstable budgets to carry out their broad responsibilities. Only one-third of the managers interviewed had "line authority"—the power to direct staff and consistently make decisions. Further, the NLCS represents approximately 10 percent of BLM land, but receives just 2.5 percent of the Agency's \$1.8 billion budget.
- ❖ Road networks that fragment wildlife habitat and bring motorized vehicles near

Interpreting the NLCS Grades

To succinctly convey the information we gathered, we summarized our findings by giving a grade for each issue and Monument/Conservation Area examined. In all cases, the grades reflect a number of different variables, and often data gaps as well.

We urge the discussion and consideration of all the grades in the context of the indicators. (See the data appendix at www.discoverNLCS.org and/or each topic analysis in this report for more details on the indicators we used.)

For example, a "D" in leadership/empowerment does not mean a manager is a "bad" leader. Rather, a "D" is a reflection that a Monument or Conservation Area doesn't have a manager, and/or lacks a manager with "line authority" and a seat on the BLM state director's management team.

In the same vein, rating an "A" in visitor management does not mean that the Monument or Conservation Area can't improve its ranger capacity, or its public education outreach or programs. However, it does reflect some combination of a relatively stronger complement of staff for visitor management, the existence of a public education program, and good availability of user friendly maps, information about hunting/camping, and clear signs.

Often, the grades are a reflection of the financial or staff resources available, and the degree of support from BLM or Department of Interior leadership for conservation priorities. Accordingly, grades should not be interpreted as a statement about the quality of work by specific managers or other BLM staff.

Understanding the National Landscape Conservation System

The NLCS encompasses many of the Bureau of Land Management's most spectacular lands and waters. Canyons, deserts, mountains, rare wildlife and plant species, and cultural sites dating from several thousand years ago to the western frontier era are all part of its realm. The System includes National Monuments, Conservation Areas, Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Historic Trails, and Wild and Scenic Rivers (see Map 1).

The NLCS was conceived to protect large landscapes containing cultural sites and wild places, rather than small ecosystems fragmented by development. The System's conservation focus is an attempt to address areas unique to our American natural and cultural heritage that are endangered by population and development pressures. While U.S. cities overall grew at 8.7 percent from 1990-2000, western municipalities grew at a median rate of 19 percent. Some of the fastest growing urban areas in the West border or surround NLCS lands, including Palm Springs, Tucson, Phoenix, and Las Vegas.

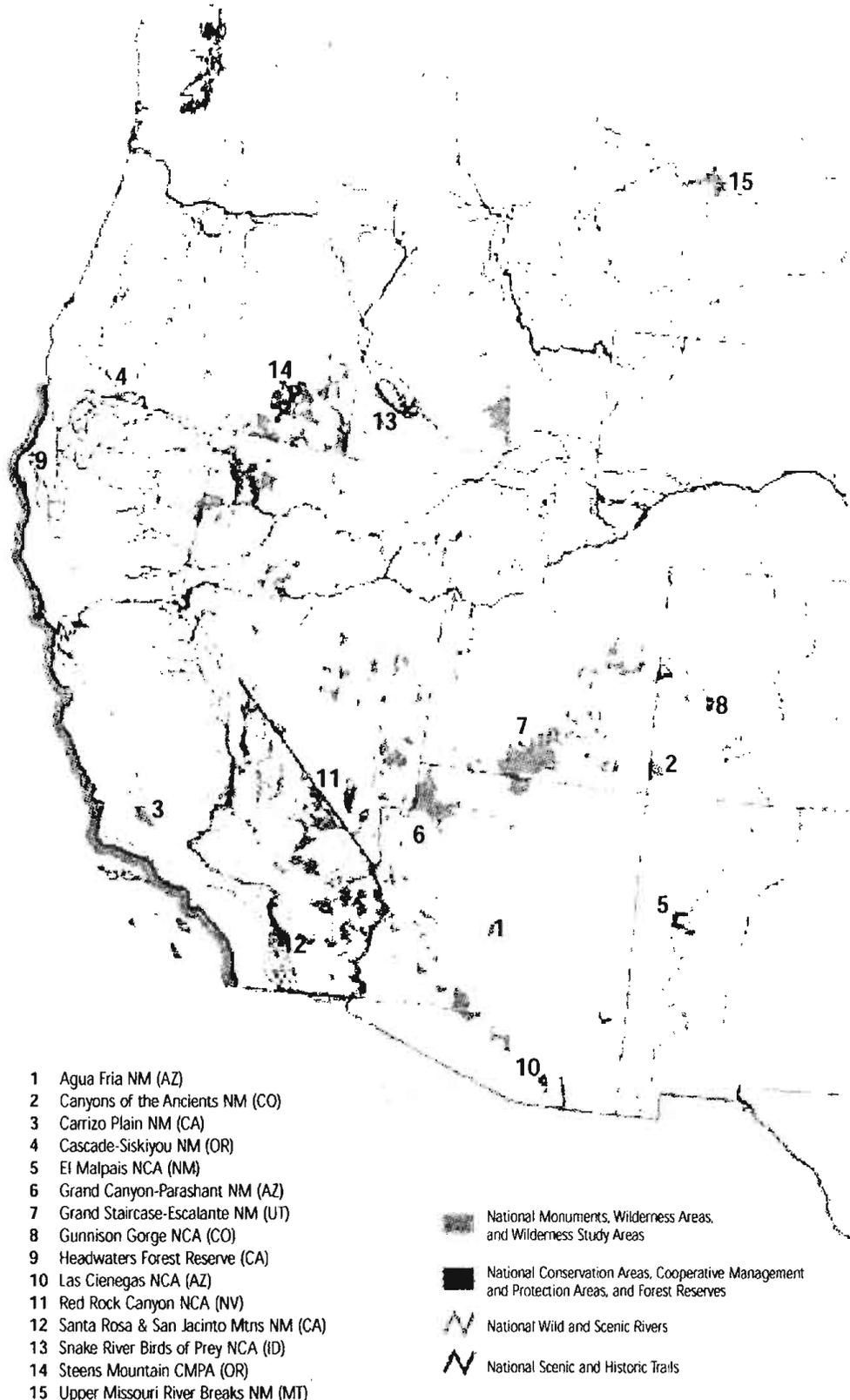
Another feature of the System is to keep these places in their natural state, with minimal evidence of civilization's encroachment—to allow visitors to see the West through the eyes of the first Americans and pioneers. The National Landscape Conservation System provides an outdoor museum for biologists, archaeologists, paleontologists, and historians, and new vistas for hikers, rafters, and explorers.

"The mission of the National Landscape Conservation System is to conserve, protect, and restore these nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations."

—Bureau of Land Management, June 9, 2000

Map 1

The National Landscape Conservation System includes 26 million acres of National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Historic Trails, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. Places assessed as part of this report are numbered and listed below.



Origins of the NLCS

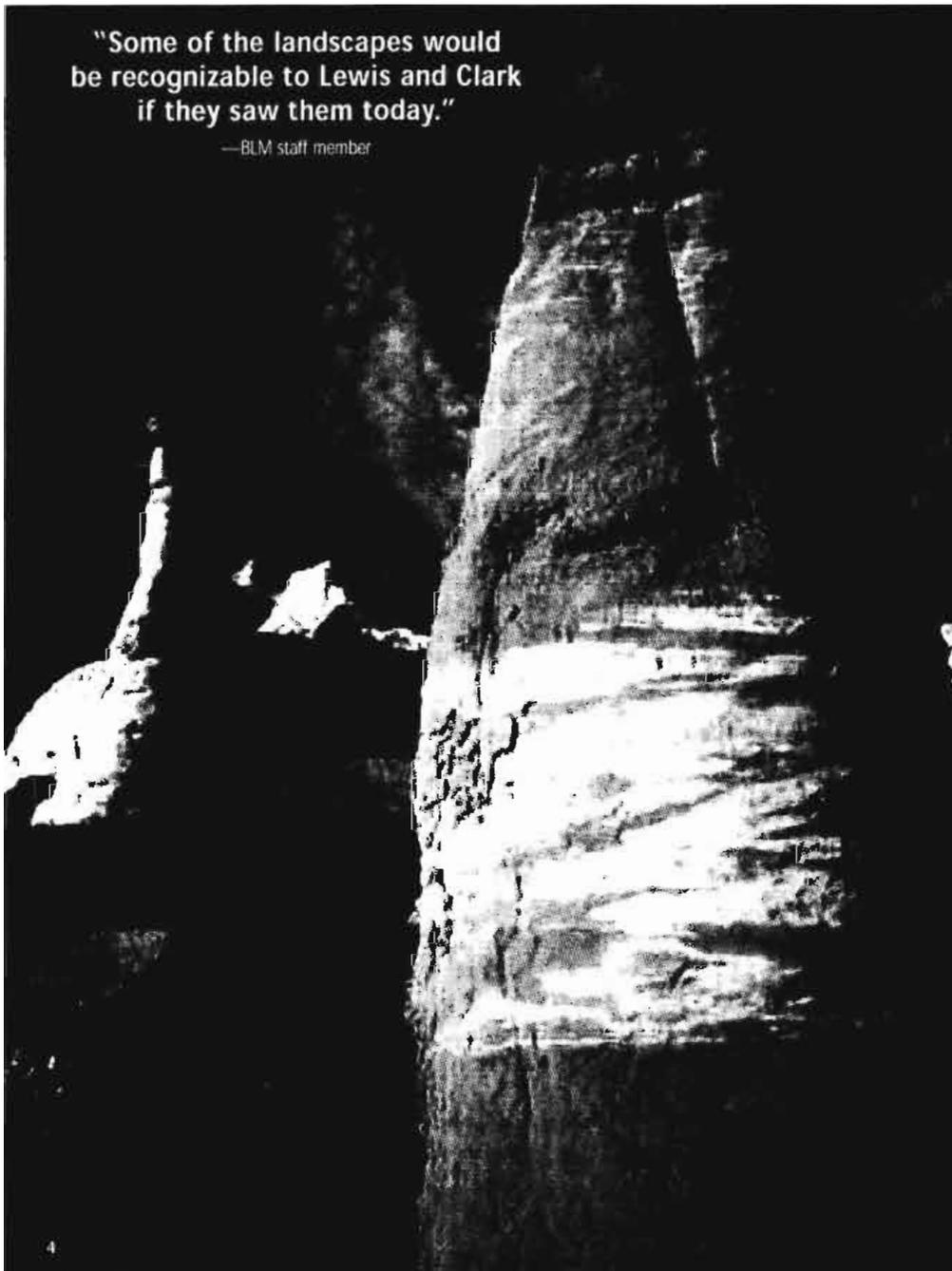
As its name conveys, conservation is a priority for the Bureau of Land Management's National Landscape Conservation System. For decades, the BLM was charged with managing public lands for a variety of uses, including recreation, logging, mining, and energy development. In 1976, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act directed the BLM to evaluate its roadless areas and determine which should be recommended for wilderness, giving the BLM an important new focus on the special ecosystems and natural landscape qualities within its boundaries.

In 1996, the issue of conservation at the BLM was elevated to a greater priority when President Clinton entrusted to the BLM for the first time the responsibility to administer a newly designated National Monument, the Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah. Prior to 1996, when BLM lands were designated as a National Monument they were then transferred to the National Park Service, a branch of the Department of the Interior long accustomed to a conservation focus.

In 2000, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt further formalized and expanded the BLM's new focus on conservation when he established the National Landscape Conservation System. The System—comprised of 26 million acres, or 10 percent of the BLM's total charge—was established with the mandate to manage the landscapes as "healthy, wild, and open."

"Some of the landscapes would be recognizable to Lewis and Clark if they saw them today."

—BLM staff member



BLM's Challenges as Steward of the National Landscape Conservation System

Congress requires BLM to manage most of its total 261 million acres for "multiple uses," obligating BLM to balance extractive uses, such as energy development, with recreational uses and conservation. Now, with the National Landscape Conservation System, the BLM is obligated to embrace conservation as the highest priority, and to preserve cultural resources from a landscape perspective. This is a new concept for any public lands agency, and a challenge for the BLM. Long-established management procedures and priorities are slow to change, and protection of cultural and historic resources often takes second priority to energy development and off-road vehicle (ORV) use.

The BLM also must cope with serious and growing pressures that make the System's natural and cultural resources susceptible to loss or damage. These include:

Growing Popularity

Visitor numbers are increasing in many parts of the NLCS as people learn about these special areas and as western populations expand. For example, the number of visitors to the five BLM National Monuments in Arizona has doubled since 2000. In Colorado's Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, the Sand Canyon Trail—which leads to numerous cultural sites—is used today by 17,000 hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders annually, compared to a few hundred in the late 1980s. The number of rafters launching from Coal Banks landing to enjoy the Wild and Scenic stretches of the Missouri River and the surrounding Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument has increased from 2,000 in 1997 to about 6,000 per year today. These increases in visitor use offer an opportunity for education and outreach about the importance of natural and historic resources, but are also a burgeoning management challenge.

"Recreation use has greatly increased over the past 15 years and is having a major impact on the National Conservation Area."

—BLM staff member

Unauthorized Use

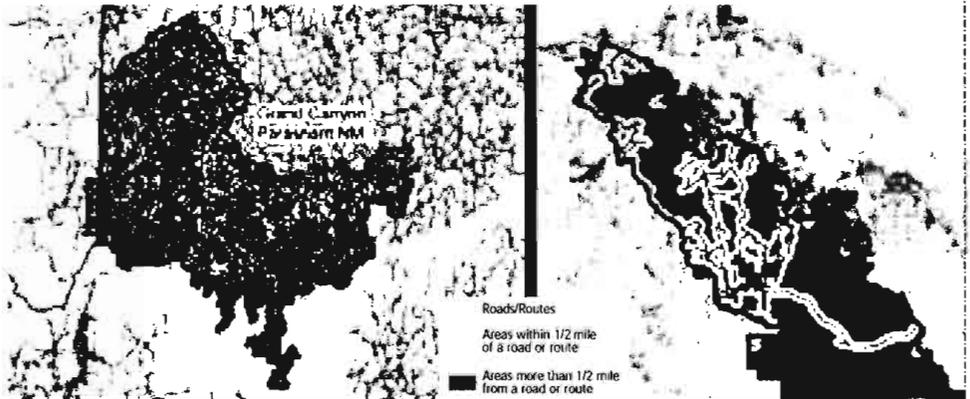
The BLM lacks staff and interpretative programs to prevent destructive unauthorized use of NLCS lands, waters, and historic landscapes. ORV use is increasing dramatically across BLM lands, including the NLCS. The number of all-terrain vehicle users in Agua Fria National Monument, for example, has increased five-fold from 1,500 in 2000 to at least 8,000 in 2004, and the area is also used by thousands of other off-road vehicles. Many areas have yet to make decisions about what trails and areas are open to ORV use; meanwhile, NLCS managers note that illegal use off-trail is a growing problem that destroys fragile, irreplaceable historic and natural resources.

In addition, looting and vandalism take an uncounted toll on cultural resources. At some Monuments, large multi-room archaeological sites have been vandalized and artifacts stolen; at others, incidents of vandalism are few. But especially worrisome is the fact that at most NLCS sites, vandalism data are not collected regularly. Commented one BLM staffer, "No incidents were reported last year. But we wouldn't know unless we looked. And because of other problems with time and money, we haven't gone and looked."

Grazing

Livestock grazing is a historic use of many NLCS lands, with grazing allotments covering large percentages of some Monuments and Conservation Areas. However, if not carefully managed, livestock grazing can harm ecosystems. Grazing can impair wildlife habitat by polluting water, cause erosion in riparian and upland areas, compete with wildlife for food, and spread diseases and invasive species.

Map 2: Fragmentation in the NLCS



Transportation routes like dirt roads and user-created two-tracks fragment Monuments and Conservation Areas, some severely affecting wildlife habitat, archaeological resources, and wild character. For example, Arizona's Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument could be fragmented by more than 1,857 miles of roads and routes if the BLM designates its "route inventory" (a field verified inventory of all tracks on the ground, many of which are faint or barely passable). Conservation groups have proposed designating only 822 miles for motorized vehicle travel. By comparison, the map of Santa Rosa and San Jacinto National Monument in California shows that the area is relatively unaffected by roads—in part because the extremely steep terrain has limited route development.

Drilling and Mining

Gas drilling and other mineral extraction is permitted on pre-existing leases and claims in NLCS units, and new leases are permitted in Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. The infrastructure of gas development—wells, drill pads, roads, pipelines—fragments wildlife habitat, displaces wildlife from preferred areas, and increases their vulnerability to predation. Energy and mineral development also pollute water and decrease water supply. These losses will endure long after the oil and gas is depleted.

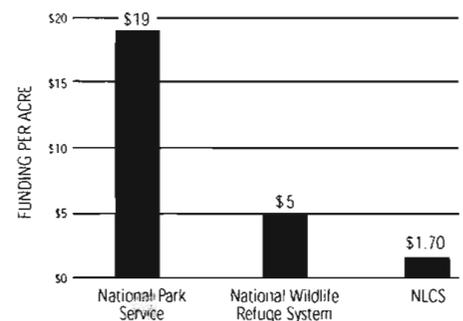
Bare-Bones Funding

Since 2001, the NLCS has received just \$38-46 million in annual funding. That is approximately 2.5 percent of BLM's \$1.8

billion budget, for 10 percent of its land. It is less than half of the allocation for BLM's oil and gas development program and other minerals management programs, to which BLM allocates over \$100 million per year.

NLCS funding is a fraction of the funding for comparable land management agencies. The 2006 budget for the NLCS of \$46 million translates to approximately \$1.70 per acre, compared to the roughly \$5 per acre that goes to the National Wildlife Refuge System and roughly \$19 per acre for the National Park Service (see Graph 1).

Graph 1
Funding for Selected Public Land Systems



Estimates based on FY06 budgets

Lack of funds undermines the BLM's ability to hire enough rangers, archaeologists, educators, and coordinators of volunteer and partnership programs. In turn, lack of staff makes it difficult to sign trails, close roads, restore areas, apprehend vandals, interpret resources, and stabilize fragile cultural sites.



Developing Indicators for the National Landscape Conservation System: A Test Run

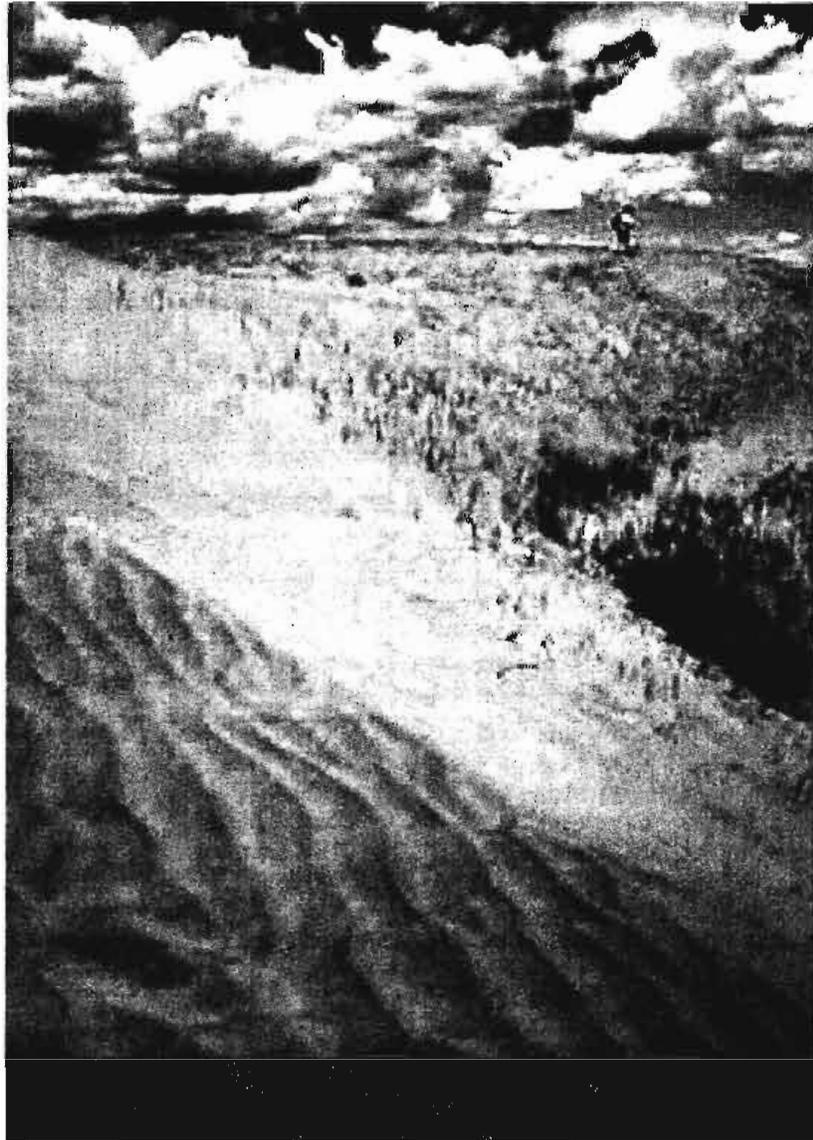
In 2004, The Wilderness Society (TWS) and World Resources Institute (WRI) began to explore how best to objectively measure the state of the National Landscape Conservation System—a large public lands system in which many units were designated by Presidential Proclamation or Congressional legislation to protect natural and cultural values, but multiple uses ranging from off-road vehicle recreation to grazing continue. We developed a set of “indicators” or succinct measures that would provide a first snapshot of key elements of condition and stewardship, and ideally could be used regularly (for example, every other year) to benchmark management progress.

Recognizing that our approach is truly “a test run,” we kept the scope relatively narrow. We focused on seven thematic areas or issues, and within each issue we identified a series of indicators and one or more specific measures. An example:

- Sample issue: Ecosystem and Species Health
- Sample indicator: Fragmentation
- Sample measure: What percent of the NLCS unit is further than 2 miles from a road?

We assessed the System by applying the indicators to a sample of 15 NLCS “units,” including National Monuments and National Conservation Areas (NCAs) as well as Headwaters Forest Reserve and Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area. The units were chosen to represent geographic and ecosystem diversity and include places with and without completed Resource Management Plans; we also chose two at random. We did not specifically assess the condition and stewardship of NLCS Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, National Scenic and Historic Trails, or Wild and Scenic Rivers (although some of the indicators we used do address issues of wild character and water quality in Monuments and Conservation Areas). Data were gathered via phone interviews with BLM staff, Internet searches, from Resource Management Plans and other relevant documents, and from Geographic Information Systems analyses.

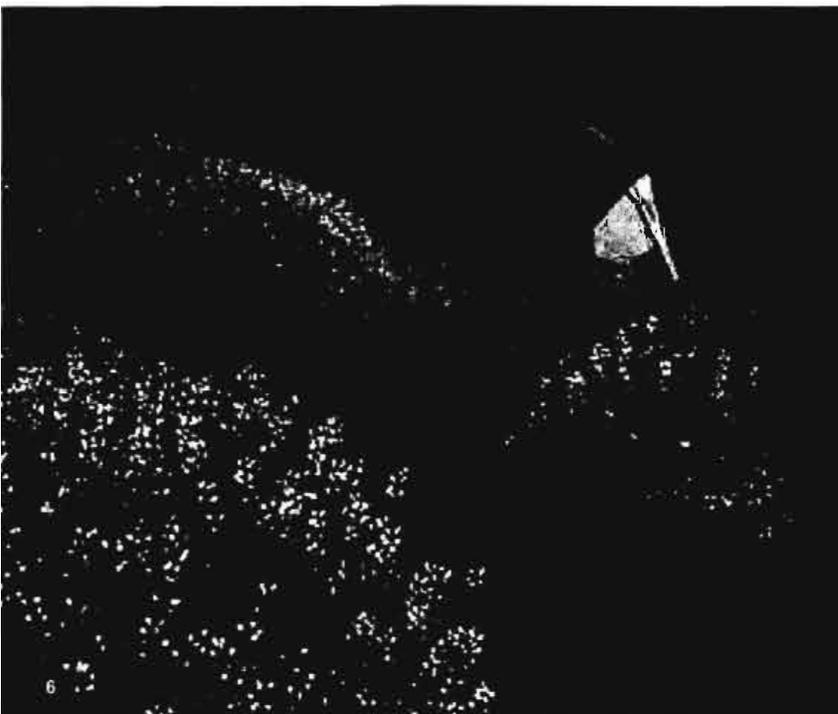
We used simple equations to index our findings and values for each measure into a score from 1 to 100. The scores for all measures were averaged to give a score for each indicator. System scores are an average of all unit-level indicator scores. The raw data and indexing equations are available in the data appendix at www.discoverNLCS.org.



Strengths and Limitations of *A First Assessment*

Hundreds of indicators of stewardship and condition were possible; we ultimately chose 35 based on input from a broad group of experts. However, we expect that further discussions with the BLM, other agencies, and non-profits could hone the indicators we used, or yield better ones. We welcome suggestions and revisions of the indicator framework, and recommend a collaborative process with the BLM to develop a set of indicators for the NLCS that would be most useful to the agency and the public, with data that could be collected annually or biennially at the unit level.

We relied on information that is readily available to BLM managers and the public, rather than what can be obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests and more intensive field research. Undoubtedly, there is additional information and data that could influence our conclusions, so we encourage readers to view the grades assigned to particular Monuments and Conservation Areas as estimates. We have greater confidence in our assessment of the stewardship and condition of the System as a whole, as small changes in individual Monument or Conservation Area scores would be unlikely to significantly alter our larger conclusions.



Why Assess the Stewardship and Health of the National Landscape Conservation System Now?

Five years have elapsed since the NLCS was established. Given the importance of preserving these unique American landscapes, it is reasonable to ask: "How is the NLCS faring under the BLM's stewardship?"

This report is an attempt to supply a thoughtful answer. The BLM prepares Annual Performance Reports and five-year strategic plans for the Agency's lands as a whole, and some state level reports. But, these measures are general to all BLM lands and only include a few mentions of the NLCS. Resource Management Plans developed for individual NLCS units typically discuss the importance of adaptive management. This approach calls for regular monitoring so management actions can be revised if goals are not being achieved at the Monument and Conservation Area scale. Yet the BLM has not developed a publicly available means of tracking whether such places are "healthy, wild, and open" under its management—in short, whether the BLM is meeting its new conservation mandate.

The 2005 "5th Anniversary" of the NLCS is an opportune time to develop a framework to measure the BLM's success at managing for conservation and to conduct a first assessment (see "Developing Indicators for the NLCS," p.6). Five years of planning and management is sufficient to allow for a preliminary assessment. It is also a good vantage point from which to acknowledge early achievements and to steer a future course that may offer greater gains for the BLM's conservation efforts. □



Our Top Priorities for the NLCS

To ensure all the stakeholders in the NLCS can celebrate its successful preservation and stewardship at its ten year benchmark in 2010, we recommend:

- Increased staffing and resources. The BLM needs adequate resources to proactively protect the Conservation System's special cultural and natural resources from visitor impacts, illegal off-road vehicle use, development, and grazing.
- A better information base for conservation management. The BLM should prioritize monitoring of water quality, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, land health, and other resources which the System is intended to protect. In some places, collecting more data is less a priority than simply better compilation and analysis of existing information to maximize its utility for management decisions.
- Completion of overdue plans and implementation strategies that provide additional detail and consistent guidance. All areas with completed Resource Management Plans should have an implementation strategy tied to a budget, to provide measurable and specific management guidance.
- Immediate closure of harmful roads and routes. The BLM should develop safe and sensible transportation plans that remove hundreds of miles of the System's unnecessary and harmful roads, particularly those that fragment the wildest areas or are close to cultural or other important resources. Those roads should be closed and obliterated promptly.
- Full utilization of volunteers and academic partnerships to inventory, monitor, and protect resources.

More detailed recommendations based on our research are included for each issue we examined, as well as major conclusions on pp. 22-24.

Leadership, Empowerment, and Accountability

Grade: **D**

The BLM does not empower its NLCS managers with the stature and authority to carry out their vital mission—to protect unique natural and cultural resources and to serve as the public face of conservation for BLM’s truly special landscapes.

Additionally, the BLM does not make readily and widely available basic information about activities and expenditures at Monuments and Conservation Areas. Such information is important to inform, involve, and invite public participation in the conservation and appreciation of these unique areas.

Leadership, Empowerment, and Accountability

	Leadership/ Empowerment	Accountability
OVERALL SYSTEM	C	F
Agua Fria NM (AZ)	D	F
Canyons of the Ancients NM (CO)	B	C
Carrizo Plain NM (CA)	B	F
Cascade-Siskiyou NM (OR)	F	F
El Malpais NCA (NM)	F	F
Grand Canyon-Parashant NM (AZ)	D	F
Grand Staircase-Escalante NM (UT)	A	F
Gunnison Gorge NCA (CO)	D	F
Headwaters Forest Reserve (CA)	D	C
Las Cienegas NCA (AZ)	D	F
Red Rock Canyon NCA (NV)	B	F
Santa Rosa & San Jacinto Mtns NM (CA)	D	F
Snake River Birds of Prey NCA (ID)	B	F
Steens Mountain CMPA (OR)	F	F
Upper Missouri River Breaks NM (MT)	D	F

Notes: For the data on which each grade is based, see the data appendix at www.discoverNLCS.org.

We urge the consideration of all grades in the context of the indicators (see below). For example, a “F” or “D” in leadership/empowerment does not mean a manager is a “bad” leader. Rather, the grade is a reflection that a Monument or NCA does not have a manager, and/or lacks a manager with “line authority” and a seat on the state director’s management team.

Why measure “Leadership, Empowerment and Accountability”?

Strong leadership is necessary for the National Landscape Conservation System to meet its *conservation* mandate—a mandate which distinguishes these 26 million acres from the rest of BLM’s 261 million acres where multiple-use management is the norm. Each NLCS unit, like a National Park, warrants a manager who is empowered to make timely and informed decisions, and to consistently apply a conservation-focused management vision and approach.

Because the System is just five years old, creating accountability mechanisms and managerial leadership opportunities can help the agency learn more quickly how to succeed with its new challenge of resource protection. Furthermore, a core principle of sound management is to give managers the authority to make key decisions, but also to hold them accountable to supervisors, the public and Congress.

“The problem is that the position of Monument manager is new... our authorities need to be explicitly spelled out.”

—BLM staff member

What indicators did we use?

- **Managerial Presence:** Whether the unit has a full-time manager.
- **Managerial Empowerment:** Whether the manager has line authority.
- **Managerial Stature:** Whether the manager is on the BLM State Director’s management team.
- **Annual Reporting:** Whether managers prepared, and allowed public access to, narrative and financial reports on the Monument’s or NCA’s activities and accomplishments.

Strengths and/or limitations of the data

Data were collected through phone interviews with managers and through a BLM website search for unit-level reports during the period January-April 2005 plus some updated information added later in 2005. The data were largely collected from the managers themselves.

What did we find?

Almost all National Monuments and National Conservation Areas have a full-time manager, demonstrating that the BLM is investing in at least one lead staff person for each unit—a person who can build expertise on the area's particular needs, focus on the unit's management challenges, and report to the public on the status of the area's health and conservation priorities. In short, most have a person who is responsible and accountable for the unit's success. We learned, however, that many unit-level managers who are technically "full time" also are charged with multiple duties as wide-ranging as planning and implementation, public education and outreach, and even field office management.

Only one-third of the managers interviewed are vested with "line authority"—the formal authority to direct staff, with clear, consistent responsibilities to make decisions, issue orders, and allocate resources. Many managers also noted a lack of real control over their budgets, a lack of ability to direct staff when significant problems arose, and frustrations related to a lack of clearly defined job responsibilities. The result: managers can't efficiently manage work like law enforcement, invasive species removal, and cultural resource protection. Many managers interviewed believe that having line authority would help them do their jobs more efficiently and effectively.

Only one manager of 15 interviewed is on a BLM State Director's management team. Inclusion on the State Director's team would be an indication that, within the agency, NLCS units are acknowledged as special and deserving of top leadership attention.

There is very little evidence that the BLM emphasizes taking stock of successes and failures in achieving the vision and goals established for each Monument or Conservation Area. Only two units could provide a narrative report on at least selected accomplishments and finances upon request (Headwaters Forest and Canyons of the Ancients); two others (Steens and Grand Staircase-Escalante) said a report was planned or forthcoming. No reports or financial accounting for individual units are posted on the BLM's websites, making it a challenge for the interested public to discover how funds were spent, what work was accomplished, and what priorities remain unmet. Several managers offered data from an internal BLM database that tracks specific elements of unit-level work, like the number of acres treated for invasive species. However, this database provides a technical report which is not easily comprehended by or accessible to the public.

Several managers liked the idea of offering a public-friendly annual report, but noted that current levels of staff and funding would not allow for narrative reporting. The Bureau of Land Management's state-level and national annual reports do not substitute for a unit-level report. The state reports typically make minimal mention of accomplishments specific to units in the National Landscape Conservation System, and the 2004 BLM Annual Report—while including thirteen pages describing NLCS units—does not describe specific management activities in any unit.

"It is critical for managers to have line authority... without it, commercial permittees and other users will deal only with the Field Office manager."

—BLM staff member



Best Practices

Grand Staircase-Escalante's Monument manager has line authority and is on the BLM State Director's team.

Canyons of the Ancients' manager can promptly provide an informative, readable report on the Monument's cultural resources program, including a report on expenditures.



Recommendations

- The BLM should grant NLCS managers consistent authority to make key management decisions on behalf of National Monuments and Conservation Areas—while also holding them accountable for their use of those authorities. Give each NLCS manager "line authority" and make each NLCS manager part of the BLM State Director's management team.
- The BLM should provide a brief "Manager's Report" on each NLCS unit at least every other year. This report could be simply a synopsis of major activities, accomplishments, challenges, and finances. Topics covered could include: partnerships, transportation/roads management, visitor education, law enforcement, cultural resource health and scientific learning, ecosystem protection and wildlife health. Reports could be made available on the BLM's website. To reduce the onus on NLCS managers, Resource Advisory Councils could help write and produce the reports. (Guidelines should ensure similar length and content for all unit-level reports.)

Planning for Resource Conservation

Grade: *Insufficient Data/
Not Assessable*

In the years just ahead, the BLM has a sterling opportunity to provide clear and unequivocal conservation guidance for the NLCS. The agency is nearing completion of Resource Management Plans (RMPs)—the fundamental guidance instrument—for the majority of its 30 NLCS Monuments and Conservation Areas. However, until the plans are completed, these special places are officially managed under outdated RMPs—some more than 20 years old—that were compiled under pre-Monument multiple-use mandates. This can lead to confusion at best, and mismanagement at worst.

As of Fall 2005, less than half the units have a final plan; even fewer have an implementation strategy. The absence of this necessary information makes a grade for the quality of planning undeterminable—and underscores the urgent need for BLM to complete plans and immediately begin to implement them, with concrete steps to protect resources.

We propose indicators to use in future assessments and we offer a brief analysis of strengths and weaknesses of completed plans. For example, a survey of the critical issue of transportation planning shows a lack of specificity about which roads will be closed to motorized use and when, and a lack of analysis of the road network relative to species habitat and cultural sites.

Why measure “Planning for Resource Conservation”?

The future condition and direction of the NLCS depends on the long-term plans—referred to as Resource Management Plans or “RMPs”—that the BLM prepares for each Monument and Conservation Area. The RMP and associated transportation plans and implementation strategies set a framework for management actions that will be taken over the next 15-20 years. For example, these documents can determine where off-road vehicles (ORVs) will be allowed, where wildlife habitat will be restored, and what species will be monitored and how often.

The plans not only serve as the blueprint for BLM’s decisionmaking on behalf of the NLCS, they clarify for the public what activities are permissible, and establish enforceable rules. RMPs and the implementation strategies also give the public a means of tracking the agency’s use of staff and budget resources and its overall stewardship.

What indicators do we propose for future assessments?

- Age of RMP: Existence of a current (less than 15 years old) RMP for each unit.
- Transportation Plan Quality: Existence of a plan for each unit that delineates routes for ORV and mechanized travel; includes a closure schedule for illegal, extraneous, or damaging routes; and incorporates a spatial analysis of road impacts.
- Implementation Plan Quality: Existence of a plan that allows the BLM and the public to measure annual progress toward RMP objectives.
- Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Assessment: Percent of rivers assessed for eligibility.

Strengths and/or limitations of the data

Much of the data needed for a future assessment using these indicators would be publicly available, but some aspects present a challenge. For example, it is difficult to assess whether transportation plans incorporate spatial analysis of wildlife habitat and cultural resources. Similarly, the BLM lacks a clear definition of an implementation strategy; some offices consider the RMP to be the implementation strategy.

What did we find?

Virtually all 30 Monuments and NCAs in the NLCS are scheduled to have an up-to-date Resource Management Plan by the end of 2006. Eight-four percent of those plans will be less than five years old.

From development to completion, a NLCS Resource Management Plan typically takes three or four years. Even then, major management guidance still is often lacking. Most plans, while 300-400 pages plus appendices, provide a framework for decisions, but do not identify specific steps or include a schedule for action. Thus, a well-developed implementation plan is essential. Unfortunately, implementation plans are typically not completed for another year or two. For example, several of the BLM's newest plans, such as Las Cienegas (2003), Santa Rosa (2004), and Headwaters Forest (2004) are only now completing implementation plans.

RMPs for NLCS Monuments and Conservation Areas vary greatly in clarity of management vision, organization, depth of information used to make decisions, and specificity—even about the management of basic resources. For example, while the Grand Staircase-Escalante plan identifies specific sites for monitoring water quality and quantity, typically plans are vague on water quality monitoring, and many don't even mention water quantity.

Cultural resource protection is a key reason many NLCS units were established, and most recently-completed plans do include some specific steps and guidance for protecting cultural resources. The Las Cienegas RMP, for example, prioritizes cultural sites for conservation and proposes a formal site monitoring plan. Others, like the plan for Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, postponed completion of a comprehensive cultural resource plan, and the Steens Mountain CMPA established inventory goals without specifying a time frame for action.

Inadequate direction in RMPs regarding species monitoring could exacerbate the current lack of comprehensive knowledge on the health of critical plants and wildlife in the NLCS (see "Natural Resource Monitoring," p.16-17). For example, the proposed Cascade-Siskiyou RMP (2005) does not call for monitoring the 30 special status plants in the Monument. The plan is also silent on the issue of reporting requirements for monitoring. By contrast, the plan for Las Cienegas calls for an annual report on action taken in response to its monitoring program, and thereby incorporates an adaptive management approach.

The BLM has crafted transportation plans for several places in conjunction with the RMP process, but in other areas, like Steens, the agency has delayed important decisions about which roads and routes to close. Rarely do RMPs or travel plans provide a specific timeframe for implementing transportation decisions.

In recent years, the BLM has studied a significant number of rivers in Monuments and Conservation Areas to determine whether they have wild, scenic, and recreational qualities worthy of protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. In most units examined, the BLM has evaluated all the rivers for Wild and Scenic eligibility or is currently doing so as part of the planning process. However, dozens of rivers and streams still need to be evaluated or re-evaluated, particularly in areas where private land ownership patterns have changed since the last assessment a decade ago.



The Flawed "Route Decision" Tree

For some transportation planning initiatives, BLM is using a "Decision/Evaluation Tree" which presents a series of questions that attempts to automate road closure choices. This process is flawed. For example, the Tree is a "route-by-route" analysis, and does not analyze the effect of a pattern of motorized routes and travel on a landscape. The tree also fails to prioritize conservation needs in a unit, and fails to consider other critical issues, such as conflicts with other users and adverse impacts to soils, water quality and wildlife. Finally, the process makes it virtually impossible to end up at a definitive recommendation for route closures.

Recommendations

- For NLCS areas still crafting a Resource Management Plan, those plans should be promptly completed; for many areas, more than four years have passed without specific guidance.
Plans should include:
 - specific decisions that protect the objectives for which the areas were established (such as wildlife, wilderness, and cultural sites) and prioritize their protection.
 - a schedule that specifies where and how monitoring should occur and a plan for using new data to inform management.
- The BLM must expediently complete transportation plans for every unit, to minimize damage from motorized vehicle use and ensure a safe and quality experience for visitors. For travel planning, we recommend a 10-step process posted at www.discoverNLCS.org.
- The BLM should complete implementation plans that are tied to budgetary decisions.
- Complete the study of all BLM-managed rivers and streams and transmit WSR recommendations to Congress in a timely manner.

Protecting Wild and Primitive Character

Grade: **C**

Protecting Wild and Primitive Character

The National Landscape Conservation System's rugged western character will suffer erosion and irretrievable losses without vigilant public oversight and renewed commitment by the Department of the Interior to keep the System wild.

The BLM is taking small steps to protect aspects of the System's "wildness," such as maintaining expansive views free of development and siting visitor centers outside the boundaries of NLCS areas. These actions are important but cannot replace management geared specifically to protecting all aspects of wild and primitive character. For example, the BLM is failing to establish or restore large, roadless areas of natural landscape and wildlife habitat by reducing road density and closing illegal or unnecessary off-road vehicle routes.

OVERALL SYSTEM	C
Agua Fria NM (AZ)	—
Canyons of the Ancients NM (CO)	—
Carrizo Plain NM (CA)	—
Cascade-Siskiyou NM (OR)	C
El Malpais NCA (NM)	B
Grand Canyon-Parashant NM (AZ)	—
Grand Staircase-Escalante NM (UT)	A
Gunnison Gorge NCA (CO)	C
Headwaters Forest Reserve (CA)	B
Las Cienegas NCA (AZ)	C
Red Rock Canyon NCA (NV)	B
Santa Rosa & San Jacinto Mtns NM (CA)	B
Snake River Birds of Prey NCA (ID)	—
Steens Mountain CMPA (OR)	D
Upper Missouri River Breaks NM (MT)	—

Notes: "—" signifies that insufficient data are available to give a grade. For the data underlying this report, see the data appendix at: www.discoverNLCS.org

Why measure "Protecting Wild and Primitive Character"?

The National Landscape Conservation System is intended to preserve the wild character and remote nature of unique western landscapes and keep them in their natural state. However, human incursions from roads, motorized travel, oil and gas development, development of private inholdings, and intrusive infrastructure can quickly diminish and destroy the wilderness character of NLCS Monuments and Conservation Areas.

The System's canyons, deserts, mountains, and rivers also are intended to offer uncommon opportunities for solitude and unmechanized recreation, with few visitor facilities. This concept distinguishes the NLCS from National Parks. Ideally, this approach offers local economic benefits by locating visitor centers in nearby communities rather than within the Monument or Conservation Area.

An additional issue is how the BLM will identify and protect lands with wilderness character in light of a 2003 settlement between the Department of the Interior and the State of Utah that prohibits the designation of new Wilderness Study Areas on the public lands. Importantly, the BLM's choice to abdicate this authority does not prohibit the agency from using other planning tools, such as zoning or special management prescriptions, to protect land with wilderness character; in fact, agency guidance expressly allows it.

What indicators did we use?

- ⚙️ **Planned Road Closures:** Percent of roads and off-road vehicle routes slated for closure and restoration to natural condition in the management planning documents.
- 👁️ **Visual Resource Management (VRM):** Percent of land classified as VRM Class I or II (areas in which BLM commits to significantly restrict visual intrusions on or modifications of landscapes).
- 👤 **Visitor Infrastructure:** Whether Resource Management Plans specifically direct visitor infrastructure outside the unit.

Strengths and/or limitations of the data

Much of the data we used are reliable and readily available in Resource Management Plans. The exception is mileage data on routes in NLCS units; "route" is not consistently defined and could refer to anything from an illegal, user-created two-track to an established and maintained dirt road. Also, data on route closures could sometimes only be estimated by BLM staff. An additional caution: only nine of the units we assessed have a completed or proposed Resource Management Plans, so some conclusions are based on a necessarily small research sample. For future assessments (when more plans are complete and data available) an ideal indicator would focus on miles of roads actually closed and restored, not merely "planned" for closure.

What did we find?

It is difficult to quantify and assess the BLM's protection of wildlands in the NLCS, because the BLM is not designating Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), which would put in place clearly defined management prescriptions. Nor could we easily quantify and assess the BLM's other major alternative management designations that might substantively protect wilderness, such as use of "primitive zones" or designation of an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern" with extensive off-road vehicle closures. There is an evident need for clear and consistent approaches to wilderness protection.

Accordingly, we focused on BLM's efforts to protect wilderness character by reducing road density, since large "roadless" tracts are a fundamental part of the definition of wilderness. We found that the agency's effort to provide a sensible transportation network while minimizing roads and motorized travel in these wild areas ranges from substantial to almost non-existent. Of the completed plans we examined, the plan for Steens Mountain CMPA closes the fewest routes—just 1 percent, or six of its more than 600 miles. In several areas, including El Malpais, Gunnison Gorge, Red Rock, and Grand Staircase-Escalante, 25-50 percent of roads and routes are slated for removal. Headwaters Reserve intends to remove 80-90 percent all routes to greatly improve habitat quality.

Aside from motorized travel issues and the lack of WSA designations, the BLM has done a commendable job of passively protecting open, unaltered western landscapes by requiring that significant areas in the NLCS remain free of power lines, buildings, and other visual alterations. The agency has applied the strictest Visual Resource Management (VRM) designations (Class I or II) to more than two-thirds of NLCS lands we examined. One hundred percent of Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, Cascade-Siskiyou, Grand Staircase-Escalante, and Las Cienegas are designated Class I and II VRM.

Existing visitor facilities are sensitive to the concept of minimal impact on the NLCS. Most of the System's Monuments and Conservation Areas have an "offsite" visitor center or no center. The on-site centers typically predate the designation of the NLCS. At least two Monuments and NCAs, including Agua Fria and Sloan Canyon, do have plans to construct a visitor center. Wisely, at least half the management plans we examined discourage major visitor facilities within the boundaries of the unit.



Best Practices

Keeping Infrastructure to a Minimum: The Resource Management Plan (2000) for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument specifies that "in an effort to protect Monument resources and provide economic opportunities in the local communities, major facilities and the services associated with them will be located in these communities, outside the Monument."



Restoring Wild Qualities: The plan for the Las Cienegas NCA and surrounding lands was developed and is now managed through a diverse group of citizens, local government, and conservation and user groups. The plan prioritizes protection of this desert watershed and the wild quality of the area by closing 10% of existing roads and maintaining the primitive character of the existing transportation system, including converting approximately 5% of existing roads to use by foot, horseback and mountain bike. About a quarter of the closures have already been completed in partnership with local groups.

Preserving Wild Qualities: Although not a unit examined in depth in our study, we note that the plan (2005) for King Range National Conservation Area identifies areas with wilderness characteristics; it also establishes comprehensive guidance for them, including specifics on rights-of-way, travel routes, mineral extraction, forest health, recreation, and other issues that affect wilderness.



Recommendations

- BLM should use all the management tools at its disposal to identify areas with wilderness character and preserve that character.
- The BLM should designate and implement a safe and sensible transportation network for NLCS units that closes unnecessary and harmful roads and off-road vehicle routes, particularly those that fragment the wildest areas or are close to cultural or other important resources.
- BLM should continue to implement protective Visual Resource Management (VRM) designations for NLCS units. Several plans currently in draft stages for Arizona National Monuments offer excellent opportunities to keep historic views free of intrusions like powerlines and development through use of VRM.
- Monuments and Conservation Areas should continue to use bulletin board-style visitor kiosks at all primary entrances and locate major visitor centers on unit boundaries or in nearby gateway communities. Forthcoming RMPs should specifically direct visitor facilities outside or to the edges of NLCS areas.

Visitor Management and Law Enforcement

Grade: **C**

Visitor Management and Law Enforcement

Effective signage and readily available permits and maps facilitate positive visitor experiences in the NLCS. But, on-the-ground capacity to protect resources and promote visitor safety is less than satisfactory. Among units assessed, typically one NLCS ranger is single-handedly responsible for several hundred thousand acres and more than 100,000 visitors a year. Growing numbers of recreational users underscore the need for an increased BLM field presence.

“Any time you get increased population and visitation, like in California, it is critical to increase [law enforcement] staffing and budgets to keep up with demand.”

– BLM staff member

OVERALL SYSTEM	C
Agua Fria NM (AZ)	C
Canyons of the Ancients NM (CO)	C
Carrizo Plain NM (CA)	C
Cascade-Siskiyou NM (OR)	C
El Malpais NCA (NM)	C
Grand Canyon-Parashant NM (AZ)	C
Grand Staircase-Escalante NM (UT)	B*
Gunnison Gorge NCA (CO)	C
Headwaters Forest Reserve (CA)	B
Las Cienegas NCA (AZ)	B
Red Rock Canyon NCA (NV)	C
Santa Rosa & San Jacinto Mtns NM (CA)	C
Snake River Birds of Prey NCA (ID)	C
Steens Mountain CMPA (OR)	D
Upper Missouri River Breaks NM (MT)	D

Notes: For data underlying this report, see the data appendix at www.discoverNLCS.org.

* Because this score and others in the report are based on specific indicators for each issue (see below), they do not reflect the BLM's failure to enforce travel restriction decisions and take legal action against Kane County, Utah for posting illegal off-road vehicle signs in the Monument.

Why measure “Visitor Management and Law Enforcement”?

The NLCS' appeal as desirable places to camp, hike, ride off-road vehicles, hunt, and birdwatch is growing dramatically. For example, in Agua Fria National Monument, near Phoenix, visitor numbers grew from 15,000 in 2000 to 77,000 in 2004. To prevent damage to the NLCS from vandalism, looting, or illegal off-road vehicle intrusion, and to provide important interpretation to visitors, the BLM's on-the-ground staff presence must keep pace with the growth of recreational users and problems that can arise from misuse and/or lack of oversight.

Visitor stewardship consists of two primary elements. A field presence helps to ensure visitor safety and discourages potentially damaging and/or illegal visitor behavior, while signs, kiosks, maps, and other materials also provide guidance to assure a safe and responsible experience. The BLM's effort and resources to provide these tools are particularly important because many visitors may be unfamiliar with NLCS regulations. This is particularly true for the many areas of the NLCS where recreational rules have changed—for example, where the recent completion of a Resource Management Plan has led to new policies, such as restriction of off-road vehicles to designated trails.

What indicators did we use?

- Law Enforcement/Field Presence: Ratio of law enforcement staff to number of visitors and acreage.
- Visitor Kiosks and Signage: Provision of information via kiosks and signs.
- Maps and Permits: Accessibility of visitor-friendly maps and permit information by telephone or website.
- Education/Outreach Capacity: Public education staff capacity and existence of a public education/outreach program.

Strengths and/or limitations of the data

The available data for measuring visitor management capacity are generally inadequate. BLM provided data on the number of law enforcement ranger staff; however, this data does not include the additional (though likely small) field presence provided by reciprocal agreements with other federal and county agencies or from other BLM staff (i.e. special agents, recreational technicians and interpretation specialists). Data on annual visitor numbers and violations are available for most areas, but suffers from differing collection and reporting methods by unit and by year. The assessments of maps and permits are necessarily subjective. Data on presence of signs are partly derived from an internal BLM survey of managers, but because of its age (2001) it may not completely reflect the current status of signage.

What did we find?

Field and enforcement capacity is severely lacking in NLCS Monuments and Conservation Areas. Only one-third of the 15 National Monuments and Conservation Areas examined have more than one full-time ranger; several have only a half-time ranger.

We found that an NLCS ranger patrols, on average, 200,000 acres—even larger areas in places like Carrizo Plains and Upper Missouri River Breaks—making it impossible to check remote areas or specific sites regularly. If rangers focus on monitoring visitors along roads and trails, the workload is no less daunting; for example, in El Malpais, a ranger employed only half-time has 362 miles of roads to monitor.

An assessment of BLM's guidance to visitors at centers and by phone proved strong. BLM staff and volunteers provide good access to a panoply of useful information. Staff who answer the phone are invariably helpful. Unfortunately, much of the BLM's website has been inaccessible in 2005, making it impossible to find camping, hunting, and other NLCS information online. We assessed the unit maps against criteria for clarity and rated nearly all as "good". An exception is the BLM map for the Upper Missouri River Breaks, which fails to delineate the Monument's boundaries. (To meet the need for an accurate and visitor-friendly map, in 2005 the local citizen's group Friends of the Missouri Breaks published a map that shows the boundaries, celebrates the area's natural and historic attributes, and mentions the NLCS.)

Information on the ground is good. Most units assessed provide unobtrusive visitor kiosks as an inexpensive and practical means of disseminating information on regulations to visitors. Most also have signs marking entrances to these special areas, though some lack adequate/appropriate information, and vandalism is a problem.

Public education capacity could be expanded and improved. About 80 percent of Monuments and Conservation areas have access to a public education or outreach specialist, but typically this is less than a full time or even half time outreach professional. None provided a formal public education and outreach plans; some include sections on outreach in RMPs, and others said they are preparing outreach plans as part of the RMP process.

Signs and Kiosks: Accuracy is Essential

Entrances to the NLCS are typically marked with a sign, but not all signs include regulations; even a prominent "No ORV use off-road" would help curtail damage from dirt-bike and ATV use in fragile washes, for example.



Of greater concern are kiosks and visitor information sheets that provide misinformation. For example, the kiosks and visitor information sheets available at registers in Agua Fria National Monument state that vehicle travel is permitted on "routes" and "trails" when, in fact, the Monument proclamation prohibits any vehicle travel off designated roads. Some signs further confuse the visitor by stating "High Clearance 4-Wheel Drive vehicles and ATVs are recommended on existing roads and trails only"—which sounds like a mere recommendation rather than a requirement, and constrains the agency's ability to enforce the actual rules.



Best Practices

BLM Maps: An excellent set of maps makes exploring two of Arizona's National Monuments easy, appealing, and safe. The maps for Sonoran and Ironwood National Monument identify entrances, trailheads, and major points of interest; they clearly mark the area's boundaries and private lands and explain the rules and regulations—all on one attractive fold-out page. And, unlike any other NLCS map we reviewed, both of these mention the concept of the Monuments within the National Landscape Conservation System, helping build public awareness of all the System's special places and their unique aspects.

Minimizing Visitor Damage: In Snake River Birds of Prey NCA, the BLM employs minimal but strategically placed signs and paths to steer visitors to a few key viewpoints for watching raptors, while trying to curtail driving off-road to the canyon's edge. The BLM has also significantly reduced recreational conflicts and safety hazards by closing approximately 65,000 acres to the discharge of rifles and pistols; signs clearly mark areas where hunting and target practice is allowed.

"We are barely able to address the issues of visitor contact, education, and clean-up and are doing so on a priority basis knowing that some areas are not receiving an adequate response."

— BLM staff member

Recommendations

- Congress should fund additional law enforcement capacity in NLCS units. The BLM should prioritize ranger capacity within the NLCS based on an assessment of areas where ORV use and visitor use is growing most dramatically, locations of cultural resources, and presence of rare or sensitive species. Several NLCS managers also described a need for additional public education and interpretation staff.
- BLM should standardize and invest in consistent data collection on the frequency, severity, and complexity of criminal incidents across units, and use that data to determine each unit's law enforcement needs. Such measures are a fundamental means of understanding whether law enforcement capacity is sufficient and effective.
- BLM should invest in clear accurate signs and small, unstaffed visitor kiosks, with accurate rules and regulations. Major entrances should have a kiosk that spells out the regulations for visitor behavior.

Natural Resource Monitoring

Grade: **C**

Natural Resource Monitoring

OVERALL SYSTEM	C
Agua Fria NM (AZ)	C
Canyons of the Ancients NM (CO)	C
Carrizo Plain NM (CA)	C
Cascade-Siskiyou NM (OR)	—
El Malpais NCA (NM)	B
Grand Canyon-Parashant NM (AZ)	D
Grand Staircase-Escalante NM (UT)	C
Gunnison Gorge NCA (CO)	B
Headwaters Forest Reserve (CA)	B
Las Cienegas NCA (AZ)	B
Red Rock Canyon NCA (NV)	D
Santa Rosa & San Jacinto Mtns NM (CA)	—
Snake River Birds of Prey NCA (ID)	B
Steens Mountain CMPA (OR)	D
Upper Missouri River Breaks NM (MT)	C

Notes: "—" signifies that insufficient data are available to give a grade. For the data underlying this report, see the data appendix at www.discoverNLCS.org.

The BLM does only an average job of collecting and standardizing environmental data to understand and protect the NLCS. The scientists and managers in the System's Monuments and Conservation Areas strive to meet the legal and policy requirements to monitor resources; some exceed them. However, data gathering requirements are often too limited and lax to allow sufficient understanding of resource health and changes, and are frequently undermined by budget constraints. When data is gathered, it is rarely analyzed and summarized to guide management change and to promote public awareness of resource health.

"[When budgets are cut] monitoring is the first thing to fall off the list."

-- BLM staff member

Why measure "Natural Resource Monitoring"?

'You can only manage what you measure'—a popular business adage—applies equally to public lands and NLCS management. It is essential to assess whether the BLM has obtained adequate baseline information and is continuing to collect data on flora and fauna health, riparian condition, water quality, and other critical indicators within Monument and Conservation Area boundaries. Over time, consistent monitoring programs can build a robust information base and alert the BLM to the need for adjustments in ecosystem management.

Threats to natural resources across the NLCS make vital the ability to track change and assess management competency. For example, 95 percent of Canyons of the Ancients National Monument is under grazing allotments. Annual visitors to Grand Canyon-Parashant have quadrupled since 2000. Off-road vehicle use in the Gunnison Gorge NCA has doubled since 2000 to almost 20,000 riders per year. These and other pressures—*invasive species, incursive roads, natural erosion, oil and gas exploration, and hikers and campers*—make it essential to consistently track key measures of ecosystem health, particularly those tied to issues highlighted in Monument proclamations.

What indicators did we use?

- **Invasives Monitoring:** Scope and frequency of monitoring.
- **Rangeland and Upland Monitoring:** Monitoring of condition and the use of these data for management.
- **Wildlife and Plant Monitoring:** Monitoring of special status species and compilation/synthesis of the data.
- **Riparian Area Monitoring:** Frequency of monitoring for proper functioning condition and whether plans address problem areas.
- **Water Quality Monitoring:** Percent of waterways monitored for compliance with state water quality standards (EPA's Clean Water Act 303(d)).

Strengths and/or limitations of the data

Most data were collected during January-May 2005 in more than 50 phone interviews with NLCS scientists and managers; often they could only provide estimates. Some data, such as water quality monitoring, were collected from publicly-available Environmental Protection Agency sources.

"We don't do real baseline inventories [on the special status species in the NLCS unit] since it is protected and we don't need to track impact."

—BLM staff member

What did we find?

Monuments and Conservation Areas appear to lack a comprehensive information base and monitoring program to inform management decision-making and direction. The scope and depth of ecosystem monitoring varies considerably by NLCS unit and issue.

Most of the units surveyed with grazing allotments have assessed more than half of their land using a rangeland health assessment. And, about half the units have assessed the health of 100 percent of their riparian areas in the past decade.

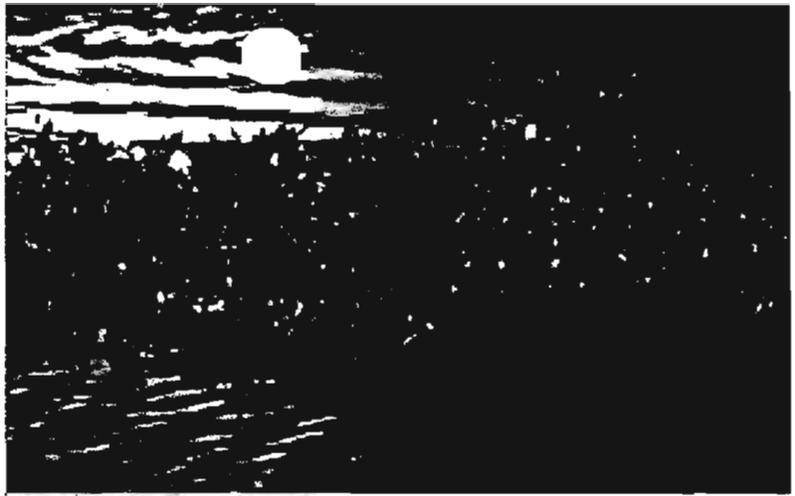
All Monuments and Conservation Areas monitor at least some sensitive wildlife and plant species. However, they rarely monitor all sensitive species or consistently compile the data and formally assess trends. In many cases, they may not have even inventoried—let alone monitored—"objects of interest" specified in the Monument proclamations or legislation.

Formal invasive species inventories monitoring is limited. Several units have assessed close to half their acreage for invasive species, but many lack a formal assessment of more than 25 percent of their land area, and most rely largely on informal inventories done while staff are in the field for other reasons.

Rarely do Monuments and Conservation Areas have comprehensive, regular water quality monitoring programs. Cascade-Siskiyou, Agua Fria, and Steens, for example, have assessed just 25-50 percent of their streams and rivers in the past five years for compliance with the EPA's total maximum daily load program standards required by Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.

Legal and policy obligations, such as the preparation of Resource Management Plans and Environmental Impact Studies, Rangeland Health Assessments, and inventories prior to permitting an extractive activity, are generating data that helps the BLM build its baseline knowledge of ecosystem condition in the NLCS. However, these mandated activities can reduce staff time available to maintain more comprehensive monitoring programs. Also, legal requirements can constrain assessments. For example, funding for upland health monitoring is tied to a mandate to monitor rangeland health in grazing allotments. Accordingly, Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area has assessed only 32 percent of its land—the area in grazing allotments.

Insufficient funding and mandate-driven data gathering may partly explain why the data that scientists do gather is rarely compiled and/or analyzed to illuminate and ultimately to inform management decisions. Although some places, like Gunnison Gorge and Agua Fria, have compiled information from their Rangeland Health and Riparian Assessments into a comprehensive report, monitoring data are more often left as raw data or as part of individual grazing allotment assessments. The data on special status species were so scattered among various agencies, offices, and reports that it was often impossible to learn even how many special-status species were being tracked.



Best Practices

The Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan (2003) provides clear requirements for a comprehensive monitoring program that, if fully implemented, would allow for a good understanding of the area's resource base and health. To ensure the data gathered is easily used and accessed, the plan specifies what reports should be compiled, with what frequency, and to whom they should be distributed. A voluntary association of agencies, groups, and individuals—the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership—is helping the BLM gain a basic understanding of what data exist and what data are needed to inform management decisions about riparian, grassland, hydrological, and wildlife resources in the watershed.

The Gunnison Gorge Land Health Assessment compiles data from the Rangeland Health Assessments of individual allotments into a unified report that encompasses the entire Gunnison Gorge planning area. It enables managers, other staff, and the public to readily find information specific to their interests and priorities.



Recommendations

- NLCS units should develop clear priorities and schedules for monitoring.
- BLM and Congress should fund comprehensive information collection on the unique resources in each NLCS area. For example, BLM should establish a Baseline Water Quality Data Inventory for the NLCS (similar to that done by the NPS). Monitoring is essential to the health of this scarce resource in the West; volunteers could be a tremendous help.
- Compilations and brief analyses of monitoring data should be posted on the Internet for public access. One venue for such data compilations—and a means of helping to attract outside researchers to facilitate monitoring—would be a web-based science portal for the NLCS, modeled on the National Park Service's Research and Reporting System. This portal, an idea under consideration in the NLCS office, would detail monitoring and science opportunities at each unit, promote partnerships and involvement from researchers and academic institutions, and feed the science products and research back to the BLM and the public.

Ecosystem and Species Health

Grade: *Insufficient Data/
Not Assessable*

Measures of habitat fragmentation, riparian health, and water quality trends are available for some Monuments and Conservation Areas. However, too little data exists to accurately grade ecosystem health in the NLCS.

One significant reason for concern about ecosystem health in the Monuments and Conservation Areas is the degree to which many are fragmented by roads and routes, which degrade terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat, spread exotic species, and increase off-road vehicle access to sensitive areas. On average, only 24 percent of land in the 15 areas examined is more than one mile from a road. Such findings underscore the need to close routes in key areas which could provide large core area habitat for wildlife or are critical to water and riparian health.

Ecosystem and Species Health

OVERALL SYSTEM	—
Agua Fria NM (AZ)	—
Canyons of the Ancients NM (CO)	—
Carrizo Plain NM (CA)	—
Cascade-Siskiyou NM (OR)	—
El Malpais NCA (NM)	—
Grand Canyon-Parashant NM (AZ)	—
Grand Staircase-Escalante NM (UT)	—
Gunnison Gorge NCA (CO)	—
Headwaters Forest Reserve (CA)	—
Las Cienegas NCA (AZ)	—
Red Rock Canyon NCA (NV)	—
Santa Rosa & San Jacinto Mtns NM (CA)	—
Snake River Birds of Prey NCA (ID)	—
Steens Mountain CMPA (OR)	—
Upper Missouri River Breaks NM (MT)	—

Notes: "—" signifies that insufficient data are available to grade this topic. For details on the data underlying this report, see the data appendix at www.discoverNLCS.org.

Why measure "Ecosystem and Species Health"?

All of the BLM's Monuments and Conservation Areas were established in part to protect wildlife, plants and their habitat. Some species, like bald eagles, bighorn sheep, and pronghorn are emblematic of the American West. Others are less well-known but also rare or endangered, like Gentner's fritillary (a lily) in Cascade-Siskiyou, or unique to a specific area, like Carrizo Plain's fairy shrimp (shrimp that live in ephemeral ponds).

More than just protecting emblematic and rare species, however, the NLCS is charged with protecting entire ecosystems that allow animals and plants to thrive. Most NLCS units encompass more than 100,000 acres. Yet in the face of recreation, grazing, invasive species, and other erosive pressures, merely setting aside large blocks of undeveloped land cannot guarantee habitat and wildlife health or survival. Proactive management and regular assessment are the only way to determine whether the BLM is keeping places like Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument "a monument to biodiversity," as its proclamation states.

"Grazing used to be our biggest impact, but ORV use has overtaken that in the past 10 years."

—BLM staff member

What indicators did we use?

- Fragmentation: Percent of land more than 1/4, 1/2, 1, and 2 miles from a road or route.
- Rangeland and Upland Health: Percent of non-riparian land in compliance with standards or deemed ecologically healthy.
- Extent of Invasives: Area affected and acreage treated annually.
- Riparian Health: Percent of wetland miles in "properly functioning condition" (the ability of riparian/wetland areas to minimize erosion, improve water quality, support biodiversity, etc.)
- Water Quality: Percent of waterways meeting state water quality standards (EPA's Clean Water Act 303(d)).
- Species Status Species: Trends in federally listed threatened and endangered species.

Strengths and/or limitations of the data

Data with which to assess ecosystem condition in the NLCS are poor. BLM staff could provide only estimates or partial data for most measures. Landscape fragmentation was analyzed using BLM Geographic Information Systems (GIS) roads data; those results should be used with caution because NLCS units do not consistently classify roads and routes, and the data may not reflect current on-the-ground road networks. Water data, mostly from the EPA's 2002 database of "water quality limited river segments," varies in quality based on the rigor of state monitoring programs.

What did we find?

The BLM devotes significant effort to rangeland/upland and riparian assessments. However, of the Monuments and Conservation Areas we examined with grazing allotments, only two—Gunnison Gorge and Canyons of the Ancients—have completed, compiled and released to the public their analysis of rangeland condition. Ninety-three percent of Gunnison Gorge meets Colorado's Rangeland Health Standards (1/4 of that with problems). Three percent of Canyons of the Ancients grazing allotments meet all five rangeland standards.

Half of the areas examined could estimate the percent of riparian miles in proper functioning condition (PFC). Findings ranged from 95 percent of riparian miles in Gunnison Gorge and Snake River Birds of Prey NCAs assessed as healthy, to 38 percent of Agua Fria's streams meeting the proper functioning condition standard, to just 7 percent of the streams in Canyons of the Ancients.

Wildlife habitat in NLCS units is extremely fragmented by roads and routes. On average, 50 percent of land in NLCS Monuments and Conservation Areas is within a 1/2 mile of a road. Seventy-six percent of land in these areas is within one mile of a road, and 90 percent within 2 miles of a road. Abundant research has demonstrated the negative impact that roads have on wildlife at these distances, including direct mortality and effects on mating and reproductive success. Roads are also pathways for the spread of invasives, ORV damage, and elevated fire risks. Grand Staircase-Escalante, Red Rock Canyon, and Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains were among the units examined that were the least fragmented by roads and routes; in all four areas more than 25 percent of the land is further than 1 mile from a road.

"The data mostly just sit [in a file]."

—BLM staff member

Data on threatened and endangered species populations are too limited to assess species health. Similarly, most units have formally inventoried only a small percent of their area for invasives. Available estimates suggest that invasive problems vary widely. Red Rock Canyon, Carrizo Plain, and El Malpais estimate that 100, 50, and 0.5 percent of their respective areas are affected by invasive species. The acreage treated for weed control also appears to vary. Most places treat 20-200 acres a year. Some treat more: Headwaters Forest Reserve treats about 500 acres annually and Upper Missouri River Breaks treats over 1600 acres.

Water quality in the NLCS also appears to vary widely, possibly due to old or inaccurate data. According to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data, none of the river segments in Grand Staircase-Escalante met water quality standards, while all waterways in Agua Fria did. An important concern is that few NLCS units are gathering data on water quality regularly. Agua Fria notes that without a hydrologist on staff, they haven't regularly monitored water quality for a decade. Further, data that is gathered does not necessarily match the information in the EPA database. For example, the EPA data shows that few of Steens Mountain's waterways meet the required standards, while the BLM's Management Plan for Steens reports that 50 percent meet standards. Water quality issues ranged from elevated temperatures in Cascade-Siskiyou, to impairment due to sediment in Headwaters, to *e. coli* issues in Las Cienegas.



Best Practices

In Snake River Birds of Prey NCA, since 1996, over 40,000 acres of degraded sagebrush and winterfat habitat have been reseeded with native shrubs and perennial grasses to improve habitat for raptors and small mammal populations. The BLM has also reduced impacts to soils and vegetation from unmanaged vehicle use in the Snake River Canyon by closing and rehabilitation braided roads and trails.

In Las Cienegas, the BLM has been regulating grazing numbers based on rainfall, forage levels and other physical characteristics. With this careful management, virtually all (98 percent) rangeland meets land health standards. Additionally, the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership is helping the BLM with erosion control along Las Cienegas Creek.

Recommendations

- ◆ The BLM should strategically close and physically erase many roads in important plant and wildlife areas to decrease habitat fragmentation.
- ◆ The BLM must take more aggressive steps to ensure that all riparian areas provide healthy habitat and achieve "proper functioning condition." In some areas, such as Canyons of the Ancients, this will require significantly curtailing livestock access.
- ◆ Trends in threatened and endangered species, as well as other special status species, should be assessed. Action should be taken to ensure all species numbers are stable or improving.
- ◆ State governments, along with the BLM and local communities, should commit to developing and enforcing total maximum daily pollutant loads to improve the water quality for these special places.

Cultural Resource Management

Grade: **D**

Cultural Resource Management

OVERALL SYSTEM	D
Agua Fria NM (AZ)	C
Canyons of the Ancients NM (CO)	A
Carrizo Plain NM (CA)	B
Cascade-Siskiyou NM (OR)	D
El Malpais NCA (NM)	D
Grand Canyon-Parashant NM (AZ)	D
Grand Staircase-Escalante NM (UT)	C
Gunnison Gorge NCA (CO)	D
Headwaters Forest Reserve (CA)	C
Las Cienegas NCA (AZ)	D
Red Rock Canyon NCA (NV)	—
Santa Rosa & San Jacinto Mtns NM (CA)	C
Snake River Birds of Prey NCA (ID)	D
Steens Mountain CMPA (OR)	F
Upper Missouri River Breaks NM (MT)	F

Notes. "—" signifies that insufficient data are available to give a grade. For data underlying this report, see the data appendix at: www.discoverNLCS.org.

The National Landscape Conservation System's unique cultural and historic resources are in jeopardy from inattention and neglect. There is limited data on the condition of specific cultural resource sites and the System as a whole, but anecdotal information from BLM staff identifies a lack of funding, personnel, and cultural site inventories and monitoring as impediments to the Agency's ability to preserve prehistoric structures and sites, rock art, and sites of historical importance. At some sites there is evidence of damage from vandalism, looting, erosion, illegal off-road vehicle use, grazing, and development.

"In the BLM, archaeologists and cultural resources... are not given the support they need."

—BLM staff member

Why measure "Cultural Resource Management"?

The System contains some of the most significant cultural resources on public lands in the United States. The cultural resources found in the NLCS range from prehistoric Native American pueblos dating from several thousand years ago to the remains of the 19th century western frontier-era migration and gold rush. Some Monuments and Conservation Areas have hundreds, others thousands, of recorded cultural sites. In just the 15 units we examined, more than 14,700 sites have been recorded. Many NLCS units have recorded only "a fraction of what's there," according to BLM archaeologists.

Most of the NLCS' National Monuments, such as Agua Fria and Canyons of the Ancients, were designated under the Antiquities Act of 1906 in part because of their exceptional archaeological sites and ancient dwellings. Also, Congress identified the need to protect important historic and cultural resources in the legislation that created many of the System's Conservation Areas, such as Las Cienegas and El Malpais. Nearly all the System's Monuments carry the expectation that these areas will provide "unequaled opportunities for scientific and archaeological research." Without regular assessment, it is impossible to know if the BLM is meeting its cultural stewardship obligations.

What indicators did we use?

- Total Cultural Inventories: Percent of area ever inventoried for cultural resources.
- Proactive Annual Inventories: Number of acres inventoried under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in the past year.
- Cultural Staff Capacity: BLM archaeologist time devoted to historic and cultural resources.
- Site Stewardship Programs: Existence of partnerships with volunteers to monitor sites through a program or friends group.

Strengths and/or limitations of the data

BLM archaeologists and other staff provided information in phone interviews between March and May 2005; also, we drew on the very limited data on cultural resources found in Resource Management Plans and Environmental Impact Assessments. Most data are informed estimates because BLM lacks the staff to regularly assess cultural resources, or the information exists in formats that could not easily be translated to unit-level analysis. Although the agency has recorded over 263,000 individual cultural sites, no database tracks cultural sites by NLCS unit.

What did we find?

Despite awareness that the NLCS contains abundant cultural resources, BLM has conducted very limited surveys of those resources—surveys which would help to better understand the resources and inform planning for their protection. In 8 of the 15 places assessed, cultural resource inventories cover less than 10 percent of the Monument or Conservation Area. Even in Colorado's Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, known to have the greatest density of cultural sites in America, just 18 percent of the Monument's 164,000 acres have been inventoried.

The majority of cultural inventories are carried out according to BLM's legal obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires assessment of impacts to cultural resources in areas where development (such as a road or power line) are proposed. The Section 106 process, while important to mitigate impacts, cannot substitute for proactive resource inventories in areas of the highest priority because they invariably lead to disconnected inventories of sites. Also, information obtained through the 106 process usually lacks condition assessments. The evident lack of proactive inventories is connected to a staffing shortage and an increasing compliance workload. "Getting funding to do... Section 110 [proactive resource inventories] is difficult," acknowledged one archaeologist. In Agua Fria National Monument, an estimated 60-70 percent of the archaeologist's time is compliance work related to proposed development.

Inability to thoroughly monitor cultural sites is a problem acknowledged throughout the NLCS. "For a fair number of sites, out of sight is out of mind," an archaeologist commented. Most NLCS areas have only a part-time cultural heritage staff person; of necessity, they rely heavily on volunteers for monitoring assistance. In Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, for example, volunteer site stewards monitor about 38 sites several times a year. More than half of the places assessed in this study benefit from a volunteer site stewardship program; among those who don't, many are establishing one. However, volunteer monitors cover only a small percentage of recorded sites.

The BLM has sought National Register nominations for very few sites in the NLCS despite the fact that many are eligible. Our research suggests that less than one percent of all known sites in the Monuments and Conservation Areas are listed on the National Register.

Lack of comprehensive monitoring makes it impossible to accurately summarize cultural site condition. "We would love to have the ability to monitor each site and get that information [on condition] but we're not there yet..." was a common response from BLM cultural resource staff. Some archaeologists thought the majority of their sites were in stable condition, but all described sites they knew were at risk—typically due to erosion, accessibility, looting, and careless camping. For officially recorded "sites at risk" the BLM typically is taking steps to stabilize the sites, but funding for preservation and stabilization of identified

**"We have lost the chance to document
so many of these resources..."**

—BLM staff member

Best Practices

In some parts of the NLCS, creative partnerships are helping meet essential needs related to cultural resource preservation. Thanks to a fortuitous partnership with Humboldt State University, all 7,400 acres of Headwaters Forest Reserve was inventoried for cultural resources in 2001.



In the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument, the BLM completed assessment and site identification of about a thousand acres along river banks through a "challenge cost share" grant with an independent archaeologist.



Agua Fria has a partnership with Arizona State University's Deer Valley Rock Art Center, which has led to a multi-year rock art research program focused on recording petroglyphs in the Monument.



Recommendations

The Department of Interior should prioritize resources for—and Congress should fund—cultural resource inventories and monitoring in the NLCS. Monuments and Conservation Areas which were established because of their significant cultural resources should have specific cultural resource goals and protection plans.

- BLM should improve their ability to track cultural resource information within the NLCS. In most states, land area surveyed for archaeological resources and site records are digitized. If BLM used this data, and took the simple step of digitizing the perimeter of each NLCS unit and entering it into a GIS system, units could readily extract from a "NLCS cultural resource system" basic information on the amount of annual inventory, number of sites recorded, and properties deemed eligible for the National Register.
- BLM and the non-profit community, including archaeological, historic preservation, and other conservation groups, should jointly encourage and expand site stewardship programs.
- BLM should pursue creative means of gaining additional condition and trend information on cultural sites, such as partnering with non-profit archaeological groups for volunteer site recording and assessments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

A Conservation Mission in Concept, Not in Practice

With the NLCS, the BLM has been given a new conservation-focused mission. However, while individual managerial actions sometimes support this mission, there is little evidence that conserving wildlife, landscapes, and cultural resources in the NLCS are an agency priority. In fact, some NLCS areas compete for financial and staff resources for conservation with other BLM areas. The conservation goals and special qualities of the NLCS are not highlighted within the BLM or communicated to the public.

Recommendations:

- The Department of Interior should institutionalize the new conservation mission for the NLCS, and give the System the leadership profile and staff it deserves.
- Agency leadership should highlight the System's special values with the public and within the agency, helping to foster an agency perception that the NLCS is an asset. Something as simple as publishing a map or brochure about the System would be a positive step.
- The NLCS should receive appropriate funding and attention within the BLM. The NLCS is allocated about \$46 million annually with, at most, the full-time equivalent of a staff of 400. Compare this to the roughly \$109 million per year that BLM spends on energy and minerals management, with 1,000 full-time staff.
- BLM should immediately prioritize and complete the RMPs for NLCS units, and implement the conservation guidance in interim and completed plans, particularly road closures and restoration.



What BLM Doesn't Know Could Hurt the NLCS

There are large data gaps that make it difficult, and perhaps impossible, for the BLM to effectively manage the lands and waters in its purview. For example, our data suggests that the agency has comprehensively inventoried cultural resources in only about 6-7 percent of the total area encompassed by the National Monuments and Conservation Areas (see Table 2). Similarly, only four of the 15 Monuments and NCAs studied reported complete inventories for invasive weeds.

The data that are gathered, particularly on recreational activities in the NLCS, are fraught with inconsistent methodologies. For example, the BLM tracks total visitors to each part of the NLCS, as well as nearly a dozen recreational uses. However, at some

point in the past five years, some units have changed how they assess total visitors—such as assumptions about the number of people in each car counted—rendering trend data nearly useless. Similarly, the way upland health is measured varies. Some units use Rangeland Health Standards, others use Ecological Site Inventories, still others haven't gathered any recent data at all.

More data is not always the priority. Our queries of BLM staff suggest that in some places, much detailed data is already available on key indicators, like riparian health. However, the data isn't routinely rendered into useful information—compiled in one place and analyzed to facilitate unit level assessments by NLCS managers. For example, only Headwaters Forest Reserve in California has summarized its trend data for threatened and endangered species into an easy-to-interpret format.

Table 2

NLCS National Monument	Percent of Area Inventoried for Cultural Resources	The BLM lacks systematic surveys of prehistoric and historic sites on NLCS lands—surveys that provide information critical to protecting these resources from off-road vehicles, roads, livestock grazing, vandalism, and erosion.
Agua Fria	6%	
Canyons of the Ancients	18%	
Carrizo Plain	12%	
Cascade-Siskiyou	14%	
Grand Canyon-Parashant	3%	
Grand Staircase-Escalante	3%	
Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mtns	11%	
Upper Missouri River Breaks	2%	

"It is fundamental to find out what you've got out there by way of prehistoric and historic resources."

—BLM staff member

Recommendations:

The BLM should:

Prioritize comprehensive inventories and monitoring of objects and resources specified in the Proclamations that created the National Monuments, such as key wildlife and plant species and cultural resources. Require monitoring of a basic set of ecosystem health indicators, including listed species, land health, and water quality, all compiled for easy unit and System level analysis, in a comprehensive database.

- Develop and use consistent approaches to measuring, collecting, and categorizing data in each NLCS unit, perhaps using National Park Service methodology, to better inform recreation, resource, and law enforcement management. Partner with scientists to design regular, required monitoring protocols that would allow the agency to answer rigorous questions about the condition of the NLCS.
- Establish a comprehensive NLCS science website that highlights research needs and opportunities at each NLCS unit, as well as offers research findings from past or current partnerships. Such a "science web portal" would help to attract research partners that can meet data-gathering needs.
- Actively seek data on the NLCS' special resources from relevant agencies, including state Game and Fish or Wildlife Departments, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state Historic Preservation offices, and local university scientists and archaeologists. In many cases, extensive data already exist outside the BLM and should be compiled with the BLM data and incorporated into planning decisions.

"We always identify in our work plans that we're going to use environmental education and interpretation as a major tool to get public compliance with land stewardship, but then we fail to fund environmental education, or try to add it to an already overburdened and overworked staff person. We get so many calls from schools, but environmental education isn't funded."

—BLM staff member

An Understaffed and Inadequately Empowered System

Most NLCS Monuments and Conservation Areas are understaffed. Nor are their managers vested with sufficient authority to champion the NLCS' unique mission and ensure it is prioritized by their own agency. For example, only one NLCS manager is part of the top-level management teams led by the BLM State Directors.

Most NLCS units have just one to three full-time staff personnel, and do not have enough dedicated staff time from archaeologists, ecologists, rangers, and public education specialists. Although most Monuments were designated under the Antiquities Act for "scientific study" and many Conservation Areas offer excellent scientific learning opportunities for students, communities, and scientists alike, few have the staff to capitalize on that objective.

Table 3

Staff Capacity

A Snapshot of Staff Capacity in 15 National Monuments and Conservation Areas

Number of Units with:

A full-time manager	11
A full-time cultural resource specialist	2
More than one law enforcement ranger	5
A full-time public education/outreach specialist	8

Recommendations:

- NLCS managers should be empowered to represent the System's needs. This should include being placed on State Director's teams.
- BLM should request—and Congress should fund—staffing at a level to allow NLCS units to successfully implement the Resource Management Plans which give management direction, and meet the conservation objectives for each unit. At a minimum, Congress should ensure that each NLCS Monument has a full-time

cultural resource specialist, education/outreach staff person, and scientist with a field of expertise relevant to that Monument or Conservation Area. More law enforcement staff to ensure visitor safety and protect resources are also essential.

- BLM should increase efforts to recruit volunteers for conservation projects in the NLCS. Websites and any document mailed to the public are free means of recruitment that require little effort. Additionally, BLM could ask the citizen Resource Advisory Councils affiliated with each unit to assist with recruitment and possibly even serve as crew leaders for projects. Great volunteer projects include fence removal and repair, trail maintenance, weed removal, campground clean up and restoration, tree planting, cultural site inventories, brochure creation, and records work and data compilation in BLM offices.

Missed Opportunities to Share Successes and Highlight Needs

NLCS managers track almost 100 annual activities in an internal agency database, including how many acres of noxious weeds were treated and grazing allotments monitored. Although NLCS managers and staff are willing to share their knowledge and data, there is no easy mechanism for the public to interpret this database information, or learn about the state of the NLCS. Nor is there a means for the BLM to help the public learn about the good work the NLCS managers are undertaking with limited resources. Increased accessibility and transparency would help the BLM to share successes, highlight the wealth of information gathered by research staff, and articulate needs for volunteers and cooperative agreements. It would undoubtedly improve the public's impression of the BLM as an accountable and capable conservation organization.

"If we ever experience a drop in the participation of our volunteer site stewards with cultural site monitoring, it will not be a question of *if* the cultural sites are further vandalized, but *when*."

—BLM staff member

Recommendations:

- A short narrative progress and financial report posted on the internet by Monument and Conservation Area managers annually or biennially would allow for basic public oversight and foster informed participation in public lands planning, management, and protection.
- The BLM should engage in a process with non-governmental organizations and other partners to further develop and improve the measures used in this assessment. They should commit to develop indicators that both the BLM and the public can use to gauge the condition and performance of individual NLCS units and the System as a whole. The agency should then commit to tracking a select set of indicators at the NLCS unit level for future assessments.

A Serious Lack of Funding

Some of our recommendations simply require a change in priorities within BLM, such as increasing the stature of NLCS managers. Others require increased funding from Congress for the NLCS, as well as partnerships among the Agency, the public, and non-profit and academic sectors.

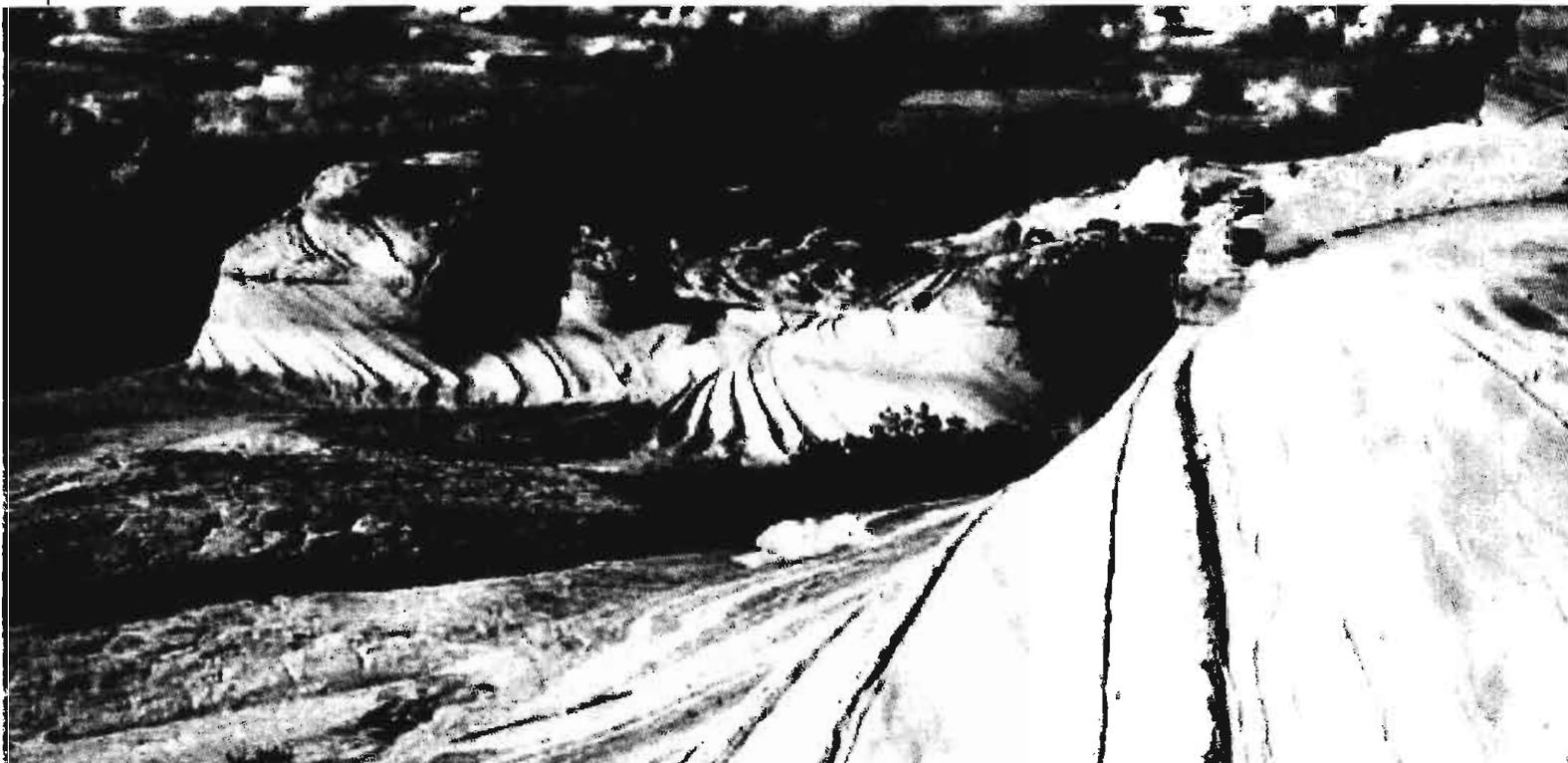
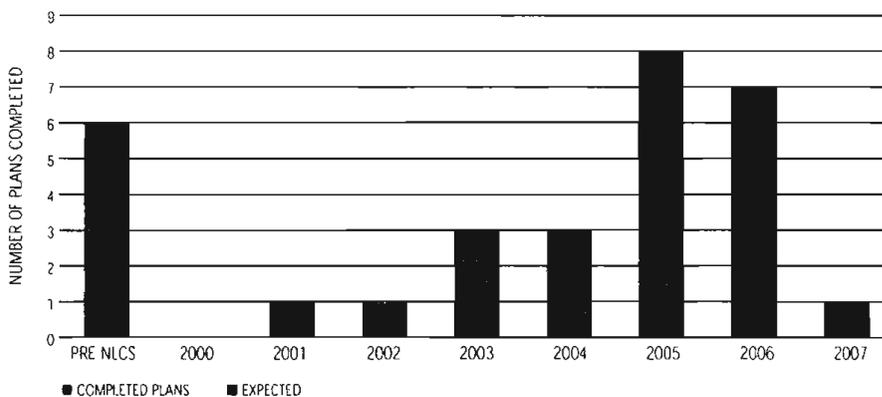
A related issue is the need to sustain funding for the NLCS after Resource Management Plans are completed. Currently, a significant percentage of the NLCS budget is devoted to planning; about half the NLCS Monuments and Conservation Areas will complete plans in 2005-2006 (see *Graph 2*). For example, the five National Monuments in Arizona

currently, on average, allocate nearly 40 percent of their total budgets to planning. When planning is complete this money should not disappear, but should instead be dedicated to implementing those plans.

Even a modest increase in funding for the NLCS, appropriately utilized, could return dramatic results. Establishing a website of science opportunities in the NLCS, for example, could attract research partnerships that result in information worth many times the initial cost of the site's development. Similarly, supporting the compilation and analysis of ecosystem and cultural resource information that the BLM staff already gather could result in greater understanding and better management of these special places. □

Graph 2
NLCS Resource Management Planning

In 2005-2007, with more than half the NLCS management plans due for completion, adequate BLM staff and funding will be essential to the planning—and plan implementation—process.



Summary of Findings: Assessed Areas and Issues Examined

Issues Examined	Leadership, Empowerment, and Accountability*	Planning for Resource Conservation	Protecting Wild and Primitive Character	Visitor Management and Law Enforcement	Natural Resource Monitoring	Ecosystem and Species Health	Cultural Resource Management
Overall System	D	—	C	C	C	—	D
Agua Fria NM (AZ)	D	—	—	C	C	—	C
Canyons of the Ancients NM (CO)	B	—	—	C	C	—	A
Carrizo Plain NM (CA)	C	—	—	C	C	—	B
Cascade-Siskiyou NM (OR)	F	—	C	C	—	—	D
El Malpais NCA (NM)	F	—	B	C	B	—	D
Grand Canyon-Parashant NM (AZ)	D	—	—	C	D	—	D
Grand Staircase-Escalante NM (UT) **	B	—	A	B	C	—	C
Gunnison Gorge NCA (CO)	D	—	C	C	B	—	D
Headwaters Forest Reserve (CA)	D	—	B	B	B	—	C
Las Cienegas NCA (AZ)	D	—	C	B	B	—	D
Red Rock Canyon NCA (NV)	C	—	B	C	D	—	—
Santa Rosa & San Jacinto Mtns NM (CA)	D	—	B	C	—	—	C
Snake River Birds of Prey NCA (ID)	C	—	—	C	B	—	D
Steens Mountain CMPA (OR)	F	—	D	D	D	—	F
Upper Missouri River Breaks NM (MT)	D	—	—	D	C	—	F

Notes: "—" signifies that insufficient data are available to give a grade.

For details on the indicators and data underlying this report, see the data appendix at: www.discoverNLCS.org.

* We urge the consideration of all grades in the context of the indicators used. For example, a "D" or "F" in "Leadership, Empowerment, and Accountability" does not mean a manager is a "bad" leader. Rather, the grade is a reflection that a Monument or NCA does not have a manager, and/or lacks a manager with line authority, a seat on the State Director's team, and an annual report.

** Because scores in this report are based on specific indicators for each issue examined, they do not reflect the BLM's failure to enforce road closures and take legal action against Kane County, Utah for posting illegal off-road vehicle signs in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

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*By accepting the conservation
mandate of the National
Landscape Conservation
System, the BLM can preside
over a spectacular System
of public lands that are as
revered by visitors as
America's National Parks.*

The Wilderness Society

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World Resources Institute

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Burying ancient treasures

Money and tools are needed to keep Arizona's natural beauty alive

Nov. 6, 2005 12:00 AM

Soaring crimson walls.

Mysterious figures etched into rocks.

Ancient ironwoods.

Historic ranch buildings.

The stone foundations of prehistoric villages.

Vistas that stretch for miles without a trace of humans.

They're all part of the natural, archaeological and scenic treasures in the national monuments and conservation areas administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

But the BLM is woefully short of the resources and tools to care for these unique and often fragile places.

The bureau manages vast areas of federal land for multiple uses, balancing commercial activities like grazing and mining with recreation and conservation.

In 2000, the most sensitive and spectacular areas were designated the National Landscape Conservation System. The BLM's mandate for those 26 million acres, 10 percent of the total land it manages, is to keep them "healthy, wild and open."

What's the record so far?

Worrisome.

The Wilderness Society and the World Resources Institute did a comprehensive assessment of the National Landscape Conservation System. They summed up the results in a report card that put the systemwide average between a C and a D.

Basic jobs, like surveying archaeological sites, are way behind. For instance, less than 6 percent of Agua Fria National Monument has been surveyed for prehistoric sites, even though that was a major reason for protecting this area along Interstate 17 north of Phoenix.

Bruce Babbitt, former Interior secretary and former governor of Arizona, warns that "we are at risk of moving backward and failing to protect these special American lands."

Better funding and more partnerships

The problem isn't a lack of enthusiasm and commitment among the BLM staff. They deserve an A for effort.

But to get results, the BLM needs better funding, more partnerships and sharper strategies, building on the practices that have been particularly successful.



Antiquities Centennial

December 2005

BACKGROUND:

Various statutes direct the BLM to protect and manage heritage resources including the Antiquities Act of 1906, and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. BLM intends to celebrate the upcoming centennial of the Antiquities Act in 2006. The centennial will provide the impetus for re-energizing the BLM Cultural Heritage Program's "Adventures in the Past" initiative and other efforts to promote awareness, appreciation and stewardship of heritage resources.

The goals of the Antiquities Centennial are to

- highlight the many heritage resources on public lands, nationally, regionally and locally, with emphasis on archaeological, historical and paleontological resources that are accessible by the public;
- highlight accomplishments and resource benefits of the Antiquities Act and the National Historic Preservation Act;
- expand awareness and support for heritage resources and encourage stewardship;
- ensure that visitors to the public lands know how to appreciate heritage resources without adversely impacting them; and
- use heritage resources as tools to teach sciences, history, respect for cultural diversity, and citizenship skills.

ADVENTURES IN THE PAST:

Since the early 1990s, "Adventures in the Past" has been the BLM's program for promoting public education about, awareness of, and involvement in protecting BLM heritage resources. Its goals include increasing responsible enjoyment of heritage resources by the public, demonstrating BLM's good stewardship of these resources, and reducing the destruction of heritage resources on the public lands. Because 2006 marks the centennial of a seminal piece of historic preservation legislation, this provides a perfect occasion to revitalize "Adventures in the Past." The benefits and duration of the initiative are intended to last far beyond 2006.

ANTIQUITIES CENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES:

BLM has created a new "Adventures in the Past" website to mark the Antiquities Centennial. The URL is <http://www.blm.gov/heritage/adventures>. This website brings together many of the educational, archaeological, recreational, and public outreach activities and programs BLM offers that fulfill the intent of historic preservation statutes and demonstrate BLM's careful stewardship of the heritage resources it manages. The website also fulfills the intent of the March 2003 Presidential Executive Order 13287 on *Preserve America*, which urges Federal land management agencies to use their cultural resources to promote economic development, particularly in the form of heritage tourism.

BLM will capitalize on opportunities in existing programs, such as Recreation and Environmental Education, to highlight heritage resources. For example, in 2006, National Public Lands Day events will feature heritage resource projects and education.

In addition to National Public Lands Day events, BLM Field Offices in Arizona are planning on-the-ground projects for 2006 that will protect or enhance heritage sites. Each of these projects will involve partnerships, and many will provide opportunities for the public to participate.

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BLM and Northern Arizona University, School of Hotel and Restaurant Management Partnership

December 2005

ISSUES:

The BLM and Northern Arizona University (NAU), School of Hotel and Restaurant Management Partnership will provide “one stop shopping” for visitors interested in public land and tourism information. A new information center will be opening in January 2006, and will be located on the first floor of the Phelps Dodge Tower, One North Central Avenue, in downtown Phoenix. The center entrance will face the 1st Street side of the Phelps Dodge Tower.

SUMMARY:

An Assistance Agreement has been signed with NAU’s School of Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM). The purpose of the Agreement is to forge a partnership between BLM and NAU/HRM.

- To deliver visitor benefits through management of a public lands information center for a three to five year period;
- Provide printed and electronic information, maps, and public outreach services for the Arizona Bureau of Land Management at its State Office facility;
- To provide coordinated and consistent information services to customers of other land management and tourism related agencies through a collaborative cost-shared effort or fee arrangement, when possible.

The Partnership creates a new management strategy. Under the management of NAU/HRM, the center offers “one stop shopping” for the visitor. The center supplies detailed informational services and instructions to approximately 10,000 recreation customers annually. Much of the information is about Arizona’s special areas (BLM’s National Landscape Conservation System), hunting on public lands, OHV use and access requirements, custom and personalized maps, and tourism information.

Additionally at the center, NAU/HRM will conduct internet training in customer service and marketing incorporating public land information and land use ethics. This training will be available for gateway communities, the hospitality industry, land managers and their partners. The partnership with NAU will provide an enhanced web presence and web-based fulfillment of information requests.

BLM PERSPECTIVE:

Because of the recognized expertise and experience of NAU and Arizona BLM in attracting and servicing visitors and customers, this relationship has a high potential for continued success. NAU/HRM brings an established record of partnership and service to public land management agencies, community tourism organizations and Native American communities in training, research and information assistance through their information technology expertise. NAU/HRM will manage the Center sales and distribution of public land and tourism information, and in return NAU/HRM will use space in the Center at no charge to them for their customer service and marketing training. The synergy of this collocation and combined service has the potential to provide more and enhanced services to the visitor, the state and the partners. With decreases in BLM funding and increases in the popularity of services and the need to support state economic development, this Partnership provides considerable value added to the investment of both partners.

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BLM Arizona FY 2005 Fire Accomplishments

December 2005

ISSUES: A wet winter and spring, combined with Arizona's population growth created a challenging year for BLM fire managers.

SUMMARY: The 2005 fire season was quite severe in Arizona, as well as southern Utah, and Las Vegas, NV. Arizona, as a whole, had 94 large fires, over 100 acres in size, burning a total of nearly 800,000 acres.

BLM firefighters spent a long spring and summer fighting over 259 fires of all sizes burning over 300,000 acres, 10 times the acres which burned in 2004. The historical average is approximately 25,000 acres. The fire activity occurred throughout most of our state, with the exception of extreme southeastern Arizona, was fueled in large part by overabundant fine fuels & grasses as a result of generous late winter and spring precipitation events with some areas receiving 300% of normal rainfall. This build-up of fine fuels was estimated to be heaviest in the past 30 to 40 years. Desert fuels usually average less than 1000 pounds of combustible vegetation per acre in a "normal" year. In 2005, BLM estimates totaled well over 2000 pounds per acre. Fine desert fuels under the correct conditions create fast moving wildland fires, which is a recipe for disaster in urban areas around Phoenix. Maricopa County is the fourth most urban county in the US. Given the current population and distribution of Maricopa County residents, these areas are similar to areas in California, which is a clear warning of a possible disaster during dry windy Arizona afternoons.

Wildland fires can have short and long term negative impacts on both the biological and physical characteristics of an area. With the continued expansion of rural communities into undeveloped areas, the risk of damage to those communities either by natural or human caused ignitions is much higher today than at any time in the past. In addition, most rural communities are quite dependent on their natural surroundings for aesthetics, products, services or recreation. Their local infrastructures and economies generally rely on marketing the environment that surrounds them. Protecting those resources, particularly those adjacent to public lands is very important.

The BLM Arizona Rural Fire Assistance Program supports increased rural fire department suppression readiness by providing grants and assistance. In 2005 BLM awarded nearly \$600,000 to fire departments. This program facilitates proper training, purchase of personal protection & safety equipment, communications equipment as well as much needed wildland firefighting tools. As in most rural areas of the West, Arizona rural fire departments are the first to respond to wildfire incidents, helping to keep fires small and away from homes, structures and local improvements. Additionally, when structure protection is required, they are able to assist federal wildland resources with the appropriate apparatus and training to protect structures or fight structural fires as part of the overall wildfire suppression activity. Through July 2005, rural fire departments assisted the BLM on 54 fires, sending a total of 138 engines to these incidents.

The BLM is also actively engaged in supporting the development of local and countywide community wildfire protection plans across the State. These plans are created by local communities to coordinate, arrange and document the specific tasks needed to improve their safety and ability to respond to local wildfire incidents. Plans have been created in Yavapai County, Pine Lake, Black Canyon City, Palominas and Mount Lemmon/Summerhaven.

BLM managed fire prevention teams have worked with communities across Arizona to educate homeowners that protecting their homes from wildfires is primarily a personal responsibility. Defensible space, building maintenance and access routes are part of the message presented to local citizens by all wildfire agencies.

The 2005 season was also a busy one for the Arizona BLM's fuels management program. The winter brought abnormally wet conditions and the summer followed with a record breaking fire season in the desert portions of AZ. Even with the additional fire suppression workload, BLM managed to accomplish 17,078 acres of the 20,000 acre Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) target, or 85 %. Outside of the Wildland Urban Interface, BLM treated 18,346 acres out of a 20,400 acre goal; an 89 % accomplishment. These treatments were designed to help protect communities like Pine Lakes, Martinez Lake, Black Canyon City, and Cascabel, or to break-up the continuity of fuel in and around areas like Mittry Lake, San Pedro National Conservation Area, Pinon Pine, and Truxton. By reducing hazardous fuels these projects also assisted restoration efforts associated with riparian areas, ponderosa pine & pinyon-juniper forests, interior chaparral communities, and desert grasslands. The BLM is proud of these accomplishments given the amount of time spent responding to wildland fire suppression during the 2005 fire season.

BLM PERSPECTIVE: The 2005 wildland fire season was 10 times higher than average. The season started earlier, ended later, and consumed more acres, keeping BLM firefighters busy. Additionally, BLM Arizona also provided expertise in the development of community wildfire protection plans, provided grants and assistance to enhance rural fire department capability, and also accomplished over 80% of the fuels targets.

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Gila Chub listed by Fish and Wildlife Service as Endangered with Critical Habitat

December 2005



SUMMARY: On Wednesday, November 2, 2005, the final rule to list the Gila chub as an endangered species and designate critical habitat was published in the Federal Register. This medium-sized minnow occurs in BLM's Phoenix and Gila Districts and historically occurred in many of the cienegas and headwater tributaries of the Gila River. As Arizona's streams and rivers dried up or became impounded and diverted over the decades, habitat for this and other Arizona native fish has been lost. In addition, introduction of exotic predators including non-native fish, such as bass and sunfish has resulted in decimation of some populations. Some of the remaining inhabited areas include BLM-managed habitat on the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, Bonita Creek in the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, Muleshoe Ranch Cooperative Management Area, and the Agua Fria National Monument.

Critical habitat was designated in 24 stream areas on 10-15% of the species' historic habitat, primarily on Forest Service and BLM-managed lands. When working on the final rule, the Fish and Wildlife Service worked closely with BLM and considered the City of Safford's concerns over critical habitat along Bonita Creek, which provides much of the domestic water supply for Safford. Because of the City of Safford's economic growth and sustainability concerns, the fact that Bonita Creek lies within the protected Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, and the fact that BLM, the City of Safford, and the Bureau of Reclamation are working on conservation of the Gila chub in Bonita Creek, the Fish and Wildlife Service did not designate critical habitat there.

Much of the public lands managed by BLM that are occupied by Gila chubs or designated critical habitat are already occupied by other threatened or endangered species. Therefore, BLM expects little impact to its management or to existing authorized uses where the chub occurs.

CONTACT:

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Hurricane Katrina Support

December 2005

ISSUES: During the late summer and fall of 2005 a series of hurricanes and associated flooding seriously impacted the southeastern United States. The Bureau of Land Management responded to the urgent needs requested by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for numerous skills and tasks including: debris removal, engineering support, law enforcement expertise, incident command and its related support positions.

SUMMARY: BLM employees were requested to assist FEMA with many immediate needs and recovery efforts caused by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma. All wildland fire agencies have used the Incident Command System (ICS) to communicate and increase understanding among firefighting agencies. FEMA has adopted the use of ICS to facilitate management of all catastrophes of this magnitude. This interagency system provides for a logical and effective structure to address the requirements necessary when a large emergency response situation occurs.

One specific challenge for BLM in Arizona has been coordinating and tracking the dispatch of agency employees and resources to those incidents under FEMA command. Due to the greater diversity of resources and expertise needed to support “all-risk” incident management (i.e. natural disasters, earthquakes, epidemics etc.), some BLM resources were assigned under other federal agencies areas of expertise. Engineering tasks were assigned to the Bureau of Reclamation, cadastral support duties were assigned to the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and law enforcement support was coordinated at the national levels of each associated federal agency.

BLM PERSPECTIVE: BLM Arizona dispatched over 65 employees to various locations around the country, including the local Veterans Coliseum in Phoenix for temporary housing of evacuees. Many of these assignments involved multiple dispatches and some employees were on duty in excess of 60 days. BLM responded to the massive relief effort by filling numerous requests for law enforcement, fire, and engineering support to assist the victims of these natural disasters.

CONTACT:

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Increase in Exploration for Uranium in the Arizona Strip

December 2005

ISSUES:

The staking of mining claims and exploration for uranium on the Arizona Strip is increasing rapidly.

SUMMARY:

In the last year, there has been a significant increase in mining-related activities on lands managed by the BLM Arizona Strip Field Office (ASFO). A surge in the number of mining claims staked for uranium began in April 2004, and rapidly accelerated between September 2004 and January 2005. This trend has continued in 2005 with at least one company using helicopters to stake claims on the ground. Between April 2004 and September 2005 (there is a lag time of approximately two months for data to be entered in the BLM national database [LR2000]), there have been approximately 700 new mining claims located for uranium on the ASFO.

- US Uranium Ltd. submitted a notice on September 19, 2005, to drill a maximum of 45 holes over nine target areas. This notice is authorized, bonded and drilling is currently in progress.
- Quaterra submitted two notices and one plan of operations for exploratory drilling on November 18, 2005. These submittals are being processed and resource clearances completed. A total of between 40 and 80 drill holes are proposed.

Recently the ASFO was contacted by Rich Ore and Standard Uranium for advice on how to submit proposals for their upcoming uranium exploration projects. Other companies who have recently staked claims for uranium on the Arizona Strip include: Clearwater Resources, Liberty Star Gold, North Exploration, Titanium Resources, North American Exploration, and International Uranium Corp. One company has indicated that they will be filing a plan of operations for a new underground uranium mine during the next year.

International Uranium Corp. (IUC) has three existing uranium mines on the Arizona Strip which have been on "care and maintenance" status since the price of uranium fell in the early 1990s. The Kanab North, Pinenut and Arizona 1 mines are expected to reopen in the foreseeable future. IUC owns the White Mesa Mill near Blanding, Utah, which is one of the two remaining operating uranium mills in the US.

Through 1990, when mining for uranium on the ASFO previously ceased, production had totaled 1.472 million tons of ore from five mines with an average grade of 0.647% U₃O₈ containing 19.04 million pounds of U₃O₈.

Processed uranium is used primarily for the production of electrical energy in nuclear power plants in the US and overseas.

BLM PERSPECTIVE:

The workload in the Mining Law Program is increasing rapidly and impacting not only the mineral's specialists, but all supporting programs within the ASFO. Processing of notices and plans of operations involves review of contract cultural reports, NEPA input and document preparation, Threatened and Endangered Species surveys and reports, interdisciplinary reviews and lands work for associated rights-of-ways, in addition to the geologic and minerals work. The BLM Arizona Strip Field Office is striving to accomplish this additional energy-related workload.

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Article Last Updated: 12/01/2005 11:26 PM

New maps whet mining appetite

Utah's uranium, limestone in high demand

By Judy Fahys
The Salt Lake Tribune
Salt Lake Tribune

The Utah Geological Survey has just published maps of hot spots for uranium and limestone.

There's keen interest in both commodities.

The construction industry, gripped in a building-products shortage, needs more limestone to make cement, and western Utah offers an abundance of good-quality reserves.

And, with many talking about a renaissance of the nuclear-power industry, those who stake claims are hoping for a third uranium boom on the Colorado Plateau in southeastern Utah.

The maps will be most sought after from people in both industries, according to the state's geology office.

"The number of public inquiries about uranium has gone up tremendously," said Ken Krahulec, who helped plot the map of uranium and vanadium mines, districts and deposits.

Utah has been going through a boom already - at least in terms of interest. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management counted about 508 mining claims of all types in the 2000-01 budget year. In an 11-month period in 2004-5, as the price for uranium quadrupled, the number of mining claims jumped to 6,823, according to the agency.

BLM geologist Frank Bain said the price for a pound of uranium is now \$34.25. He said many claims stakers are old-time southeastern Utah miners with ties to the booms in the 1950s and 1970s.

They generally are, he said, "people who are hoping make a few bucks by selling their claims to someone else."

Lately, that often means Canadian uranium companies.

The renewed interest in uranium claims has been accompanied by an increase in conflicts over claim jumping, he added. Some appear headed to court, Bain said. "In the old days, it was solved with a shotgun."

Bryce Tripp, the state geologist behind the limestone report, noted that two cement plants already rely on Utah limestone, one in Morgan County and the other near Delta.

Meanwhile, a few times a year his office fields questions from international construction companies. One is currently exploring for a new mine.

"The West is certainly an attractive area," Tripp said. "Companies can't get enough [construction raw materials] to finish what they are building now."

The state School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration has its eyes on both commodities. Agency spokesman Dave Hebertson said uranium inquiries have come in for trust lands in San Juan, Grand and Emery counties.

"We have leased some lands that haven't been leased in a long time," he said.

In addition, the agency, which raises money for state schools from the 3.4 million acres in its charge, earns about \$750,000 a year from limestone companies.

The limestone map and report costs \$15.95. A CD containing the uranium-vanadium map costs \$24.95, while the plot-on-demand map is available for \$14.95.

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NEWS RELEASE

WWW.AZ.BLM.GOV



For Release: November 10, 2005
Contact: Carrie Templin (602) 417-9448
Carrie_templin@blm.gov

06-SO-002

BLM State-Specific Web Site Reconnected in Arizona

The Bureau of Land Management in Arizona is pleased to announce that its web site is now back on line at www.az.blm.gov. Our customers can now again obtain non-Indian Trust information about the BLM in a timely manner.

Most state BLM websites have now been reconnected. In addition, the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Information site also now available. The Bureau originally disconnected these sites so that site security could be improved.

The BLM recognizes the impact of this disconnection to its customers and thanks them for their patience and understanding during this period. The last six months have posed challenges, but making sure that all constituents receive timely information about the agency's actions has been a priority for the entire agency.

The BLM is now concentrating on reconnecting sites that provide interactive non-Indian Trust data and services. Unfortunately, sites of this kind are more complex and time consuming to reconnect. Additional announcements will be made as other sites are reconnected.

--BLM--

NEWS RELEASE

WWW.AZ.BLM.GOV



For Release: November 3, 2005
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06-SO-001

Secretary Norton Announces New Appointments to BLM Resource Advisory Council in Arizona

Interior Secretary Gale Norton announced today the appointment of several new and current members to Arizona's citizen-based Resource Advisory Council (RAC) that advises the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on public land issues.

"We welcome our new and reappointed members to the Resource Advisory Council and commend them for their commitment," Norton said. "I look forward to their advice and recommendations as we work together to improve the health and productivity of our public lands."

The BLM's Resource Advisory Councils (RACs), composed of citizens chosen for their expertise in natural resource issues, help the agency carry out its stewardship of 261 million acres of public lands. The Bureau, which manages more land than any other Federal agency, has 24 RACs across the West, where most BLM-managed land is located.

"The work of the Resource Advisory Councils is a prime example of Cooperative Conservation," Norton noted. "This unique partnership strengthens our management efforts and helps to promote citizen stewardship."

"RAC members come from a variety of backgrounds and bring a wide range of perspectives to each of the Arizona RAC," said BLM Arizona State Director Elaine Zielinski. "This diversity results in a balanced outlook that helps the BLM carry out its multiple-use mission in Arizona," which is to manage the public lands for multiple uses."

The RAC appointments include: 1) Stephen Sway from Sierra Vista, representing Off-Highway Vehicle Use, 2) Frances Werner from Tucson, representing Dispersed Recreation, 3) Glendon Collins from Phoenix, representing Dispersed Recreation, 4) Dr. Larry Howery from Tucson, representing Academia, and 5) Richard Lunt is from Duncan and is a Greenlee County Supervisor for District 3. He will represent the Elected Official position on the RAC. The terms of the five appointments are for three years (2003-2006).

"I am very pleased with Secretary Norton's appointments," Zielinski said. "As BLM's advisor, the RAC has worked diligently on numerous issues and paved the way for more effective on-the-ground land management, while helping to build strong partnerships between BLM and its constituencies."

-More-

Secretary Norton Announces RAC Appointments

Following is a complete list of the RAC members, the category they represent and their place of residence.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Term</u>
Thomas Kelly	Commodity/Grazing	Wickenburg	9/2006
Lee Aitken	Commodity/Transportation/ROW	Tucson	9/2007
Sandra McCullen	Commodity/Off-Road Vehicle Use	Mesa	9/2006
Carolyn Loder	Commodity/Energy/Minerals	Tempe	9/2007
**Stephen Saway	Commodity/Off-Road Vehicle Use	Sierra Vista	9/2008
William Branan	Non-Commodity/Environmental	Elgin	9/2007
Jan Holder	Non-Commodity/Dispersed Recreation	Safford	9/2007
Tina Clark	Non-Commodity/Historical/Archaeology	Yuma	9/2006
**Glendon Collins	Non-Commodity/Dispersed Recreation	Phoenix	9/2008
**Frances Werner	Non-Commodity/Dispersed Recreation	Tucson	9/2008
Lorraine Euler	Local Area/Public-At-Large	Glendale	9/2006
Peggy Titus	Local Area/Public-At-Large	Mayer	9/2006
Jay Adkins	Local Area/Public-At-Large	Goodyear	9/2007
*Richard Lunt	Local Area/Elected Official	Duncan	9/2008
*Larry Howery	Local Area/Academician	Tucson	9/2009

***Newly Appointed and **Reappointed RAC Members**

The next meeting of the Arizona RAC is scheduled for December 6, 2005, at the BLM Arizona State Office located at One North Central Avenue on the 8th floor. For more information on the Arizona RAC, please contact Deborah Stevens at 602-417-9504.



Saginaw Hill Update

December 2005

ISSUES:

BLM is pursuing the clean up of the Saginaw Hill mine site. A Draft Engineering Evaluation / Cost Analysis (EE/CA) has been prepared and presented to the public for comment. In addition, BLM hosted two public meetings to summarize the issues and answer public questions.

SUMMARY:

Saginaw Hill is a 540-acre parcel of public land surrounded by private and State land located southwest of Tucson, Ariz. It contains abandoned mine sites which pose threats to the public. Several mine openings which posed physical safety hazards were closed during the 1990s, and the remainder of the physical hazards were closed in spring 2005. Two of the existing mine sites encompass mine wastes that are the subject of an ongoing BLM Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) Removal Action using the Interior's Central HazMat Fund. The Saginaw Hill site is near the Harriet Johnson Elementary School and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe gaming casino.

BLM formally closed to public use two 10-acre sites that contain mine wastes with high levels of contamination. Within those sites, fences have been erected and signs placed around several areas where the contamination levels are highest. Increased law enforcement patrols, and the formal closure give rangers the authority to issue citations. In August 2005, BLM closed an additional 290 acres to public access to provide a safety zone for future clean up activities.

BLM conducted a potentially responsible party search, contacted mining claimants to close mine features, and coordinated with the Arizona State Mine Inspector to pursue enforcement of state safety regulations. The current claimant did not assume responsibility for the 28 shafts which were then filled in by the BLM.

As part of BLM's community outreach, a public meeting was held on June 27, 2005, to explain the CERCLA clean up process and discuss health risks. A panel consisting of BLM, AZ State Mine Inspector, AZ Department of Environmental Quality, Pima County Health Department, AZ Department of Health Services, and Tucson Unified School District answered questions from the public. BLM successfully communicated its strategy to clean up Saginaw Hill and corrected misinformation that had been distributed by a very aggressive, local community action group. Local news media provided balanced coverage of the meeting on the nightly news spots, which helped to distribute information to a broader audience. Questions of health risk were fielded by Pima County Health Department which is offering to test children six years old and younger.

Further site investigation work was conducted the week of June 27 to ascertain the spread of contamination from the mine wastes. The results were combined with sampling conducted for the EE/CA and presented in the draft EE/CA which was released November 14, 2005. The results indicate that arsenic and lead contamination occurs in the soils to the northwest of the Saginaw Hill mine sites and to the southwest in an arroyo. The contamination did not migrate beyond the boundaries of BLM-administered land.

In addition, soil sampling of surrounding soils has detected high concentrations of arsenic that appear to have leached from natural deposits in the underlying bedrock. BLM has also found that many of the small waste piles from exploration shafts in the immediate area also have very high concentrations of arsenic. BLM installed chain link panels around these satellite piles.

A public meeting was held on November 28, 2005 to present the findings of the draft EE/CA. That document explains in detail the full range of alternatives developed to meet the objectives outlined by the CERCLA clean-up process. The information was presented by BLM with support from the Pima County Health Department. Most of the other partner agencies that attended the June 27th meeting were in attendance. The alternatives presented ranged from No Action to full removal of the contaminated soils and groundwater. The contractor presented their recommended alternatives for both soil and groundwater which involves excavation of all mining waste into an on-site repository and placing a gravel cap on the remaining surface materials to contain the naturally occurring heavy metals. Based on the groundwater test results, the BLM has recommended that the contaminated groundwater continue to be monitored for any evidence of movement of the contamination.

BLM PERSPECTIVE:

The BLM has aggressively mitigated the physical hazards at Saginaw Hill through fencing and signs and filling in mine shafts. BLM hand delivered a letter to the mining claimant on March 22, 2005, asking him to identify which of the mining features he claimed he owned, such as mine wastes and shafts. The claimant has disavowed ownership and does not object to BLM remediation.

BLM will continue with the ongoing CERCLA removal action and pursue funding to do additional site characterization, community outreach, and complete the EE/CA. A 30-day comment has been scheduled from November 14 to December 14, 2005. A public meeting was held on November 28, 2005, at the Harriet Johnson Primary School to present the EE/CA and to answer questions and comments. Based on input from the community, the comment period was extended until December 29, 2005. Following the analysis of any comments from the public and the BLM partner agencies, a final EE/CA will be issued and BLM will choose a remediation alternative and issue a decision. The clean-up action could begin as early as summer of 2006 depending on the level of allocated funding.

BLM is continuing its contact with Congressman Grijalva's Office, Pima County which continues to have an interest in the area as a park, the Tucson Unified School District that has a school nearby, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe which has a nearby casino, ADEQ, and Pima County Health Department.

CONTACT:

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SAGINAW HILL CHRONOLOGY UPDATED 10.25.05

1988/89 Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) are prepared for the proposed "Saginaw Hill Regional Park by consultants working for Pima County.

1990/91 Despite findings of ESAs, Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) builds the Harriet Johnson Primary School adjacent to Saginaw Hill, through BLM Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP).

December 1990 -- TUSD contacted the BLM Phoenix District to express its concerns about abandoned mine shafts near the new school.

February 1991 -- BLM wrote to the Office of the State Mine Inspector requesting that the State Mine Inspector take appropriate action.

June 5, 1991 -- the State Mine Inspector informed BLM in writing that all mining claims owners were notified under Arizona (AZ) Revised Statute 27-318 that shafts would be closed by the Mine Inspector unless suitable hazard elimination was undertaken by the claimant.

June 24, 1991 -- the Mine Inspector held a meeting in Tucson with TUSD, Pima Co. Supervisor's, local Fire Dept., Pascua Yaqui tribe, the media and BLM. A core committee that included BLM was formed to ensure action was taken before the opening of the school.

July 25, 1991 -- the public was informed through the media of hazardous materials near smelter slag at Saginaw Hill.

August 1991 -- the AZ State Mine Inspector sent a plan to BLM to eliminate hazards at Saginaw Hill. The plan calls for three phases: Phase I, immediate filling of shafts within ¼ -mile of the school; Phase II, soliciting help from the mining industry to blast in the large open cut on top of Saginaw Hill; Phase III, evaluation of remaining hazards within one mile of the school, notification to claimants to fence and post open shafts, evaluate mine wastes for environmental damage and remediation. In a memorandum dated August 6, 1991, BLM stated "It is our continuing position that the mine/mill hazard elimination is not a federal action; instead the Mine Inspector is acting to enforce State mine hazard regulations."

The AZ State Mine Inspector, with help from industry, closes a few shafts deemed to be the most dangerous, including a large hole on top of Saginaw Hill.

A mining notice was filed with BLM in conjunction with placer claims filed on the Saginaw Hill site in 1988. The notice further hampered efforts by the AZ Mine Inspector to close shafts and clean up mine wastes because of the claimants' rights under the mining laws.

1994 Placer claims are dropped and the mining notice case file is closed by BLM. There is no documentation that shows that exploration or development work was done on the ground by the mining claimant.

1997 June -- one of the shafts closed in 1991 collapses. BLM sends a letter to the claimants asking them to repair the collapsed plug and close the mine shaft again. No response was received from the claimant.

1997/98 BLM staff discovers copies of the 1988/89 ESAs in working files of former employee.

1998 June -- BLM closes two mine shafts, including the one collapsed in 1997.

1999 March -- BLM sends a letter to the mining claimant asking him to close eight additional mine shafts found within the claims, after receiving complaints from local fire department about trash dumping occurring into the shafts. No response was received from the claimant. In March, BLM fills in four shafts that are the most accessible by the public.

2001 Pima County applies for a Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP) lease for Saginaw Hill, with the intent to create a desert park. BLM informs Pima County that the land has existing mining claims, which have a pre-existing right, and that any hazardous waste must be cleaned up before the land can be transferred to the county.

2002 September -- using standard policies and procedures, BLM publishes a notice in the Federal Register announcing Saginaw Hill to be suitable for classification for an R&PP lease and the land is segregated from the General Mining Laws.

2003 March -- Limited sampling of the mine wastes conducted by BLM shows elevated levels of lead and arsenic, which confirms the 1988/89 ESA results.

May -- BLM prepares a Preliminary Assessment. It concludes that a release of hazardous substances has occurred at Saginaw Hill.

Spring -- BLM applies for Central Hazmat Fund (CHF) to conduct a removal action for hazardous substances, which begins with a detailed assessment.

December -- BLM fences and signs the two mine waste areas totaling five acres, knows to contain contaminants.

2004 Summer -- BLM contracts for a Removal Site Inspection, the Engineering Evaluation/Cost Assessment (EE/CA) and Community Involvement Plan.

December -- Contractor completes site characterization field work.

2005 January -- Community Involvement Plan is completed; it outlines plans to keep the community notified and involved after completion of the EE/CA.

February -- Office of Inspector General visits Tucson and interview staff, visits Saginaw Hill.

February -- Results of domestic well sampling are completed. Results show that water from a domestic water tank exceeds AZ standards for lead and arsenic. Water from well is retested; results show that the well water does not exceed drinking water standards for lead or arsenic.

February -- Vandalized and breached fences are repaired. New signs are installed on fences surrounding both waste areas. Emergency fences are erected around the most dangerous remaining mine shafts.

March -- Draft EE/CA is submitted to BLM. Results show groundwater is contaminated. BLM asks for scope of work to do further site characterization and implement the Community Involvement Plan.

BLM submits a Notice to the Federal Register for a year-round use restriction from the areas around the two contaminated sites, to give law enforcement more authority.

A chain link fence is erected around one contaminated waste site.

BLM Tucson Field Office hand delivers a letter to the current mining claimant to establish ownership of the mine features and request immediate action to secure the mine features. The claimant verbally responds that he has no interest in closing features at the Saginaw Hill site and had nothing to do with creating them. The AZ Mine Inspector is considering action under state law.

April -- BLM backfills all remaining 27 mine shafts on BLM land. BLM erects a stronger chain link fence around the Palo Verde waste site.

June – BLM hosts a public meeting as part of its community involvement plan to inform the public about the CERCLA process, what BLM has learned about Saginaw Hill thus far, what additional studies are planned, and potential health effects. A panel consisting of representatives from BLM, AZ Department of Environmental Quality, AZ State Mine Inspector, AZ Department of Health Services, Tucson Unified School District, and Pima County Health Department answer question from the public.

BLM conducts more site investigation work including soil sampling, installation of monitoring wells, and sampling of domestic wells.

July – The Saginaw Hill PRP Draft PRP report, dated December 2004, described the involvement of a number of individuals and corporation. Most of the individuals are deceased and the corporations defunct. This month, BLM plans to send CERCLA 104(e) Information Request to Phelps Dodge Corporation and the mining claimant to determine what activities they conducted at the site. Finally, a Cost Recovery Plan has been prepared that sets forth in detail BLM's cost recovery strategy at the site.

August – BLM formally closes and fences 290 acres at Saginaw Hill to further protect the public from satellite mine wastes that were discovered to contain high concentration of metals.

September – BLM receives the Draft EE/CA, a Final Draft will be available in November 2005.

November – Public meeting held on November 28, 2005 to discuss the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft EE/CA. The document was originally available for review and comment for 30 days from November 14, 2006 to December 14, 2005; however, based on several issues presented at the public meeting, the comment period was extended to December 29, 2005.