

# Idaho BLM Accomplishments



2008



Greetings!

It gives me tremendous pleasure to serve as the State Director for the Bureau of Land Management in Idaho. While not without challenges, we have much to be proud of as we look back at the many accomplishments of 2008. This report highlights a few of these achievements.

During the past year, Idaho BLM supported energy production and transmission projects and continued timely processing of livestock grazing permits according to the strategic plan for that review. Travel planning and travel management ensured continued access to a variety of outdoor recreational experiences. We continued to build on efforts to restore healthy landscapes through local community and partnership efforts, and we worked with partners to conserve habitat for sensitive species such as bull trout, slick spot peppergrass and sage-grouse. Protecting lives and property from wildfire in the expanding wildland-urban interface and on range and forest lands was also a top priority.



These accomplishments would never have been possible without the hard work of our dedicated employees and the support of our many partners and neighbors. Together, we made substantial progress in sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of Idaho's public lands and resources; lands which make up 22 percent of the state's land base and which provide for a multitude of uses and values both here at home and across the nation.

I look forward to the coming year being full of opportunities for us all to continue bringing leadership and expertise to the job of resource management. By challenging ourselves, we can continue to meet the needs of a changing nation and a changing world.

Sincerely,

*Thomas H. Dyer*

Thomas H. Dyer  
State Director

## Recreation

Our National System of Public Lands is increasingly used for the outdoor recreational experiences it offers. Idaho's particularly rapid population growth has made recreation one of the premier elements of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) mission and service in the state.

More intensive use of public lands for recreation requires more attention to protecting resource values and managing potential conflicts with other uses of public lands. In some cases, recreational user fees have been implemented to support resource protection and service enhancement. Recreational user fees support the important goals of ensuring enjoyment of natural and cultural resources and providing fair value in recreation.

The Idaho BLM/Forest Service Joint Recreation Resource Advisory Committee are actively involved in advising both agencies on their recreation fee programs.

In 2008, the Coeur d'Alene District established a new fee site at the Mineral Ridge Boat Launch on Lake Coeur d'Alene. The Coeur d'Alene Field Office also sought public input as planning began for recreational development at the Blue Creek Bay site.

Travel management plans help ensure enjoyment of public lands while improving the quality of access to outdoor experiences. In 1973, there were just 2,800 off-highway vehicles registered in Idaho; today, there are more than 100,000, with an additional 10,000 being registered each year.

The travel management plan for the Challis Field Office signed in June puts in place seasonal trail and road closures intended to protect Wilderness Study Areas while leaving 657,000 acres open to motorized travel year-round. Overall, the plan reduces road redundancy that in turn fragments sage-grouse habitat. The Challis plan was developed in partnership with the Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation, the Idaho Department of Fish & Game, and the Salmon-Challis National Forest.



*The Lower Salmon River is the longest free-flowing river in the lower 48 states, drawing thousands of rafters and kayakers every year, mostly in the months of July through September.*



River recreation in the Challis area was enhanced with two new boat ramps, one at the Bayhorse Recreation Site, the other at the Lost River Access Trail. The Field Office continues to work with the City of Mackay to maintain and improve access to the Big Lost River.

In the Owyhee Field Office, implementation of the Wilson Creek Travel Management Plan (TMP) began in 2008, filling a niche for non-motorized recreation, while work on a TMP for the Murphy sub-region focused on motorized recreation. In the Wilson Creek sub-region, construction of a new trailhead and installation of informational kiosks and trail markers were completed as planned. Work was begun to rehabilitate former OHV routes, hill climbs and informal play areas now closed under the TMP. The Hemingway Butte Play Area remains open with improved amenities in the form of two newly built restrooms.

The Cottonwood and Coeur d'Alene Field Offices have incorporated travel management into their respective resource management plans. The Coeur d'Alene RMP was finalized in 2008, with completion of the Cottonwood plan expected in early 2009. A comprehensive TMP for Craters of the Moon National Monument is also underway and will be completed in the coming year. Travel management planning for the Salmon Field Office began in February 2008 and will benefit from the Lemhi County Commission's participation as a cooperating agency.

Travel planning and management are also part of the ongoing revision of the Jarbidge RMP, and the Burley Field Office has contracted with Cassia County to inventory two-track roads on lands in the field office area.



*About 6,500 parties float the 112-mile stretch of the Lower Salmon river managed by Cottonwood Field Office - equating to about 30,000 user-days.*



# Energy

Idaho possesses abundant renewable energy resources in the form of wind and geothermal energy that will be essential to building a sustainable-energy future. Idaho is also a critical link in the Nation's energy supply system. Pipelines and power transmission lines connect energy production facilities in the central Rockies with in-state energy markets and those in the Pacific Northwest.

## Energy Transmission

In 2008, all milestones for energy transmission projects proposed for BLM-managed lands in Idaho were met or exceeded, including work on right-of-way (ROW) applications for the Gateway West transmission line (with BLM-Wyoming), the Southwest Intertie Project (SWIP, with BLM-Nevada), the Mountain States Transmission Intertie transmission line (MSTI, with BLM-Montana), and the Sunstone Pipeline (Idaho Falls District, with U.S. Forest Service). Designated energy transport corridors on Federal lands in the 11 Western states include 314 miles on BLM-managed land.



## Wind Energy

The Burley Field Office continues to administer the ROW grant for the wind power project on Cotterel Mountain. The Jarbidge Field Office is leading the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed China Mountain wind energy project, one of the largest wind energy projects yet proposed for public lands. A local working group has formed to focus on issues surrounding wind turbine towers and sage-grouse. The project is on schedule for a Record of Decision to be issued in late 2010.

## Geothermal Energy

Environmental analysis of the Sulphur Canyon non-competitive geothermal lease was completed on schedule. The lease will be formally issued early in 2009.

BLM-Idaho also actively promoted competitive geothermal leasing nominating eighteen geothermal parcels in 2008, with additional leasing expected in 2009, following completion of the Nationwide programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) for geothermal energy development on public lands.

The Burley Field Office continued working with proponents of geothermal projects in the Raft River Valley and approved resource exploration plans on non-leased parcels in the area. The Boise District Office is supporting existing leases in the Crane Creek field.



*18 geothermal parcels were nominated for competitive leasing in FY 08.*

## Solid Mineral Leasing

The BLM leases certain solid minerals on the lands it manages and on other Federal lands. These commodities are key to the Nation's economy and in many cases to the stability of local and regional economies. Such is the case in Idaho, where two mining operations were among the highlights of 2008.

### **Phosphate: Smoky Canyon, Idaho Falls District**

A Record of Decision was signed for the expansion of phosphate mining operations at Smoky Canyon, located in the Pocatello Field Office on land managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The BLM cooperated with the Forest Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, involving the mine's operator, J.R. Simplot, to ensure that water quality standards, Forest Service rules on roadless areas, and numerous other resource protection concerns were addressed. The Decision contains extensive mitigation measures and best management practices to protect human health, treaty resources, and the environment including migratory birds, other wildlife, aquatic resources, and fisheries.

*The Smoky Canyon Mine employs 210 people; an additional 350 people work at the Don Fertilizer Plant in Pocatello, whose sole source for ore is the Mine. Royalties paid on the phosphate ore range from \$1.6 to \$2 million annually, half of which is returned to the State of Idaho to support public schools and county government and services.*

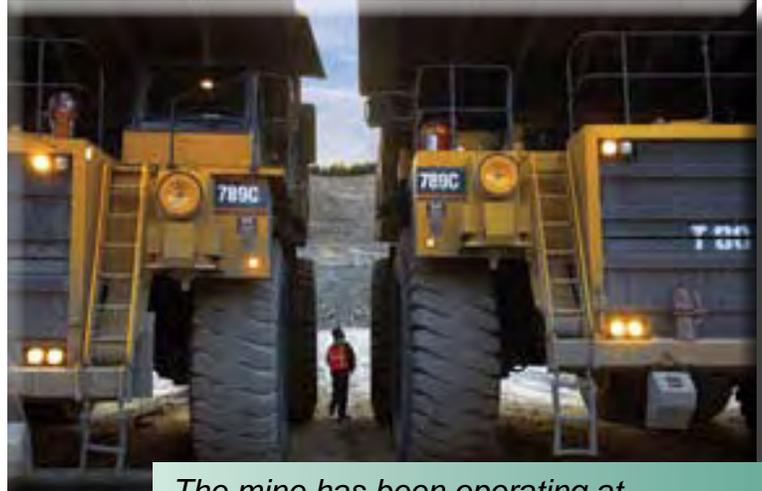


The Smoky Canyon Mine employs 210 people; an additional 350 people work at the Don Fertilizer Plant in Pocatello, whose sole source for ore is the Smoky Canyon Mine. Annual wages and salaries for these employees exceed \$52 million. Royalties paid on the phosphate ore range from \$1.6 to \$2 million annually, half of which is returned to the State of Idaho to support public schools and county government and services.

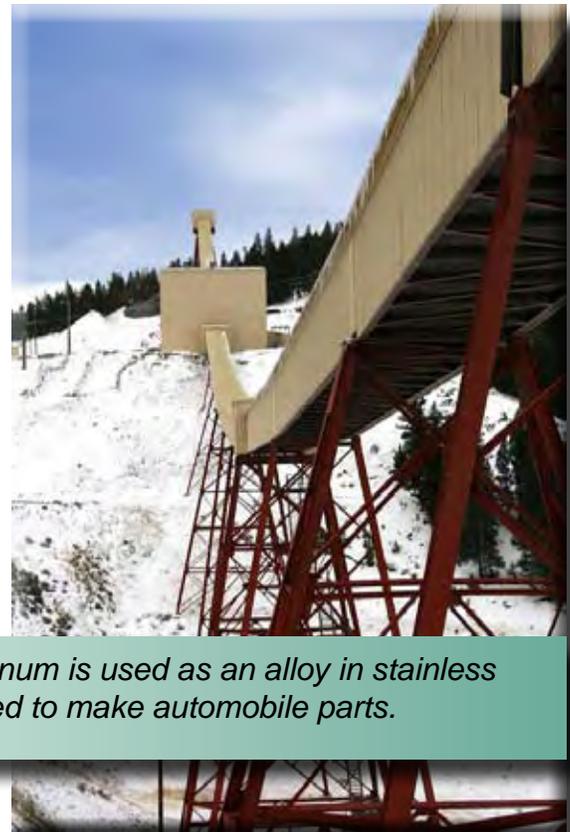
### **Molybdenum: Thompson Creek Mine, Idaho Falls District**

The Thompson Creek molybdenum mining operation in the Challis Field Office received the BLM Hardrock Mineral Community Outreach and Economic Security Award in 2008 for its commitment to the long-term economic health of the community, improving community infrastructure, assisting local organizations, and providing ongoing academic and vocational opportunities for area residents. The mine has been operating at commercial levels since 1983, employing 350 people and producing six percent of the world's supply of molybdenum from a 2,500-acre site southwest of Challis. Daily, monthly and annual projects augment spending of nearly \$40 million annually on goods and services in the communities of Challis, Mackay and Salmon.

The Sustainable Mineral Development Award recognizes Thompson Creek's commitment to community economic security, educational programs, historic preservation, youth development, and environmental protection.



*The mine has been operating at commercial levels since 1983, employing 350 people and producing six percent of the world's supply of molybdenum from a 2,500-acre site southwest of Challis.*



*Molybdenum is used as an alloy in stainless steel used to make automobile parts.*

## Livestock Grazing

The National System of Public Lands manages more than 2,200 grazing allotments in Idaho which maintain open space while supporting rural communities and sustaining a unique part of the state's culture and history. As longtime users of public lands, grazing permittees are able to use their experiences with public lands to support the BLM in managing the effects of severe wildfires, invasive plant species, and dramatic population growth in previously rural or undeveloped areas.

BLM-Idaho has developed and continues to refine and implement a strategic work plan for fully processing all pending grazing permits and leases. The number of protests and appeals – along with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and litigation associated with the grazing program – indicate the high level of public interest in the health of public rangelands and in grazing as one of the multiple uses for which the BLM must manage.

In 2008, grazing permit renewals in the Upper Snake Field Office were completed. Field and District Office staff processed permits on more than 400 allotments, including associated assessments of Standards and Guidelines and NEPA analyses, between 1999 and 2008. This year, the Pocatello Field Office processed 28 permits, marking completion of 98 percent of the pending renewals on the 347 grazing permits it administers. The Twin Falls District fully processed 31 grazing permits.



The BLM continues work with stakeholders at the state and local levels to ensure that standards and guidelines for rangeland health are being achieved on all grazing allotments. Standards for the health of public rangelands in Idaho were finalized in 1997, with assessments scheduled for completion in 2009.

The ways in which livestock grazing interacts with other uses of the land also continues to be evaluated. An interdisciplinary team of resource specialists and academic researchers examined interactions among grazing, vegetation and fire behavior during the 2007 Murphy Wildland Fire Complex. The team's findings and recommendations are being developed into pilot projects that will use targeted strategic grazing as one tool for managing wildland fire fuels.



# Healthy Lands Initiative

The Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI) aims to improve the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands in today's fast-growing West and thereby avoid restrictions on uses of those lands that would directly affect quality of life locally and nationally. BLM lands in Idaho are part of two HLI emphasis areas.

The Southern Idaho-Snake River Plain Healthy Lands Initiative coordinates landscape-level efforts to maintain and improve the sagebrush-steppe rangelands of southern Idaho. Here, the focus is sustaining the wildlife, recreational, and traditional values provided by the sagebrush steppe in the face of increasing demand for energy and economic development.

The Oregon-Idaho-Nevada Cooperative Shrub-Steppe Restoration Partnership involves maintaining shrub-steppe health where it currently exists and strategically restoring additional areas that are critical to wildlife. The Partnership accelerates implementation of the three states' sage-grouse conservation plans.

The State Director issued guidance in 2008 requiring that protection of sage-grouse habitat be considered during fire management planning and fire suppression, as well as in land use planning, authorizations, and analysis of new infrastructure and wind energy development. Sage-grouse habitat conservation measures were incorporated into the Boise District Fire Management Plan, and the statewide Fire Management Direction Amendment (FMDA) analyzes the effectiveness of fuels treatments in strengthening sage-grouse strongholds.

Partnerships are a cornerstone of the HLI and in Idaho include a strong relationship with the IDFG, the Nature Conservancy, the Owyhee Uplands project, the University of Idaho, Utah State University, and the statewide sage-grouse advisory committee and 12 local working groups.



The Jarbidge Field Office worked closely in 2008 with the Idaho Department of Agriculture, the Idaho Department of Lands, and IDFG to rehabilitate both public and state lands with native vegetation.

Land exchanges and acquisitions that conserve or improve landscape health were accomplished through partnerships with various state and federal agencies, local governments, the Teton Regional Land Trust, and the Conservation Fund.

# Fuels Treatment and Vegetation Management

Fuels treatment has become increasingly important in preventing wildfire in the growing wildland-urban interface (WUI). Hazardous fuels were reduced on more than 84,000 acres of public lands in Idaho in 2008, including nearly 53,700 acres in the WUI. Mechanical treatments were the most common method in the WUI, while most of the acres outside the Interface were treated with herbicides to reduce fuel loads. Prescribed fire was used on a total of 11,750 acres. Monitoring of some 70,300 acres tracked the effectiveness of earlier treatments.

## Coeur d'Alene District

The City of Wallace in the Coeur d'Alene District has historic experience with devastating wildfire: half the town along with 3 million exurban acres burned in Idaho's largest fire ever, in 1910. Conditions now are worse than a century ago, with more trees per acre. Under the National Fire Plan (NFP), the BLM has begun the collaborative Wallace South Hill Project, a community fire protection plan to manage the threat of future fire. Another NFP project – the Two Tails Stewardship project – treated 700 acres of forest in 2008 to reduce fuel hazards in the WUI near Bonners Ferry. Local mills make use of biomass removed from the project area, which to-date totals 5.2 million board-feet of saw timber, hew wood and pulp.



*The Fire Management Direction Amendments (FMDA) were approved in July 2008 for 12 resource management plans covering 5 million acres of BLM-managed lands in south-central and south-eastern Idaho. These plan amendments acknowledge fire as the greatest threat to human activity in the WUI and to the health of critical wildlife habitat. The FMDA increases fuels treatments six-fold, from a previous average of about 25,000 acres per year to an average 154,000 acres each year for the next ten years.*

## Idaho Falls District

The Pocatello Field Office (Idaho Falls District) leads Idaho in prescribed-fire treatments. In 2008, it added 1,892 acres to the total of treated areas. The field office has participated in the Gateway Interagency Fire Front (GIFF) since 1987, through monthly meetings and an annual "surprise" wildland fire drill in the Pocatello WUI. With Three Rivers Resource Conservation & Development (the area's National Resource Conservation District), the Pocatello Field Office helps local landowners reduce fuels on their property with funding for prescribed burns and neighborhood cleanups. The Upper Snake Field Office drill-seeded 10,500 acres with sagebrush and mechanically planted 100,000 sagebrush seedlings on more than 9,000 acres burned in the 2006 Crystal Fire and some of the drill-seeded acres.



## Twin Falls District

Vegetation treatment in the Twin Falls District focused on rehabilitating the 653,000 acres burned by the 2007 Murphy Complex wildfires. Massive emergency stabilization and rehabilitation (ES&R) operations reached targeted completion levels in December 2007. Contractors and BLM staff drill-seeded 86,244 acres with mixed grass/forb seed, with 99 drills operating at the height of activity. Another 294,098 acres were aerially seeded, and reconstruction of 425 miles of fence rounded out stabilization and rehabilitation that matched the unprecedented nature of the fires themselves. Nearly 600 archaeological sites were also inventoried as part of stabilization, ensuring that they would not be disturbed by drill seeding. Four Native American petroglyph and pictograph sites burned over in the fires were then photographed, mapped and recorded to create baseline documentation featuring enhanced digital photos. A scientific assessment of the interactions among livestock grazing, vegetation types and fire behavior in the Murphy Complex evaluated the potential for using strategic grazing as a tool for managing fuels. The interdisciplinary team of specialists and researchers from federal and state agencies and academia who conducted the assessment reported their findings and recommendations to the State Director in August. After completion of a technical report, one or more targeted pilot projects will be implemented to further explore opportunities identified in the report. Findings will also be incorporated into the ongoing revision of the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan.

### ***Murphy Complex Fire Rehabilitation Efforts***

- *Unprecedented 653,000-acre fire*
- *86,244 acres drill seeded*
- *294,098 acres aerially seeded*
- *Handplanted sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush*
- *Contractors reconstructed 425 miles of fence*
- *Over 600 archeological sites recorded*

## Boise District

In the Boise District, protecting the WUI involved prescribed burning, pile burning, mechanical treatments, and herbicide application to invasive weeds. Nearly 4,000 acres in the Indian Meadows unit were treated with prescribed fire to control encroaching juniper and improve native bunchgrass. Another prescribed burn addressed 550 acres in the areas of Silver City, Placerville and Hornet Creek. Mechanical treatment on 2,590 acres also contributed to goals of the Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI), and application of herbicides on 6,100 acres removed weeds that are more fire-prone than native species.



## Partnerships and Cooperation

Partnerships expand and extend BLM's capacity in virtually every program area, creating ways to leverage additional funding and allow broader participation in the management of public lands and fuller understanding of land-use ethics and stewardship.



Acquiring lands or easements for conservation would often be impossible without partners. Ongoing cooperation to ensure conservation of lands within the Snake River and Henry's Lake ACECs (Upper Snake Field Office) has placed this effort at the top of the BLM's Land and Water Conservation Fund national project list.

Partnerships allow recreational users of BLM sites around Idaho to enrich their experience with interpretive information about historical and cultural resources. In 2008, partnerships helped create interpretive signs for the Cove Recreation Site (Snake River Birds of Prey NCA) and the Gilmore Townsite, Gilmore and Pittsburgh Railroad, and lead silver mines around the Salmon region. The BLM also partnered with the Nez Perce Tribe to educate the public about tribal history and culture.



The BLM State Office and a Boise State University opened a FireWise Garden in spring 2008, next to the Old Idaho Penitentiary in Boise. The garden features fire- and drought-resistant plants and information for homeowners about using landscaping to help increase the chances that a home can survive a wildland fire.



The Boise District fire staff sought to increase cooperation with area ranchers in fighting rangeland fires through outreach and communication. The BLM developed a slide presentation that details the challenges facing wildland firefighters and clarifies how ranchers can help – rather than hinder – fire suppression. The presentation received a BLM National Safety Award and has been shared with all BLM Districts in Idaho, the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), and BLM offices in Arizona and Wyoming. In 2008, the District also worked with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to promote habitat conservation in southwestern Idaho through protection and restoration activities.

The BLM and the Idaho Department of Fish & Game organized the Idaho Volunteers for Habitat Restoration in 2008. Volunteers rebuilt a barbed wire fence in the Twin Falls District this year and stand ready to support future land restoration activities in southern Idaho.



BLM personnel in the Coeur d'Alene District maintain a close working partnership with guides and outfitters licensed in the District floating together down the Salmon River each spring to share knowledge about geology, history, wildlife and fisheries, along with safety and river ethics. Work with the Elk City non-profit group "Framing Our Community" has helped restore forest and watershed areas in the Cottonwood Field Office and earned the group a national Landscape Stewardship Award from the Public Lands Foundation. Numerous outdoor education programs in the District benefit from an environmental education specialist staff position shared with the U.S. Forest Service and the Idaho Department of Fish & Game.



## National Public Lands Day Events

National Public Lands Day educates Americans about critical environmental and natural resources issues and the need for shared stewardship of these valued, irreplaceable lands; builds partnerships between the public sector and the local community based upon mutual interests in the enhancement and restoration of America's public lands; and improves public lands for outdoor recreation, with volunteers assisting land managers in hands-on work. Statewide BLM field offices hosted several Public Lands Day Events in 2008.

- **Burley FO** - Site cleanup of isolated tracts for wildlife habitat enhancement
- **Coeur d'Alene** - Wallace Forest Conservation Area cleanup
- **Upper Snake** - South Fork of Snake River campsite designation; St. Anthony Sand Dunes cleanup
- **Challis** - Big Lost River Access pedestrian trail cleanup
- **Shoshone** - Bliss dumpsite cleanup/reclamation project
- **Four Rivers** - Water catchment project (provided water to new trees for raptor nesting area)
- **Pocatello** - Hawkins Reservoir cleanup



*In the BLM Idaho Falls District, volunteers contributed over 1,000 volunteer hours, saving the BLM over \$22,000 and over 6,000 pounds of garbage was collected.*

## Conservation Agreements

BLM-managed lands in Idaho provide crucial wildlife habitat as well as places for people to work and recreate. Efforts in the Twin Falls and Boise Districts highlight habitat conservation and species recovery in 2008.

### Species and Habitat Conservation

The Jarbidge River population of bull trout is the southern-most population of the species in North America and the only fish species in the Twin Falls District listed under the Endangered Species Act. The BLM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed a Five-Year Status Review of the population and with a number of other agencies are cooperating on a Recovery Plan that will focus management and recovery efforts where the need is greatest. The Twin Falls District also supported bull trout conservation through relocation of a road near the Jarbidge River, which restored floodplain function and will reduce sediment loads in a stretch of river that provides habitat.



In the Boise District the BLM supported the Idaho Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan in 2008 with the first habitat improvement project developed directly from the plan – a 2,300-acre juniper-control cut on Upper Castle Creek, south of Grandview. BLM-Idaho also flew 460,000 acres in the District to monitor leks, including 180,000 acres in the Four Rivers Field Office using a Challenge Cost Share agreement with the West-Central Idaho Sage-Grouse Local Working Group.

## Land and Open Space

### *Idaho Falls District*

Two conservation easements acquired in the Idaho Falls District in 2008 conserve extensive cottonwood forests, multiply-listed fish and wildlife species, and outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities within the Snake River ACEC. Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) dollars were used to purchase an easement on the 572-acre Gold Ranch. With over a mile of frontage along the Henry's Fork, the easement contributes significant conservation values in one of the most biologically rich areas of the Intermountain West. Wetlands within the easement are critical migration stopovers, nesting grounds, and foraging areas for half a million waterfowl and several hundred thousand birds of other species. The ranch also lies in three bald eagle nesting territories.

Federal Land Transfer Facilitation Act (FLTFA) funding was used to complete the second phase of conserving the Ron and Hellen Merrill property. A 298-acre conservation easement with approximately two-thirds of a mile of river frontage was purchased in cooperation with the Teton Regional Land Trust and complements the 103-acre fee acquisition completed in 2007. The Merrill property encompasses winter range for Yellowstone Park elk, great blue heron rookery, the largest bald eagle winter roost in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem, the Confluence bald eagle nest territory, and habitat for the endangered Utah valvata snail.

Negotiations continue on six additional conservation easements in the Snake River ACEC and two in the Henry's Lake ACEC. These acquisitions remain the BLM's top LWCF project nationally.

### *Boise Foothills/Northern Idaho*

The Boise Foothills/Northern Idaho land exchange – which, in part, conveyed 3,760 acres to the Coeur d'Alene Field Office (Kootenai, Shoshone and Benewah Counties) – was completed in September 2008. The exchange was legislated by Congress in 2006 to formalize an agreement among the BLM, the U.S. Forest Service, the State, and the City of Boise to accomplish two goals: preserving open space in the Boise Foothills while allowing the State to meet its obligation to maximize revenues from State Endowment Lands in support of public education. It completes a statewide collaborative process to manage public lands for mutual interest.

Elsewhere in northern Idaho, the Coeur d'Alene Field Office also signed an agreement with the City of Coeur d'Alene to pursue land exchanges associated with a proposed "education corridor" involving Idaho colleges and universities, Kootenai County and the City.

*Projects in Idaho supported by the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Federal Land Transfer Facilitation Act (FLTFA) have conserved 25,000 acres since 1998. These lands are valued at more than \$45 million, \$4.3 million of which were donated.*



# Environmental Education and Youth Involvement

The BLM is partnering across Idaho to provide quality environmental and outdoor educational experiences on public lands.

The *Take It Outside!* program gives young people opportunities for “hands on” learning experiences that create the next generation of public land stewards.

Five projects in four BLM Field Offices in Idaho were funded through *Take It Outside!* in 2008. The Kids Klub Salmon Surfers and Wild Science Explorers helped the **Cottonwood Field Office** patrol the Salmon River while learning “Leave No Trace” outdoor principles. The Shoshone Outdoor School introduces students to the natural and cultural resources found on public lands right outside their back doors in **Shoshone**, and year-round events in the Raptors of the Seasons series in **Coeur d’Alene** acquaint participants with ospreys, owls, nesting bald eagles and falcons. Program funds also supported development of the brochure highlighting the Lava Trail System at Hell’s Half Acre in the **Upper Snake River Field Office**.

For the fifth year running, the BLM partnered with Northwest Nazarene University and the Meridian School District to offer FIRE Up for Summer. During the three-week “**Fire Inquiry Research Experience**,” high school students gather fire fuels monitoring data and conduct fire structure analyses to help small communities around the state better prepare for the fire season.

The **Challis Field Office** sponsored another opportunity for high school students with the National Park Service and the EarthWatch Student Challenge Award program. *Challis Bison Kill Site: Challenging Students and Conventional Wisdom* engages young archaeologists in an 18-day field school that is re-evaluating the site’s ecological and cultural significance. Re-analysis of artifacts from the original excavation of the site informs the BLM’s ongoing protection, stabilization, and interpretation.



Creating employment and stewardship opportunities for Idaho youth with projects that enhance the state's natural resources is the goal of the Idaho Youth Conservation Corps (IYCC), inaugurated in 2008 by the BLM **Boise District Office** and the Idaho Department of Labor (IDL). The BLM identified work projects and provided vehicles and tools, while the IDL funded the program and hired the high school-age workforce and a crew leader. On BLM-managed lands the IYCC crew removed unwanted fencing, collected bugs for bio-control of weeds, and performed trail rehabilitation and reseeding. Additional trail maintenance was done near Bogus Basin for Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. The IYCC is being expanded to other counties statewide in 2009, increasing to several hundred the number of Idaho's youth employed in beneficial, outdoor conservation and rehabilitation experiences that also enhance the land and resources.

The **Salmon and Challis Field Offices** provide local teens and young adults the opportunity to learn about natural resource issues through the Youth Employment Plan. Participants work with BLM staff to accomplish various projects on public lands in the field office boundaries. The Salmon FO initiated the program in 1995. Challis joined the effort in 2001.



## Interpretation/Cultural

### 2008 Interpretation Projects

BLM field offices produced:

- Lower Salmon River kiosk
- North Menan Butte brochure
- Ridge to Rivers Trail System panels
- Wilson Creek Trail System panels
- Cress Creek Nature Trail website
- Hulls Gulch National Recreation Trail website
- Gilmore Historic Townsite panels
- Pirmids Cabin panels
- "Nez Perce" quiz cards
- Bison Jump on-site cultural program



## Tribal Relations

Formal government-to-government consultation accompanied ongoing Tribal involvement in land use planning and in review of proposed regional projects such as the Gateway West transmission line, and the West-wide Energy Corridor designation and geothermal energy development, along with such Idaho-specific efforts as the Jarbidge RMP revision, the Challis Travel Management Plan, the Snake River Birds of Prey RMP, and proposed land exchanges in the Idaho Falls District. In completing the Cottonwood RMP, the Coeur d'Alene District developed a process to allow for early involvement of the Nez Perce Tribe. In all, Idaho Field Offices held 65 face-to-face consultations with Tribes in 2008, in addition to regular consultations under the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes' Wings and Roots program.

### Nez Perce Tribe

Five months ahead of the deadline legislated in the 2004 Snake River Water Rights Act, the BLM transferred all records for valid existing water rights in the District to the Nez Perce Tribe. Transfer of nearly 11,300 acres of public land in the Cottonwood Field Office to the Bureau of Indian Affairs was also successfully completed under the Snake River Basin Adjudication/Nez Perce Water Rights Settlement.

Nez Perce tribal life prior to the Nez Perce War of 1877 was the subject of a set of educational quiz cards produced by the Cottonwood Field Office, and an interpretive bandana shows the Tribe's traditional seasonal rounds.

### Coeur d'Alene Tribe

A large area of cultural significance to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe was inventoried and documented in 2008. Rock cairns, pits, and alignments numbering nearly 600 were recorded, including the Skitswish Monuments, cairns associated with tribal religious and cultural practice.



### Shoshone-Paiute Tribe

In the Boise District, custody of human remains inadvertently discovered on BLM-managed land was transferred to the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes after completion of a Cultural Affiliation Determination. The Tribes also worked with recreation planners to produce an interpretive sign at the Cove Recreation Area on CJ Strike Reservoir detailing the Bruneau Treaty of 1866.

### Shoshone-Bannock Tribe

The Shoshone Field Office and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe used a Challenge Cost Share grant to identify and collect traditional plant foods on BLM-managed lands in this area of the Twin Falls District.

### Lemhi-Shoshone Tribe

The Salmon Field Office (Idaho Falls District) participated in activities commemorating the removal of the Lemhi-Shoshone from the Lemhi Reservation, continued monitoring and maintenance under the plan for managing cultural resources at the Chief Tendoy Cemetery, took part in a Shoshone-Bannock treaty rights workshop, and participated in various phases of the second annual Agai Dika Gathering.

## Cooperating to Restore Native Vegetation

A partnership with southern Idaho Tribes is giving the BLM a ready source of native plant materials for restoration and rehabilitation projects while training tribal members in production, collection and planting techniques.

Because the lands of southern Idaho are of such importance to the Tribes and to the BLM, the Native Plant Materials Program was established in 2000 as part of the National Fire Plan. In 2005 the BLM secured funding for an agreement with the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes to build greenhouses on each Idaho reservation where tribal members can grow and supply native seeds and seedlings. Built near schools so that students can gain hands-on experience, the greenhouses have grown 160,000 seedlings, all of which the BLM purchased in the spring of 2008 for fire rehabilitation in the Twin Falls and Idaho Falls Districts.

Staffed by Duck Valley FFA members and horticulture students from the Owyhee Combined School, the greenhouse on the Duck Valley Reservation raised 60,000 bitterbrush and sagebrush seedlings, of which 10,600 were transported to the U.S. Forest Service's Lucky Peak Nursery, where they wait in cold storage for planting next spring in areas burned by the 2007 Murphy Complex wildfires. BLM plant specialists offered training sessions in identifying, gathering, collecting, and handling native plant materials and managing a greenhouse.



The Idaho Falls District maintains a similar agreement with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to grow sagebrush seedlings for fire rehabilitation. The Fort Hall greenhouse has so far raised 100,000 seedlings and offers on-site refrigeration for storing seedlings until planting time. The Tribes have funding in place to build a second greenhouse to expand operations in the coming year.

Tribes are also engaged in collecting native plant material for use in rehabilitation. The Boise District of BLM offered to purchase 100 pounds of bitterbrush seed from the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes once collected, and training in willow-gathering will provide that plant material for riparian stabilization and rehabilitation. Building on greenhouse operations at Fort Hall, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes are working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to gain additional expertise in seed and material collection.

### **Federal Regional Seed Warehouse**

- BLM's only dedicated seed warehouse
- Provides plant seed for 40 BLM offices
- Received over 600,000 lbs. of seed worth over \$4.3 million (2008)
- Seed used to rehab after large fires
- Custom mixing operations

Under the National Fire Plan and as part of the Great Basin Restoration Initiative, the BLM-Idaho is committed to using native plant materials for emergency stabilization, fuels management and longer-term rehabilitation and restoration of public lands affected by wildland fire. The BLM also provides technical assistance to tribal land managers in post-fire restoration and rehabilitation of lands under their stewardship.

# Planning

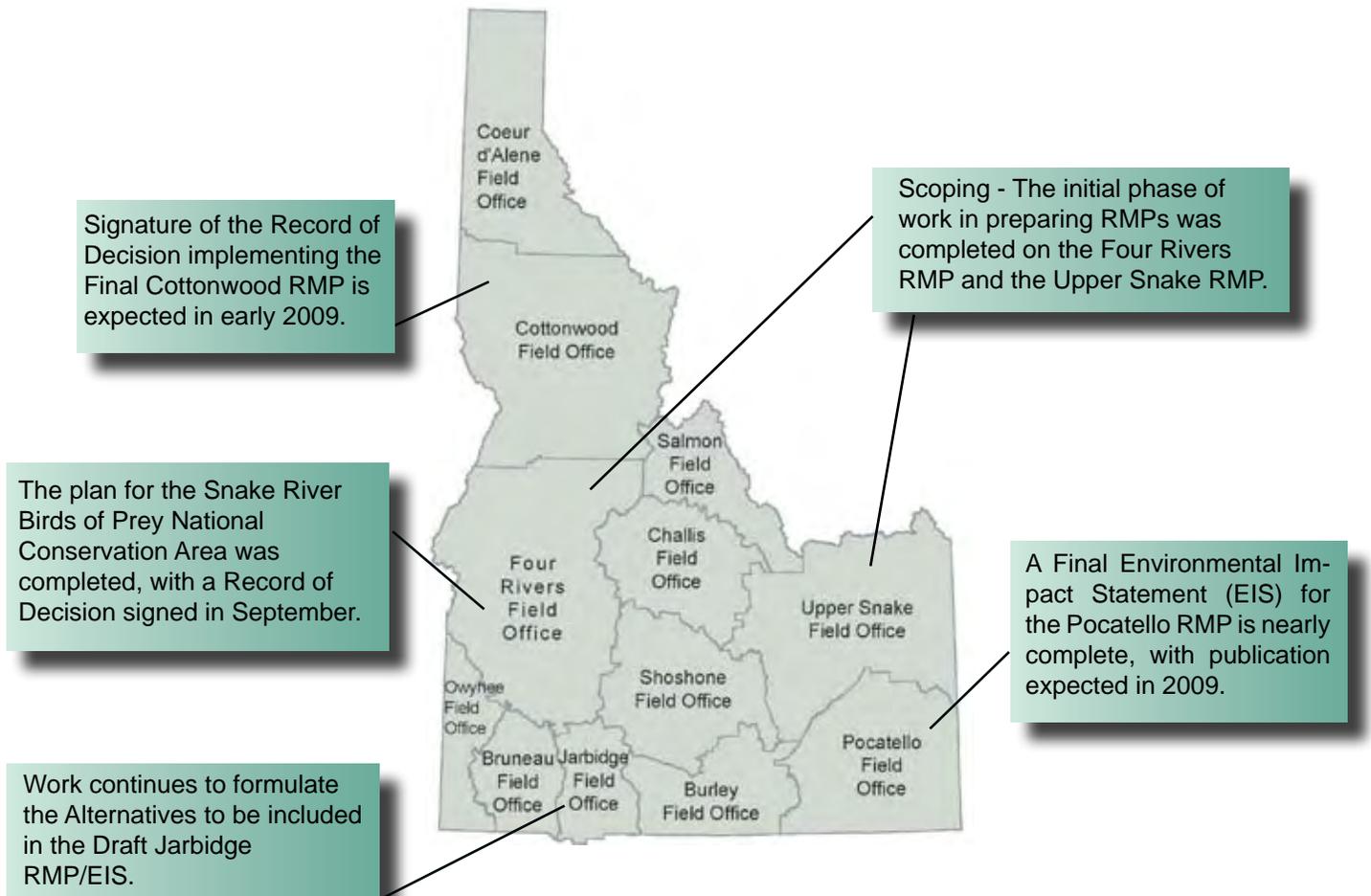
Comprehensive land use plans are the framework for the use and protection of resources on public lands. Resource management plans (RMPs) are prepared in consultation with the Tribes, State and local governments, and in cooperation with land users and the interested public. Typically, an RMP guides management decisions and activities for a 15 to 20 year period. Toward the end of this period – or sooner if significant changes in resource conditions warrant – the BLM usually updates a plan to reflect the continually evolving public land use patterns, needs, and issues in the geographic area the plan covers.

The **Challis Field Office** completed a project-specific EIS on the plan of operations for the Three Rivers Stone Quarry, and the **Cottonwood Field Office** began an EIS on proposed operations at the Buffalo Gulch Mine, with formal scoping and a field trip to the mine site near Elk City.

Three joint efforts with the U.S. Forest Service resulted in completion of additional resource management guidance. In December 2007, the agencies signed RODs on the Special Use Permits for the Bald Mountain ski area in Sun Valley.

More recently, in July 2008, the BLM and the Caribou-Targhee National Forest finalized the Snake River Activity/ Operations Plan to address future management of 20,000 acres of Federal land on the South Fork of the Snake River.

The **Idaho Falls District** of BLM and the Caribou-Targhee NF also completed a joint authorization of extended operations at the Smoky Canyon phosphate mine, located on the National Forest.



## Hazardous Site Clean-Up

The variety of uses of public lands can leave behind various hazards. Several types of hazardous sites found on BLM-managed lands across Idaho were addressed in 2008.

### **Coeur d'Alene Basin Superfund Site**

Northern Idaho's history as a hardrock mining district has left several challenges for ensuring the health and safety of today's public land users, visitors, and local residents. The BLM completed remediation work on the Coeur d'Alene Basin Superfund site in the Silver Valley, the largest silver mining district in the world, in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Forest Service, the State of Idaho, and other agencies.

Tailings from old mines have affected more than 50 miles of floodplain, washing into the Coeur d'Alene River and on the bed of Lake Coeur d'Alene. The Nabob Mine capping project placed clean soil, a PVC cover, and a drainage system on more than two acres to stabilize tailings.

The Nabob is one of more than 100 mines, a thousand related sites and thirty mills needing cleanup in the Silver Valley. Work within the Superfund site boundaries is expected to take 30 years to complete.



### **German Lake Dumpsite**

In southern Idaho, northwest of Minidoka, clean-up of a historic dump site neared completion in 2008. Thirty acres at German Lake where agricultural, residential and construction waste accumulated over the years have now been restored with recent funding from the Special Cleanup Fund. The Burley Field Office anticipates final completion in 2009 with planting of perennial grasses for mitigation.



## Abandoned Mine Lands

Abandoned mines without Superfund status also pose significant threats to public safety. More than 130 abandoned mine land (AML) sites have been identified in the Coeur d'Alene District. Hazards such as adits, shafts and stopes are found on these sites, with new discoveries each year. The District Office has prioritized remediation of these sites by concentrating first on those lying within a quarter-mile of residences. In 2008 District staff and contractors closed 10 openings at six AML locations.



## Law Enforcement

Access to and enjoyment of public lands are enhanced when visitor safety and resource protection are ensured. The BLM-Idaho law enforcement ranger staff was brought to full capacity in 2008. Eleven rangers are responsible for public safety and resource protection on the 12 million acres of BLM-managed lands in Idaho.

New ranger positions at Craters of the Moon National Monument, in the Cottonwood Field Office, and a position assigned to the Salmon and Challis Field Offices will be filled in 2008 to ensure that resource planning and management decisions are carried through in day-to-day use activities particularly during times of high recreational use.

Clandestine cultivation of marijuana on public lands is an increasingly common occurrence. In early September 2008, BLM law enforcement seized more than 7,000 mature marijuana plants (with an estimated street value of \$10 million) growing on public lands in a remote part of Owyhee County. Seizure and destruction of the planting followed a three-month-long investigation.



# National Awards for Idaho

## BLM Excellence in Interpretation/ Environmental Education Gold Award

Dave Sisson of Idaho BLM Cottonwood Field Office developed a series of environmental and interpretative programs - including the "Nez Perce Quiz Cards," the lower Salmon River Cultural Resources website, educational programs for river guides, and a time-lapse video of a Salmon River excavation site.



## 2008 Reclamation and Sustainable Mineral Development Awards

The Idaho-based Thompson Creek Mining Company was awarded the Hardrock Mineral Community Outreach and Economic Security Award. The company mines molybdenum from a 2,500-acre site approximately 35 miles southwest of Challis.

## BLM National Safety Award

BLM Boise District staff were awarded the National Safety Award for their creation of a presentation to increase cooperation between firefighters and ranchers. The presentation clarifies firefighter challenges and identifies how ranchers can help suppression efforts and hinder them.



## 2008 Rangeland Stewardship Awards

BLM grazing permittee Chris Black of Bruneau (Joseph Black and Sons) was awarded for his work in enhancing sagebrush and riparian habitat on the Big Springs grazing allotment.