

## PART 2

### HEALTHY PRODUCTIVE LANDS

Healthy and productive public lands and waters support and sustain natural ecological communities that provide numerous benefits for the American people, including open space, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, clean water, clean air, energy and minerals, livestock forage, and other economic, environmental, and social benefits. The BLM's rangelands maintain not only the economies of Western rural communities, but also their history, social fabric, and cultural identity.

To effectively fulfill its mission, the BLM implements sound management practices to (1) assess the conditions and trends of public land resources, (2) identify risks to these resources, (3) restore resources that are in a deteriorated, undesirable condition, and/or (4) maintain resources that are in healthy condition. The BLM works closely with other Federal agencies, American Indian tribes, local and State agencies, constituent groups, other public and private partners, and the general public in developing programs and projects to restore, maintain, protect, and preserve public land resources and their values.

Land resource condition is sometimes defined in Federal and State laws, such as those related to air and water quality. Condition can also be defined in more general terms, requiring subsequent interpretation and the development of measurable standards on a regional basis, such as the BLM's rangeland health standards. The BLM balances the use and protection of public land resources through cooperative conservation projects, citizen-based stewardship, and other on-the-ground partnership activities to achieve long-term public land health and stability of the public lands.

Table 2-1, Percent of Rangeland Acreage by Ecological Status by State, provides a summary of the ecological site inventories conducted by the BLM over the years. This table is updated annually to reflect new inventory work and changes in the ecological status. Ecological site inventories provide land managers with useful information for determining site capability, and for assessing the implementation of land use plans and achievement of resource management objectives.

Table 2-2, Condition of Riparian-Wetland Areas, was first reported in *Public Land Statistics* in 1995. While riparian-wetland areas comprise a small percentage of the public lands administered by the BLM, their benefits far exceed their relatively small acreage. To manage these areas on a watershed basis, the BLM, along with the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has initiated the Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration and Management strategy to restore and maintain these areas in proper functioning condition. A riparian-wetland area is considered to be functioning properly when adequate vegetation, landform, or large woody debris is present to dissipate energies associated with high-flow events.

Table 2-3, Resource Conservation and Improvement Accomplishments, is a summary of the many conservation, rehabilitation, and development projects completed on the BLM public lands during the past year. These projects stabilize soils, maintain or improve water quality, reduce siltation and salinity, reduce surface runoff, and control flooding. They also assist in improving ecologic site condition, promoting healthy riparian areas and wetlands, and enhancing overall rangeland health.

Table 2-4, Forest Development Accomplishments in Acres, shows the numerous reforestation and improvement projects completed during Fiscal Year 2006 to restore forest health conditions on the BLM public lands. The table was slightly modified in Fiscal Year 2005 to reflect changes in the BLM's forest management practices. The columns "Reforestation – Seeding" and "Genetic Tree Improvement – Seeding" were removed as the BLM no longer sows tree seed as a reforestation practice; there were no acres reported in either category for at least 10 years. A column entitled "Pruning" was added as the BLM is now using this practice for disease control and fuel hazard reduction.

Table 2-5, Types of Wildlife Habitat on Public Lands, describes the various types of wildlife habitats that exist on BLM-administered public lands. No single Federal or State agency manages more fish and wildlife habitat than the BLM. As the quality and quantity of the fish and wildlife habitats decrease across the country, the varied habitats on the BLM public lands become increasingly important in maintaining the Nation's fish and wildlife heritage.

Table 2-6, Estimated Number of Big Game Animals on Public Lands, shows an estimate of the numbers of big game species located on the BLM public lands. Most of this information was provided by the various State wildlife agencies.

Table 2-7, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Improvements Completed, portrays the variety of improvement projects used to enhance fish and wildlife habitats on public lands over the past year. Habitat quality and quantity are the keys to the future of wildlife. On-the-ground activities to preserve, enhance, or restore wildlife habitat represent a wise investment in the future. Most habitat improvement efforts are accomplished in cooperation with State wildlife agencies, conservation groups, and a variety of other public and private partners.

Table 2-8, Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Projects, displays the BLM's fire rehabilitation projects to stabilize soils and restore watersheds following wildfires. Fire rehabilitation actions are necessary to prevent unacceptable resource degradation, minimize threats to public health and safety, prevent unacceptable off-site damage, and minimize the potential for the recurrence of wildfire. The number and acreage of fire rehabilitation projects vary yearly, depending on the severity of the wildfire season occurring on BLM-managed public lands.