

PART 5

PRESERVE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

The public lands encompass some of the United States' last, great open spaces. They contain exceptional geologic formations; comparatively undisturbed native plant and animal communities; wilderness areas and wild and scenic rivers; and innumerable paleontological, archaeological, and historical sites. These resources are scientifically, ecologically, culturally, educationally, and recreationally important, representing a significant part of our Nation's natural and cultural heritage.

Congress has passed a variety of laws concerning the management and use of these heritage resources, including the Antiquities Act (1906), the Wilderness Act (1964), the National Historic Preservation Act (1966), the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968), the Sikes Act (1974), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (1976), the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (1979), and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990).

Many of these laws establish procedures for formally recognizing areas that are unique or that contain significant scientific, educational, and recreational values. Some of these designations, including National Conservation Areas and National Monuments, require Congressional or Presidential action. Others, such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), are BLM designations established through land use planning or other administrative procedures. Over the past 30 years, beginning with the designation of the King Range National Conservation Area, many extraordinary landscapes on our public lands have been given protective designations either by an Act of Congress or by Presidential Proclamation.

National Landscape Conservation System

The BLM established the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) to provide a national framework for managing Congressionally and Presidentially designated special areas on the public lands. This system includes all of the BLM's National Conservation Areas, Wilderness Areas, National Historic and Scenic Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Monuments, Wilderness Study Areas, the White Mountains National Recreation Area in Alaska, the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area, and the Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area in Oregon. Taken together, these areas include 867 BLM units encompassing more than 43 million acres of public land, although some NLCS units do overlap others.

This conservation system is designed to be different from either the National Park System or the National Wildlife Refuge System. Most visitor facilities are located in adjacent communities, providing local economic opportunities and minimizing new development in the special areas. Many traditional public land uses, such as livestock grazing, are permitted in these areas, and adjacent communities and interested public entities are encouraged to participate in the planning process and ongoing management activities.

The following tables provide statistics for the conservation units included in the NLCS:

- 5-1 National Landscape Conservation System: Number and Size of Designated Areas
- 5-2 National Monuments within the National Landscape Conservation System
- 5-3 National Conservation Areas within the National Landscape Conservation System
- 5-4 Designated Wilderness within the National Landscape Conservation System
- 5-5 Wilderness Study Areas within the National Landscape Conservation System
- 5-6 BLM Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers
- 5-7 National Historic and Scenic Trails

Administrative Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations

On all of America's public lands, the BLM, in addition to the responsibilities noted above, works to preserve and protect threatened and endangered species; wild free-roaming horses and burros; significant archaeological, paleontological, and historical sites; areas of critical environmental concern; and other outstanding natural areas. Some of those responsibilities are portrayed in the following tables.

Table 5-8. Land acquisition through exchange, purchase, easement, or donation pursuant to Sections 205 and 206 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of October 21, 1976 (Public Law 94-579; 90 Stat. 2756), and various Acts of Congress is an important component of the BLM's land management strategy. The Bureau acquires land and easements in land when it is in the public interest and consistent with publicly approved land use plans. The BLM's land acquisition program is designed to improve management of natural resources by consolidating Federal, State, and private lands; to increase recreational opportunities and preserve open space; to secure key property necessary to protect endangered species and promote biological diversity; and to preserve archaeological and historical resources.

Table 5-9. The BLM, other Federal agencies, and local governments in Clark and Lincoln Counties use 85 percent of the revenue generated by land sales under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act for parks, trails, and natural areas; capital improvements; conservation initiatives; a multi-species habitat conservation plan for Clark County, Nevada; environmentally sensitive land acquisitions; and Lake Tahoe restoration projects. Table 5-9 shows specific acquisitions, accomplishments, and funding levels. For additional information, please visit the SNPLMA website at <http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/lvfo/snplma.html> .

Tables 5-10 and 5-11. Bureau-administered permanent or seasonal habitats on public lands are home for over 3,000 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, and amphibians. Priority treatment is given to federally listed threatened or endangered plant and animal species that depend on public lands for all or part of their habitat needs.

Tables 5-12 and 5-13. The Bureau also administers the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, which provides for the protection, management, and control of wild horses and burros on the public lands. A major responsibility under the Act is to preserve a thriving natural ecological balance on the range. To do so, it is necessary to remove excess wild horses and burros, which are then offered to the general public for adoption. Tables 5-12 and 5-13 portray wild horse and burro populations and adoptions.

Table 5-14. The BLM is steward for the Federal government's largest, most culturally diverse, and scientifically most important body of cultural resources. To carry out this stewardship responsibility, the Bureau's cultural resource management program is designed to inventory, evaluate, and manage cultural and paleontological resources on public lands under its jurisdiction. The BLM has inventoried over 17.8 million acres for cultural resources and has recorded over 286,000 properties.

Tables 5-15 and 5-16. The Bureau provides special management prescriptions for public lands under a variety of special designations such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Research Natural Areas, and National Natural Landmarks. Table 5-15 lists the present Areas of Critical Environmental Concern managed by the BLM. Table 5-16 lists numerous types of areas on the public lands having Special Management designations that are not encompassed by the NLCS.