

BUREAU OF LAND  
MANAGEMENT  
CASPER FIELD OFFICE

2630 Cowgill Road  
Cody, Wyoming 82414  
September 22, 2006

Jim Murkin, manager  
Casper Field Office  
US. Bureau of Land Management  
2987 Prospector Drive  
Casper, Wyoming 82604

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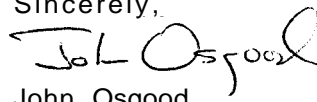
Dear Mr. Murkin and  
members of your RMP and EIS team:

I am hoping that the Resource Management Plan document you released on July 21, 2006 is meant as a trial balloon to **see** what kind of flack **it** is going to attract, rather than a serious attempt at able resource management according to your agency's mandate. You are allowed to "dispose" of **agency-**owned lands as necessary on what has historically been a small-scale basis. **However**, the proposal in your Plan's preferred alternative to dispose through "standard disposal" or "restricted disposal" Bureau of Land Management lands, known routinely as public lands, in the amount of 230,287 acres is at major, galling odds with your past practices and stated intents. 230,287 acres is 16.9 percent (slightly more than one-sixth) of the lands in your district, which you are managing ostensibly for the public. **As a** citizen who values the existence and availability of publicly-owned lands, I find your proposal confounding and hypocritical. You are advocating getting rid of one-sixth of the land your district manages. In light of the fact that your own Wyoming state office has published an information sheet, #WYNF-0013, in August, 2003 which states 1) that "public lands are one of the last guarantees of open space, a key factor in the West's lifestyle." and 2) "the public in general -and Westerners in **particular-** appreciate the open space guaranteed by BLM", your Plan's proposal comes across as bad faith at best and duplicitous at worst.

I find that none of your proposed alternatives in the Plan is acceptable. I advocate that you back up, look at what you **are** really supposed to be spending your time with, **i.e.** managing commercial, recreation and conservation interests on the land you **oversee** in trust for us, the public, and get back to basics. I have no problem with the extraction of oil, gas and coal (and wind and solar) **from** public lands **as long as it** is done in **an** environmentally **responsible** manner, and as long as the land remains in the public domain. I encourage you to promote and enhance recreational opportunities on district lands, and to engage in active conservation efforts in areas where they are deserved, especially riparian and **critical-wildlife-habitat** zones.

Public trust is public trust. **We** the public count on you to do things consistently and in accordance with your mandate, not to engage in radical departure in the hope that we won't notice in order to placate **narrow-interest** groups. I wish you good luck and better future endeavors.

Sincerely,



John Osgood

Encl. • Sens. Enzi, Thomas  
CC: Rep. Cubin

# BLM suicide ripples across West

By **TODD WILKINSON**

You have probably never heard of Marlene Braun. But I hope, after reading this, you don't forget her.

Braun worked for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management at one of the newest and least conspicuous national monuments in the country.

She was 46 years old when she committed suicide in May, taking her own life following a rocky professional relationship with her BLM boss.

As chief overseer of the 250,000-acre Carrizo Plain National Monument in California, Braun enraged ranching interests by questioning the primacy of cows on the open public range.

Carrizo Plain, designated by Bill Clinton in the 11th hour of his presidency, was carved out of the high desert primarily as a wildlife refuge to replenish and bolster native animal and plant populations that had fallen into decline after a century of public land livestock grazing.

Sensitive riparian areas at Carrizo, the richest part of the landscape, harbor the highest concentration of imperiled land species in California.

I had heard about Ms. Braun's clashes with her BLM superiors while she was still alive. Over the past three months, I've kept tabs from afar as the shockwaves of her suicide rippled out across the West, notably within the chatter of BLM field employees.

A full account of the saga was published in the Aug. 20 edition of the Los Angeles Times, the result of excellent reporting by staffers Julie Cart and Maria La Ganga. Check it out if you can.

Braun's death has been explained by some as that

of a dedicated, if not slightly troubled, civil servant who fell on her sword in order to protect public resources rather than compromise her scruples (and obligation) as a manager.

From others, I've heard Braun described as an idealistic zealot who did not possess the patience, diplomatic acumen and desire to be a "team player" willing to work through the system to achieve conservation-oriented results.

Still others have claimed Braun was the victim of an overbearing superior who is the personification of a callous and deeply politicized federal resource agency.

The BLM, they say, not only abandoned Braun in her mandate of reforming grazing, but the agency does not tolerate dissent from those within its ranks who raise doubts about the BLM's handling of many contentious issues, including energy development.

I am not going to mention the name of Braun's superior here, upon whom she blamed her troubles, though the BLM itself referred to her death in a prepared statement as "tragic," which implies that it was preventable.

At present, the agency is conducting an investigation into the factors that

precipitated her suicide. She herself has been both praised and faulted for believing that her role as a steward made her necessarily a wildlife advocate.

Perhaps a better way of pondering the circumstances of Braun's decision is to consider this: Talk to BLM employees today and you will hear fear expressed over the way that marching orders are coming down from members of the Bush administration in Washington.

An expectation exists that every career civil servant will be in absolute lockstep and that even discussing issues outside the chain of command with the public is tantamount to consorting with the enemy.

The irony is that members of the Bush administration accused the Clinton White House of top-heavy governance.

So where do public servants go when they identify problems, internally, with the direction of management? Do they take them to a superior who

does not want to make waves? Do they mention them to citizens and risk being punished for insubordination, which is what

happened with Braun?

There are no easy answers. Besides being depressed, Braun felt in her despair there was nowhere she could turn after her BLM superior allegedly isolated, punished and humiliated her for doing what she thought was her job.

Anyone who suggests that these days employees of Western land and wildlife agencies show up for work each day, clap hands and sing "Kum baya" around conference tables is not acknowledging the REAL morale issues inside these agencies.

If Braun's death causes the federal bureaucracy and public to do a little reflection, it will at least not seem like such a pitiful waste.

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