

BLM's "multiple use mandate" – what does that even mean?

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was officially formed in 1946, but the agency's mission wasn't completely pinned down until 30 years later with the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The FLPMA (pronounced "flip-muh") gave the BLM its multiple use mandate.

The term "multiple use" seems fairly self-descriptive. For public land management, it means: public lands have many *resources* (renewable and non-renewable), such as forage, timber, energy, habitat, etc., and public lands have many *uses*, such as grazing, recreation, mining, etc.

The multiple use "mandate" through FLPMA states that the resources *and* uses on public land must be utilized in a balanced combination that will best meet the needs of the people (current and future needs for current and future generations). Simple enough, right? Actually, it's just the opposite. Public land management is complex!

First, consider that "the people" is a collection of widely diverse individuals (and groups) that all have an interest in their public lands. From the rancher to the environmentalist and thoroughly across the board, everyone has a stake in the claim.

Second, there are dozens upon dozens of laws and Congressional acts that influence public land management. From the General Mining Laws (1872) to the Taylor Grazing Act (1934) to the Endangered Species Act (1973) – and the numerous other regulations, court orders and decisions, and interior policies, manuals and handbooks – there is quite an analysis to perfect when determining the best course of action on public land. Many of these laws, regulations, and policies are broadly applicable to the BLM, while others are specific to particular lands or resource types. Nonetheless, the multiple use direction involves a heap of resources, uses, and issues, all with major environmental, social and economic consequences and a history of conflict.

So how does the BLM handle this complexity? Every major land use decision the agency makes is ran by a well-defined planning process established under FLPMA. Land use planning is one of the most important tools that the agency has, as it ensures that the BLM manages the public lands consistently and in a way that upholds the principle of multiple use. The planning process, moreover, incorporates ample opportunity for public involvement. The Burns District of the BLM makes every effort to plan for and implement decisions that will most positively impact local land users.

This information is provided by your local BLM office, who is working to enhance collaboration and communication between the BLM and the people who live here. The BLM hopes these efforts will help lead to a better understanding of how and why the BLM works and how the agency genuinely wants and works for the well-being and success of this community.

