



# Our Public Land Heritage: From the GLO to the BLM

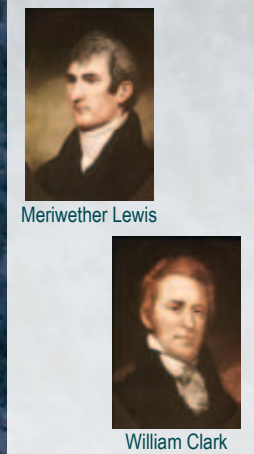
The challenge of managing public lands started as soon as America established its independence and began acquiring additional lands. Initially, these public lands were used to encourage homesteading and westward migration, and the General Land Office (GLO) was created to support this national goal. Over time, however, values and attitudes regarding public lands shifted. Many significant laws and events led to the establishment of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and laid the foundation for its mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

[www.blm.gov/history](http://www.blm.gov/history)



**1776**  
Declaration of Independence is signed.

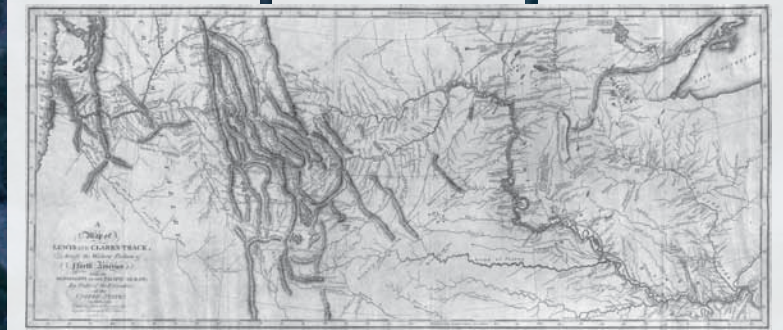
**1778**  
Second Continental Congress begins persuading states to cede land to create the public domain.



**1783**  
Revolutionary War ends

**1785**  
Land Ordinance allows settlement of public domain lands and establishes the government's rectangular survey system.

**1789**  
U.S. Constitution gives Congress the "Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting The Territory and other Property belonging to the United States."



Lewis' and Clark's path across the western portion of North America, published 1814

**1812**  
General Land Office is established within the Treasury Department to oversee disposition of ceded and acquired lands.

**1824**  
Office of Indian Affairs is established in the Department of War and is later transferred to the Department of the Interior

**1837**  
On its 25th anniversary, the General Land Office has 65 district land offices.

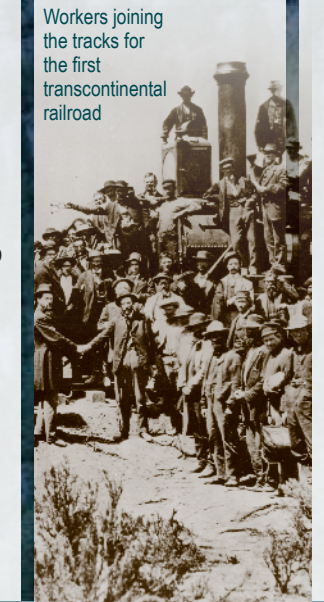


Homestead

**1843**  
"Great Migration" on the Oregon Trail begins.

**1844**  
First geological surveys of public lands are initiated by the General Land Office in Michigan.

**1849**  
Department of the Interior is established and the General Land Office is transferred to the new department.



Workers joining the tracks for the first transcontinental railroad

**1850**  
First railroad land grants are made in Illinois, Alabama, and Mississippi.

**1860**  
First Pony Express rider leaves St. Joseph, Missouri.

**1862**  
Homestead Act entitles settlers to 160 acres of public land after they reside on and cultivate the land for 5 years.

**1869**  
First transcontinental railroad is completed at Promontory Summit, Utah.

**1872**  
General Mining Law identifies mineral lands as a distinct class of public lands subject to exploration, occupation, and purchase under stipulated conditions.

**1877**  
Desert Land Act authorizes the disposition of 640-acre tracts of public lands to homesteaders upon proof of reclamation of the lands by irrigation.

**1878**  
Timber and Stone Act authorizes the negotiated sale of lands that are valuable for either logging or mining and otherwise unfit for cultivation.

**1889**  
Oklahoma Land Rush begins the disposal of federal public domain lands in Oklahoma.



Travel across the desert in California

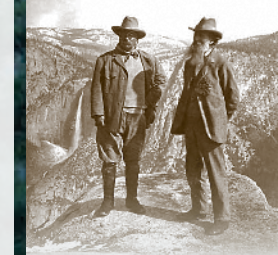


Oklahoma Land Rush

**1894**  
Carey Act authorizes transfer of up to 1 million acres of public desert land to states for settling, irrigating, and cultivating purposes.

**1897**  
Forest Management "Organic" Act transfers fire protection responsibilities for forest reserves from the Department of Army to the General Land Office.

**1898**  
Congress extends homestead laws to Alaska.



Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir, 1903

**1906**  
Antiquities Act preserves and protects prehistoric, historic, and scientifically significant sites on public lands and creates national monuments.

**1911**  
Weeks Act permits the federal purchase of private land to protect the headwaters of rivers and watersheds and calls for cooperative fire protection efforts.

**1916**  
Stock Raising Homestead Act authorizes homesteads of 640 acres and separates surface rights from subsurface (mineral) rights.

**1926**  
Recreation and Public Purposes Act allows conveyance or lease of public lands to state and local governments for outdoor recreation purposes.



Evening campfire, 1926

**1934**  
Taylor Grazing Act authorizes grazing districts, grazing regulation, and public rangeland improvements in western states (excluding Alaska) and establishes the Division of Grazing (later renamed the U.S. Grazing Service) within the Department of the Interior.

**1937**  
Oregon and California (O&C) Revested Lands Sustained Yield Management Act requires O&C Railroad lands to be managed for permanent forest production and provides for watershed protection, regulation of streamflow, and recreational facilities.

**1939**  
Alaskan Fire Control Service is created within the General Land Office to prevent and suppress fires on Alaska public lands.

**Land Acquisitions of the United States**

<b>1783</b> Lands south of the Great Lakes and east of the Mississippi River are ceded to the United States.	<b>1803</b> Louisiana Purchase nearly doubles the size of the United States.	<b>1819</b> Spanish cession of Florida and boundary adjustments west of the Mississippi River add more than 46 million acres to the public domain.	<b>1845</b> Republic of Texas is annexed by the United States.	<b>1846</b> Oregon compromise gives the United States claim to part of the Pacific Northwest.	<b>1848</b> Mexico cedes California and vast areas of the inland West to the United States.	<b>1853</b> Gadsden Purchase adds almost 19 million acres of public lands in southern Arizona and New Mexico.	<b>1867</b> United States purchases Alaska, adding 375 million acres to the public domain.
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	---

John Trumbull's painting, Declaration of Independence



Cadastral surveyors



**1942**

Extensive withdrawals of public lands for military and defense use begin, with more than 13 million acres withdrawn in 2 years.

**1946**

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is established within the Department of the Interior through the consolidation of the General Land Office and the U.S. Grazing Service.



**1940**



Oil well operation

**1953**

Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to lease mineral lands more than 3 miles offshore; the BLM assumes responsibility for leasing through competitive sales.

**1954**

Recreation and Public Purposes Act amends the 1926 act and allows the sale and lease of public lands for other purposes in addition to recreation.

The BLM reorganizes and creates a state office system.

**1955**

Multiple Surface Use Act withdraws common varieties of minerals from entry as mining claims and allows claim owners to use the surface for mining operation purposes only.

**1959**

Wild Horse Protection Act prohibits the roundup of wild horses by aircraft and motor vehicles.



BLM range grass study, 1959

**1950**



Johnny Horizon Cleanup Days near petroglyphs in California, 1969



**1960**

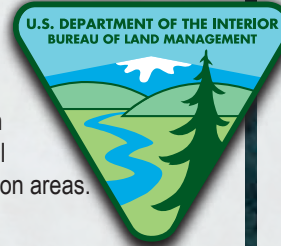
Public Land Administration Act allows the use of donations and cooperative agreements to improve and better manage public lands.

**1964**

Public Land Law Review Commission is established to study public land laws and make long-term recommendations for public land use.

Wilderness Act protects undeveloped federal land to preserve its natural condition.

The BLM adopts a new logo.



**1965**

Land and Water Conservation Fund is established for federal acquisition of outdoor recreation areas.

**1966**

National Historic Preservation Act expands protection of prehistoric and historic properties.

**1968**

Wild and Scenic Rivers and National Trails System Acts preserve sites with outstanding natural, cultural, scenic, historic, and recreational significance.

Johnny Horizon program promotes public awareness of BLM-administered lands.

**1969**

National Environmental Policy Act requires federal agencies to assess the impacts of their actions on the environment.

**1960**

Alaska pipeline



**1971**

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act provides for settlement of aboriginal land claims of Alaskan Natives and Native groups; the BLM is tasked with the largest U.S. land transfer effort ever undertaken.

Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act provides for the protection and management of these animals on federal lands.

**1973**

Endangered Species Act requires the conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals and the ecosystems upon which they depend.

**1975**

Energy Policy and Conservation Act addresses energy demands and establishes a strategic petroleum reserve.

**1976**

Federal Land Policy and Management Act requires that public lands be managed for multiple uses and sustained yield through land use planning.

Management of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska is transferred to the BLM.

**1977**

Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act ensures environmental safeguards for mining and reclamation of mined areas.

Trans Alaska Pipeline System begins transporting oil 800 miles from Alaska's North Slope to the Port of Valdez.

**1978**

Public Rangelands Improvement Act requires inventory, determination of trends, and improvement of public rangelands.

**1979**

Archaeological Resources Protection Act requires permits for excavation or removal of these resources from federal lands and provides stringent criminal and civil penalties for violations.

**1970**

Wind energy project in Wyoming



**1980**

Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act designates and conserves public lands in Alaska as national parks, wildlife refuges, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, and forests and provides for subsistence use by rural Alaska residents.

Energy Security Act promotes the development of alternative energy sources such as oil shale, synthetic fuel, wind power, and geothermal sources.

The BLM completes its first resource management plan, covering the California Desert Conservation Area, and designates its first areas of critical environmental concern in Utah and California.

**1983**

Bear Trap Canyon in southwestern Montana is designated by Congress as BLM's first wilderness area (it later became part of Lee Metcalf Wilderness).

The BLM transfers responsibility for offshore leasing to the Minerals Management Service.

**1987**

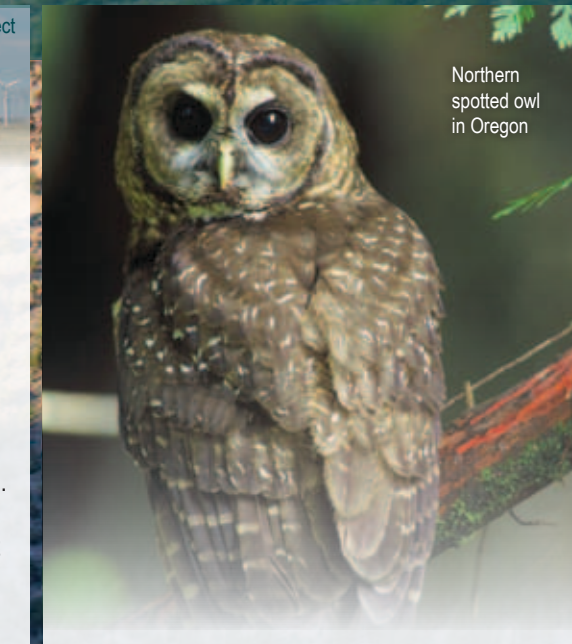
Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act establishes a new leasing system and changes certain operational procedures for onshore resources on federal lands.



Alaska Natives filleting salmon in Alaska, 1985

**1980**

Northern spotted owl in Oregon



**1990**

Northern spotted owl is listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, leading to an enjoinder of all timber sales on federal lands within its range.

**1992**

Energy Policy Act increases focus on alternative energy sources, energy efficiency, and reducing the country's reliance on foreign fuel sources.

**1993**

Presidential summit leads to the development of the Northwest Forest Plan to address human and environmental needs in areas within the northern spotted owl region.

**1994**

BLM Summit, the first ever gathering of all BLM managers, resulted in the development of a new strategic vision for the BLM.

Rangeland Reform '94 amends grazing regulations and establishes Resource Advisory Councils.

**1996**

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is designated by Presidential proclamation as BLM's first national monument.

**1990**

Tent Rocks National Monument in New Mexico



**2000**

National Landscape Conservation System is established.

Executive Order 13175 mandates consultation and collaboration with tribal officials in developing federal policy that has tribal implications.

**2005**

Energy Policy Act ensures energy efficiency and the production of secure, affordable, and reliable domestic energy.

**2008**

BLM-managed lands are officially designated as the National System of Public Lands.

**2009**

Omnibus Public Land Management Act authorizes the 26-million-acre National Landscape Conservation System and establishes permit requirements and penalties for unauthorized removal of paleontological resources from federal lands.



Femur bone fossil found on BLM land in Wyoming

**2000**

Monitoring trees in Oregon



**2012**

200th anniversary of the General Land Office and the 150th anniversary of the Homestead Act

An environmental education program in Colorado



Today, the BLM benefits the national economy as well as the economies of local communities. Activities on BLM lands, such as energy production, mineral extraction, timber harvesting, grazing, and recreation, result in jobs and income from goods and services associated with public land resources. In 2010, the BLM's management of public lands contributed more than \$112 billion to the national economy and supported more than 500,000 American jobs.

**2010**