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President's FY 2007 Budget Request of \$1.8 Billion for BLM Would Advance Environmentally Sound Energy Development

WASHINGTON – The Bush Administration today proposed a budget of \$1.8 billion for the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management in Fiscal Year 2007, including a \$25.4 million increase in its energy and minerals program aimed primarily at boosting the development of energy from America's public lands in an environmentally sound manner. Funding increases for energy activities will support the BLM's implementation of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and energy initiatives on Alaska's North Slope. The President's budget proposal also contains a \$3 million increase for "Enduring Legacy," a major cultural resource enhancement initiative.

"This budget request supports BLM's multiple-use mission and advances key national priorities," BLM Director Kathleen Clarke said. "Environmentally sound energy development on public lands is one vital part of our national strategy to ensure our economic and national security."

Clarke added, "The President's budget proposal will also help our agency meet the challenges of managing public land resources and uses in the fast-growing, fast-changing West." The BLM's top priorities, Clarke said, are to contribute to the nation's energy supply; to manage healthy and productive rangelands, forests, and watersheds for thriving economies and communities; to improve dispersed recreational opportunities; and to protect cultural and natural heritage resources.

Of the proposed \$25.4 million increase for energy programs, \$12.4 million would support exploration and development of energy on Alaska's North Slope and respond to environmental risks related to legacy wells in the area. The budget proposal assumes congressional authorization of oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) on Alaska's North Slope in 2006. If Congress authorizes such development, the BLM would use a portion of the money to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and take steps leading toward exploration and development in ANWR, where anticipated lease sales in 2008 and 2010 would generate a projected total of \$8 billion in bonus bids.

The funding proposal for energy includes \$9.2 million to ensure the BLM's timely processing of oil and gas drilling permit applications. Of the \$9.2 million, \$4.3 million would be used by the BLM to process approximately 1,100 permit applications in Fiscal Year 2007, \$2.8 million would fund inspections relating to environmental compliance and production verification, and \$2.1 million would support increased energy-related monitoring. Separate from the \$9.2 million, the budget proposes a \$3.3 million increase to manage the BLM's oil shale research and development leasing program.

The additional \$3 million for the cultural resource enhancement initiative "Enduring Legacy" would strengthen protection for cultural sites, increase the number of volunteers and partnerships, and support heritage tourism workshops. An additional \$3 million for the Western Oregon forestry program will strengthen its efforts to increase the volume of timber offered for sale.

The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land – 261 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.