

NEWS Release BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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Oregon Trail Interpretive Center Opens Special Exhibit for Homesteading Anniversary

BAKER CITY, Ore. – The 150th anniversary of the landmark Homestead Act is commemorated at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center with a special exhibit and special programs running throughout the summer. “Home! Sweet Homestead: the 150th Anniversary of the Homestead Act” opens June 7 in the Flagstaff Gallery, and runs daily through Sept. 3, 2012. The exhibit includes photos, artwork, maps, artifacts and text panels related to the original Homestead Act of 1862, the political and societal climate that created a movement to provide free land to small farmers, and the impacts of homesteading on settlement and culture of the west. It includes personal stories of three homesteading eastern Oregon families, a replica cabin scaled to the minimum size structure required as part of the patent process, and artifacts that display the technology available to homesteaders building a new life in the west. A “General Land Office” area includes information on the patent process, maps, and the opportunity to get a souvenir replica “land patent” issued by a historical re-enactor. Interpreters will also be available to answer questions about resources available through the Bureau of Land Management to research historic homesteading documents and survey records online to find family connections.

Throughout the summer living history interpreters will present the special program “Windows in Time” in the Leo Adler Theater depicting the concerns and issues of early day homesteaders. This program is followed by a question and answer period. To date, the interpreters have received a remarkable array of questions from audiences showing just how many people in the United States and Europe have homesteading in their family heritage. June 17 through July 9 the Center also hosts a traveling exhibit from the National Park Service Homestead National Monument explaining how the 1862 Homestead Act is considered one of the most significant laws ever in American history.

The Homestead Act of 1862, and subsequent revisions of the act, eventually resulted in 62,926 patented homesteads and 10.5 million acres of land transferred from public domain to homesteading farmers between 1863 and 1975 – 17 percent of all land in the state. Governor Kitzhaber has proclaimed June 7 as “Homesteading Day” in Oregon to acknowledge the tremendous impact of this historical event.

The National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, operated by the Bureau of Land Management, is located east of Baker City, Oregon. Take Exit 302 from Interstate-84 onto Highway 86 and proceed five miles. The Center is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Admission for adults is \$8; seniors are \$4.50; and children 15 and under are free. Federal passes are accepted.

Visit oregontrail.blm.gov for more information about the Center or call (541) 523-1843 for program and event updates. For information on other events in Baker County, Oregon, call (800) 523-1235.

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About the BLM: The BLM manages more land – more than 245 million acres - than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, 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. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

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