

## **BLM and the Economy**

**Edward Shepard, BLM Oregon/Washington State Director**

Classic parables like the ancient tale of the blind men describing an elephant illustrate how perspectives on a single thing can diverge widely. The mission of the Bureau of Land Management spans so many areas that different people could tell you completely different things about us depending on where they live, work, or play. In this challenging economy, it's smart to be aware of how our tax dollars are being invested. As a taxpayer, I want to know what we get in return for that revenue.



The BLM has the privilege of managing some of the Nation's most unique treasures. We manage over 15.7 million acres of public land in Oregon and approximately 436,000 acres in Washington together with some 23.4 million acres of Federal subsurface minerals. Each year, the BLM puts about \$100 million in to rural Oregon economies and another \$12 million in to Washington. Revenues that we return to the states and counties come from the fees we collect for recreation use, grazing and mineral leases, timber sales, energy royalties and right-of-way rentals.

The BLM's annual operating budget of \$272 million in Oregon and Washington generates almost five times as much in economic benefit. That's a nice return on your investment! In 2010, the overall economic effort of our programs in the Pacific Northwest was almost \$1.3 billion. Our direct financial contributions to Oregon and Washington don't fully capture the economic activity of the individuals and companies we contract with to provide goods and services. When we award contracts for habitat restoration, road renovation, fuels reduction, energy retrofitting, or myriad other projects, it multiplies the impact of those dollars to commodity suppliers and through local workers.

Next, consider the 2,000 BLM employees who live and work near you. They protect and preserve public lands, educate our kids about natural resources, guide people through the laws and policies on public lands, enhance and develop the recreation opportunities you enjoy, and much more. But you also find them serving as first-responders for fire or emergency medical situations, coaching youth sports, volunteering on civic groups of every variety, and helping wherever the need might arise in your hometown.

No matter what perspective you come from, the numbers make one thing perfectly clear: investing in the BLM is a gain, not a drain, on the region we love. Our people and programs provide a positive economic return on the diverse portfolio that comprises your public lands.

