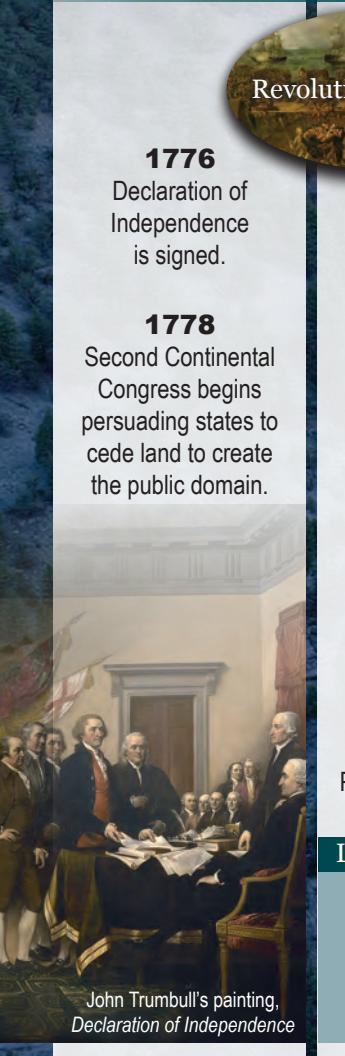




# Our Public Land Heritage: From the GLO to the BLM

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."

**1790**



John Trumbull's painting,  
*Declaration of Independence*

**1770**

**1780**

**1790**

**1800**

**1810**

**1820**

**1830**

**1840**

**1850**

**1860**

**1870**

**1880**

**1890**

**1900**

**1910**

**1920**

**1930**



**1812**

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

**1803**

Ohio becomes  
the first state created  
from the public  
domain.

**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.

**1843**

"Great Migration"  
on the Oregon Trail  
begins.

**1849**

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

**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.

**1864**

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

**1867**

First transcontinental  
railroad is completed  
at Promontory  
Summit, Utah.

**1868**

Transcontinental  
Railroad Act gives  
railroad companies  
rights-of-way and  
alternate sections of  
public domain lands  
along both sides of  
their railroads.

**1870**

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

**1872**

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

**1877**

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

**1889**

Establishment of  
Yellowstone National  
Park marks a shift  
from disposition to  
conservation and  
protection of federal  
lands.

**1890**

Travel across the desert  
in California

**1891**

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

**1898**

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

**1900**

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

**1906**

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

**1911**

Theodore Roosevelt and  
John Muir, 1903

**1912**

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**

Mineral Leasing Act  
authorizes federal  
leasing of public  
lands for private  
extraction of oil, gas,  
phosphate, sodium,  
and other minerals.

**1920**

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

**1926**

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.

**1930**

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

**1770**

**1780**

**1790**

**1800**

**1810**

**1820**

**1830**

**1840**

**1850**

**1860**

**1870**

**1880**

**1890**

**1900**

**1910**

**1920**

**1930**

**1770**

**1780**

**1790**

**1800**

**1810**

**1820**

**1830**

**1840**

**1850**

**1860**

**1870**

**1880**

**1890**

**1900**

**1910**

**1920**

**1930**

**1770**

**1780**

**1790**

**1800**

**1810**

**1820**

**1830**

**1840**

**1850**

**1860**

**1870**

**1880**

**1890**

**1900**

**1910**

**1920**

**1930**

**1770**

**1780**

**1790**

**1800**

**1810**

**1820**

**1830**

**1840**

**1850**

**1860**

**1870**

**1880**

**1890**

**1900**

**1910**

**1920**

**1930**

**1770**

**1780**

**1790**

**1800**

**1810**

**1820**

**1830**

**1840**

**1850**

**1860**

**1870**

**1940**

**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.

**1950**

**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.



**1953**  
Johny Horizon Clean-up 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.

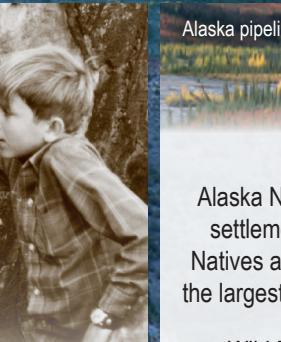
**1965**  
Land and Water Conservation Fund is established for federal acquisition of outdoor recreation areas.

**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.



**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.

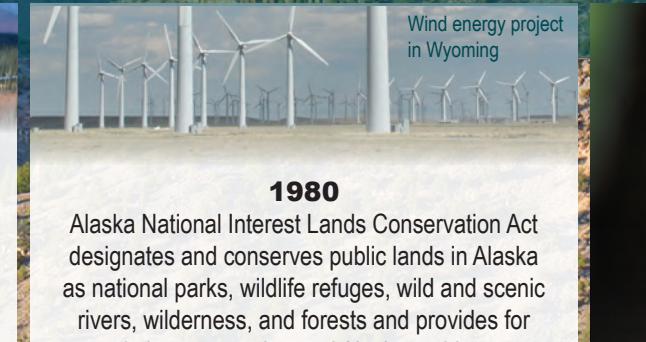
Management of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska is transferred to the BLM.

**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.



**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.

**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.



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.

**2000**

**2012**  
200th anniversary of the General Land Office and the 150th anniversary of the Homestead Act.

**2015**  
15th anniversary of the National Landscape Conservation System.

**2016**  
40th anniversary of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.



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 2015, the BLM's management of public lands contributed \$88 billion to the national economy and supported more than 374,000 American jobs.