Benefits of Public Lands

The public lands not only provide economic contributions in terms of jobs and output supported by various activities, but they also provide other benefits that families and communities across the United States derive from having access to our nation’s natural, scenic, recreational, and cultural resources.

**Economic Activity and Stewardship**

Economic contributions arising from public lands include economic opportunity and stability in diverse ways.

- **Visitor Spending**
  - 8.6 million visitors
  - $440 million in economic output
  - 7,100 nonfederal jobs
- **Coal Leasing in Wyoming**
  - 39,000 nonmarket permits
  - $1 billion in economic output
- **Minerals**
  - 201,000 nonfederal jobs
  - $11 billion in economic output
- **Timber**
  - 7,000 nonfederal jobs
  - $1 billion in economic output
- **Grazing**
  - 14,000 nonfederal jobs
  - $1 billion in economic output
- **Recreation**
  - 27,000 volunteers
  - $75 million in economic output
- **Volunteer Support**
  - 1 million hours of work
  - $150,000 in economic output

**Visitor Spending**

- **8.6 million visitors**
- **$440 million in economic output**
- **7,100 nonfederal jobs**

Economic Contributions from BLM-Managed Lands

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 1 in every 10 acres of land in the United States, working with partners to promote multiple uses of those lands through shared conservation stewardship. The BLM also manages a large portion of the nation’s minerals, facilitating development that creates jobs, helps local communities, and increases America’s economic vitality. Every state has public lands and minerals covering a variety of landscapes, including forests, mountains, canyons, wild rivers, and deserts. The BLM is committed to keeping public landscapes healthy and productive and to effectively managing border landscapes to keep America safe.

The public lands managed by the BLM generate significant and quantifiable benefits for the nation and serve American families by providing energy and mineral resources, grazing and timber resources, and access to recreational opportunities, including hunting and fishing. They provide valuable goods and materials that we rely on every day to heat our homes, build our roads, and feed our families. Through balanced management, the BLM develops these resources while maintaining healthy ecosystems and preserving cultural resources and iconic landscapes.

In fiscal year 2016, the diverse activities authorized on BLM-managed lands generated $75 billion in economic output throughout the country—more than any other agency within the Department of the Interior. The economic activity supported 372,000 jobs and also contributed substantial revenue to the U.S. Treasury and state governments, mostly through royalties on minerals.

**Economic Activity**

- **Revenue**
  - $372,000 in jobs supported
- **Economic Output**
  - $75 billion in economic output
- **Fiscal Year 2016**
  - $480 million in timber
  - $320 million in coal
  - $280 million in natural gas
  - $260 million in oil
  - $220 million in geothermal
  - $200 million in wind, solar, and other renewable energy sources
  - $180 million in water

**Footnotes**

1. BLM-managed land
2. BLM-administered area
3. Fiscal Year 2016
4. Source: Bureau of Land Management, Fiscal Year 2016 report, August 2017

**Nonmarket Benefits**

- Benefits related to recreation opportunities, cultural resources, visual beauty, strategically significant resources, environmental health, and supporting local communities are often more challenging to quantify in economic terms.

- **Local partnerships**
  - 15 jobs
  - $300,000 in economic output

- **Visitors to Fort Ord National Monument, CA**
  - 18,000 visitors
  - 12 jobs
  - $120,000 in economic output

- **Benefits related to public safety, education, and environmental health**
  - 966 federal jobs
  - $74 million in economic output

- **Coal leasing in Wyoming**
  - 14,000 nonfederal jobs
  - $1 billion in economic output

- **Minerals**
  - 201,000 nonfederal jobs
  - $11 billion in economic output

- **Timber**
  - 7,000 nonfederal jobs
  - $1 billion in economic output

- **Grazing**
  - 14,000 nonfederal jobs
  - $1 billion in economic output

- **Recreation**
  - 27,000 volunteers
  - $75 million in economic output

- **Volunteer support**
  - 1 million hours of work
  - $150,000 in economic output
Oil and gas: The BLM leases more than 27.2 million acres of land, from the eastern United States to the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, for onshore oil and gas production. Sales of federal onshore oil production decreased to 168.5 million barrels during 2016, compared to 182.5 million barrels in 2015, due at least in part to continued low prices for oil.

Coal: The BLM administers coal leases encompassing approximately 467,000 acres in 12 states. Coal continues to be a large source of energy in the United States, but the continuing low cost of natural gas has spurred a shift away from coal for energy production. A decrease in U.S. coal production from 1,095.64 million short tons in 2011 to 728.24 million short tons in 2016 reflects this trend.

Nonenergy minerals: The BLM issues leases for minerals that are not used for energy production, such as potash, phosphate, sodium, and gilsonite, which are used in fertilizers, glass, and paper. Federal lands also contain saleable mineral materials, including sand, gravel, dirt, and rock, and locatable hard rock minerals, such as copper and gold. In 2016, nonenergy minerals produced from federal lands were valued at $11.4 billion.

Geothermal, wind, and solar: The BLM has approved 126 renewable energy projects, including 36 solar projects, 40 wind projects, and 50 geothermal projects. Combined, they represent a total of 17,963 megawatts of capacity that could provide power to about 7 million homes.

Recreation: The public lands managed by the BLM offer more recreational opportunities than lands managed by any other federal agency, with more than 99 percent available for recreation with no fee. Lands used for recreational activities also contribute significantly to local economies. In 2016, BLM lands received more than 64.6 million recreation-related visits, an increase over the previous year.

Grazing: In 2016, the BLM permitted 12 million animal unit months (AUMs) for ranchers who graze their livestock, mostly cattle and sheep, on public lands. An AUM is the amount of forage needed to feed a cow and calf or the equivalent for 1 month. In 2016, the grazing fee was $2.11 per AUM. While the number of AUMs sold each year remains relatively steady, annual variations in use occur due to factors such as drought, wildlife, market conditions, and restoration projects.

Timber: One-fourth of the 245 million acres of lands managed by the BLM are forest ecosystems, spread across 13 western states, including Alaska. Through responsible management of these lands, the BLM ensures the health and resilience of the nation’s public forest lands as well as the availability of traditional forest products, such as timber. In 2016, the BLM offered 233.2 million board feet of timber for sale. This number has remained relatively steady over the past decade.