

## **BLM'S 2013 "MAKING A DIFFERENCE" NATIONAL VOLUNTEER AWARD WINNERS**

### **VOLUNTEER WINNERS**

**LINDA AND RAY PANTER, CENTRAL YUKON FIELD OFFICE, AK:** Over the past two years, Linda and Ray Panter have greeted nearly 10,000 summer visitors annually at the BLM's Yukon Crossing Contact Station, located beside the Yukon River along Alaska's remote, 414-mile Dalton Highway. This important BLM visitor station provides valuable services to travelers from around the world as they venture north to the Arctic Circle and beyond. Linda and Ray answer thousands of questions, distribute brochures, track visitation, provide critical safety and travel information, maintain the contact station itself, and monitor the nearby rustic campground. Their record sales of books and merchandise have strengthened BLM's partnership with the Alaska Geographic Association, the local non-profit cooperating association. Linda and Ray have also initiated projects and programs to enhance visitor experiences, including short programs on Arctic tree growth, during which they compare tree rings from Alaskan species to those of trees from their native Oregon. They lead walking tours for visitors interested in the local fauna and flora, have produced a stunning photo program based on their discoveries, and planted a small garden to demonstrate the speed with which plants must develop during the short Arctic growing season. Ray even hauls in local spring water each day so that visitors can literally "get a taste of the Arctic." Linda and Ray staff the contact station every day of the week, working long hours amidst such luxuries as a satellite phone and an outhouse. These special hosts obviously love what they do, happy to welcome Yukon Crossing visitors with warmth and hospitality.

**JOSHUA BARLOW, PRICE FIELD OFFICE, UT:** When 14-year-old Josh Barlow wished to perform an Eagle Scout project, he contacted the BLM's Price Field Office for some ideas. He chose to work on a project to enhance the Gordon Creek Trail, which is located just outside the town of Price. The first three miles of the trail cross BLM-managed land, and the last half-mile crosses a Wildlife Management Area administered by the Utah State Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR). Josh's plan was to build a barricade in front of a historic cabin, install signs along the trail, and fix washed-out trail segments. BLM staff remarked on the size of the undertaking and suggested that Josh select only one project component; however, he wanted to do it all. Josh worked with BLM and DWR staff, arranging regular meetings and on-site visits to ensure that he understood what was needed. Josh also presented his project plans at a public recreation meeting and found outside donors for materials such as culverts. He coordinated with the BLM, DWR, and Utah Off-Highway Vehicle Program to obtain the remaining materials, including lumber, signs, and tools. On the first day of the project, Josh, BLM and DWR staff, and project volunteers met at the trailhead for a briefing to review plans and discuss safety considerations. Accomplishments over the course of the three-day project included installation of four culverts, construction of water bars, and leveling of trail segments. Fencing of the historic cabin was accomplished two months later. Josh personally contributed over 56 hours of time to the project, with additional hours devoted to project preparation and obtaining materials. Josh's project volunteers performed 658 hours of labor on the Gordon Creek Trail project, whose value is estimated at more than \$15,000.

## **VOLUNTEER WINNERS: LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT**

**UPPER RIDGE WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION, REDDING FIELD OFFICE, CA:** For more than 27 years, volunteers from the Upper Ridge Wilderness Association (URWA) have been the principal caretakers of BLM's Upper Ridge Nature Preserve (URNP), a 120-acre parcel sandwiched between housing subdivisions and a school in the Magalia area. With a membership of only 15-20 individuals at any given time, the group maintains hiking trails, picks up trash, reports trespassers, sponsors educational activities, and patrols the preserve. In conjunction with local 5<sup>th</sup>-grade teachers, the URWA coordinates an annual "Trail Days" event, a week of student environmental education activities for which the preserve serves as an outdoor classroom. Participating organizations include the California Conservation Corps, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), and the Magalia Beautification Club. "Trail Days" has received a President's Environmental Youth Award "for outstanding achievement in environmental protection services." BLM has been able to increase outdoor recreation opportunities in the Magalia area thanks to the work of URWA volunteers, who have coordinated the construction of a toilet, trails, trail bridges, and an information kiosk; developed and printed a trail brochure; and installed a handmade stone sign at the URNA. Currently, the URWA is working with the Redding Field Office on additional trails that will allow pedestrian access to Little Butte Creek Canyon and Little Butte Creek. The work performed by URWA volunteers over the years is valued at more than \$250,000.

**ILLA WILLMORE, UPPER MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS NATIONAL MONUMENT, MT:** With true pioneer spirit, Illa Willmore and her husband Warren still ranch on land homesteaded by Warren's father in 1915. More than 21 years ago, Illa signed on to volunteer at the nearby James Kipp Recreation Area, serving as the site's campground host and all-around BLM ambassador from March to November each year. She shares her knowledge of all things related to the Breaks country—history, culture, wildlife, plants, and everyday activities—via daily journal entries and personal musings, which are recorded at the Visitor Contact Station. These have provided successive resource managers with valuable "snapshots" of BLM's history and conditions at Kipp. She and four generations of her family have participated in the National Public Lands Day volunteer projects held annually at Kipp since 1999, as well as the nationally recognized Lewis and Clark Bicentennial events hosted from 2003-2006. More recently, Illa's service during the historic Missouri River flooding in the summer of 2011 was nothing short of outstanding. Her assistance included several trips a day to the bluffs above the stricken campground to provide daily updates on conditions. Her "real-time" reports to BLM law enforcement and managers were instrumental in the safe, orderly evacuation and subsequent temporary closure of the campground. Illa is a passionate steward of the public lands, and the backbone of James Kipp Recreation Area; during her tenure, Illa has contributed an average of 1,200 hours per year. She has already planned her return for the 2013 volunteer season.

**ANNETTE FROELICH, LAS CRUCES DISTRICT OFFICE, NM:** Annette Froehlich spent 40 years as a Medical Mission Sister, dedicating herself to providing nursing and other services to disadvantaged people both in the United States and abroad. After such a remarkable career in the health field, Annette decided to pursue another lifelong passion—the natural world—and earned a Wildlife Science degree from New Mexico State University in 1994. A year later, Annette began volunteering one day a week at the BLM's Dripping Springs Natural Area, and she's been doing it ever since. Comprised of 2,850 acres on the western side of the spectacular Organ Mountains, the site annually receives over 22,000 visitors, who treasure the opportunities

for hiking, nature study, and other day-use activities. Annette's main duties include staffing the visitor center and conducting trail patrol hikes. In the visitor center, she greets the public, collects day-use fees, and shares her vast knowledge about the natural area's plants, animals, and history. Her trail patrols include collecting litter, informing visitors of the area's rules and regulations, and—in her words— “checking for hikers *in* trouble or *making* trouble.” In the past, Annette has also led group tours for children, worked in the book store, and helped to establish a visitor garden. She has also been invaluable in orienting new site hosts and day volunteers. Annette's sweet laugh and bright eyes convey her enthusiasm as a lifelong learner who delights in imparting her knowledge to others. Annette explains, “Driving up to these mountains is like driving up into to an awesome cathedral. It gives me an indescribable feeling of peace and tranquility.” Her positive attitude and caring disposition have earned Annette the respect of BLM employees, volunteers, and the public alike.

### **VOLUNTEER WINNER: MILESTONE**

**PAT WILLIAMS, RED ROCK CANYON NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA, NV:** Since Pat Williams and her husband, Chuck, began volunteering at the BLM's Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA) in early 1999, they have been a driving force within the Friends of Red Rock Canyon (FORRC) organization, the BLM's oldest “friends” group. In her time with FORRC, Pat has served in numerous capacities, including President, Membership Chair, Secretary, Communications Lead, book store manager, and contributor to *The Rock*, the FORRC's quarterly magazine. Pat has served with dedication and heart, helping to raise funds, increase community awareness, implement educational initiatives, protect natural and cultural resources, and organize and lead both volunteers and volunteer projects. Pat and Chuck have been nominated for and presented with two well-deserved BLM “Making a Difference” National Volunteer Awards since the recognition program began in 1996. This year, however, the BLM would like to acknowledge a simple but amazing milestone in Pat's tenure with the Friends of Red Rock: in January 2013, she exceeded 20,000 hours of volunteer time contributed to the BLM. Red Rock Canyon NCA has benefited immeasurably from Pat's hard work on behalf of National Conservation Lands. The BLM offers Pat heartfelt congratulations and thanks as she embarks on her next 20,000 hours!

### **EMPLOYEE WINNER**

**WARREN J. TROGDEN, SR., CHALLIS FIELD OFFICE, ID:** Challis maintenance worker Warren J. Trogden, Sr., has shown extraordinary dedication to the BLM volunteer campground host program throughout his 16 years of service with the agency. During this time, Warren has helped volunteers collectively log over 76,000 hours at four high-use recreation sites. He has shown a personal commitment to providing volunteers with the facilities, equipment, and assistance they need to provide visitors with pleasant and safe camping experiences. Warren's care, commitment, and accommodating nature have made Challis-area BLM campgrounds highly sought-after destinations for prospective volunteer hosts from all over the nation. Warren has often expressed his passion for making the hosts' lives easier “since the volunteers already

do so much for us.” Challis-area camp hosts—the local face of the BLM for thousands of visitors—are eager to return year after year because of Warren’s dedication to improving conditions and making their responsibilities more manageable. And though his accomplishments are undoubtedly impressive, Warren, with typical humility, insists that the volunteers deserve all the credit. While Warren may not acknowledge the significant role he plays, the volunteer campground hosts certainly do. In the words of one long-time host, “. . . I have never seen a harder working person. He is always willing to give a helping hand and always has a smile and good word for everyone. Warren makes it a joy and a pleasure to be a volunteer campground host.”