Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify before your subcommittee on the Bureau of Land Management's proposed budget for fiscal year 2000.

The principal mission of the BLM, as reflected in our budget submission, is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. These lands - 264 million acres in all and more than 560 million acres of subsurface estate - comprise about one-eighth of the entire U.S. land mass. The BLM is a microcosm of the Department of the Interior as a whole in that we manage for energy and minerals, forestry, fish and wildlife, and wilderness while at the same time we are responsible for overseeing paleontology, archaeology and recreation interests. Given these challenges, the BLM attends to the needs of a growing and changing West, forcing us to recognize the increasing demands of public land users while addressing the needs of traditional user groups. All of this comes at a time when resources are scarce and obligations abound.

Where the BLM comes from is just as interesting as what we do. Our roots go back to 1812 when the Congress established the General Land Office to dispose of the vast "public domain" that remained after lands were set aside for national forests, wildlife refuges, parks and monuments. By the early 20th century, the Congress took additional steps towards recognizing the value of the assets on the public domain by directing the Executive Branch to begin managing activities on these lands. In 1934, the Taylor Grazing Act established the U.S. Grazing Service to formally oversee and manage public rangelands. The BLM was officially born on July 16, 1946 when President Harry Truman merged the General Land Office and the U.S. Grazing Service to create what is today the Bureau of Land Management. A clear mandate was established - the BLM was to manage the public domain for the benefit of all Americans, with a policy of multiple use and sustained yield.

This brings us to 2000, perhaps an era in which the BLM faces its greatest task - balancing the many interests and uses of the public domain with an expanding Westward population. While there are no clear solutions to many of the natural
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Partnership efforts are also at the heart of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Designated by President Clinton in 1996, the 1.7 million acre Monument in southern Utah is a place of remote and desolate beauty, with cliffs and mesas in a rich mosaic of colors. Working collaboratively with local interests, the BLM will complete the Monument's management plan to assure that grazing, transportation, visitor services and other interests are adequately met. Part of the unique nature of the Monument is the opportunity for scientific research it presents. Thus, the BLM, in cooperation with the USGS Biological Resources Division, the State of Utah, the Forest Service's Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, and other local interests, is establishing natural resource baseline data that will be used for nearly all future scientific research efforts within the Monument's boundaries. In 2000 the BLM will also continue to focus on the management of the Monument and requests $3,150,000 for the construction of three visitor contact stations at Cannonville, Big Water and Glendale, gateways to the Monument.

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contribute directly to the viability of states' economies. In 2000, the public lands will
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million increase over the FY 1999 enacted budget level. The BLM's total budget request
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Mr. Chairman, I would like to briefly highlight for the Subcommittee some of the other requested increases included in the BLM's 2000 budget request.

The restoration and preservation of fish and wildlife habitat continues to be at the top of the BLM's agenda. At the heart of this effort is the BLM's request for an additional $2,150,000 to build on past years' water quality and watershed health efforts, which form the core of many of our programs. Through the Clean Water and Watershed Restoration initiative the BLM will continue to reduce polluted runoff from Federal lands and promote restoration of watersheds, principally through collaborative efforts. For example, in Arizona resource assessments and health standard compliance reviews have identified restoration needs in the Middle Gila watershed necessary to improve water quality for the threatened gila trout.

In the Southwest, where 93% of native fish are listed as endangered, threatened or are considered to be of special concern, the BLM requests $800,000 to continue critical habitat restoration work. This funding will be used to comply with recently issued biological opinions from the Fish and Wildlife Service and will address critical on-the-ground habitat improvements focused on riparian and watershed areas. Recent legal challenges in the Southwest have diverted a significant portion of BLM funding, but we feel that with the assistance of local interest groups and other Federal and state agencies that are working to develop a coordinated approach to long term restoration, the BLM can avoid future adverse litigation.

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Approximately one-third of the land that the BLM manages is part of the Alaskan tundra. However, very little scientific information is available about these lands and natural resources in this region. The BLM requests $1,000,000 to work collaboratively with other Department of the Interior agencies, as part of the Tundra to Tropics initiative to more fully understand from a scientific point of view this region and its unique ecosystems. Staff will begin to collect and analyze data on Alaskan surface water sources and river systems, develop habitat models, and process data on habitats essential to the production of various species of salmon. Given the complexity of ecosystems in this region, coupled with the lack of base scientific data, these efforts are essential for effective land management of the region.

A longstanding concern of the BLM is the health of its rangelands. The prolific spread of invasive weeds is causing the greatest, most rapidly accelerating adverse impacts to the long-term health of public lands to date. Noxious weed infestation degrades the productivity of rangelands, wildlife habitat, and adjacent agricultural lands throughout the western U.S. by reducing water flows, increasing soil erosion, and reducing forage for grazing animals. The problem is so bad that 11 million acres, or roughly 5%, of BLM administered public lands are currently infested with noxious weeds. This is an area roughly half the size of the State of Virginia. Further, we estimate that noxious weeds are spreading at an alarming rate - more than 2,300 acres of BLM lands per day. Past years of expansive inventorying support the need for treatments. Consequently, the BLM requests $3,500,000 to expand integrated weed management and to treat an additional 60,000 acres of public lands, focused especially on early detection and immediate control of small infestations.

In the California desert the BLM is making progress on several resource issues and is requesting $1,200,000 to support the California Desert Managers Group effort to restore desert lands. With the additional funding the BLM pledges to do its part to eradicate salt cedar, a noxious weed that has invaded most riparian areas; survey and prioritize hazardous material sites in preparation for clean-up; mitigate hazardous material sites by playing an active part in an interagency strategy to reduce illegal dumping; and develop a joint approach to burro management in areas with common boundaries and overlapping herd populations.

Finally, in relation to our nation's rangelands, the BLM is requesting $2,500,000 to deal with the extraordinary workload associated with renewing expiring livestock grazing permits and leases. Over 17,000 permits and leases were issued to livestock operators in the late 1980's for a ten year period after many of our land use plans were completed. Now that these permits and leases are expiring, a more intensive level of review is necessary in order to comply with current laws and regulations. Approximately 2,250 renewals will need to be completed in 2000 and it is possible that an additional 1,000 renewals may carry over from work not completed in 1999; in contrast, our permit renewal workload in 1998 was less than half of the amount we can expect in 2000.
Mr. Chairman, other requests in our 2000 budget include:

$700,000 to enable the BLM to participate in interagency reviews of the recreational and hydrologic impacts on BLM watersheds of 43 FERC hydropower projects;

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$1,350,000 to accelerate the clean-up of hazardous materials on BLM, FWS, and NPS lands and pursue potentially responsible parties to cover appropriate costs.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to talk briefly about several of our successes as well as several important areas of national interest where the BLM is involved.

In California, the BLM has led a joint Federal/State effort to acquire and conserve the world's largest privately-held old growth forest. I am pleased to report that the Headwaters Forest acquisition is now in the final stages of completion, with management responsibilities to be assumed in 1999 by the BLM and the State. The Bureau requests $1,000,000 in 2000 to complete silvicultural and watershed assessments needed to prepare the Headwaters Forest Coordinated Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, assuring that old-growth and old-growth dependent species are preserved and that recreation opportunities are available to the public. To assist with these efforts, the State of California is contributing $1,200,000.

The Secretary of the Interior has identified as one of his top priorities the reduction of hazardous fuels to mitigate the damaging costs associated with fire, including threats to public health, property and safety, and fire dependent ecosystems. In keeping with this policy, the BLM more than doubled its fuels reduction activities from 1997 to 1998, completing 170,000 acres of prescribed fires. On a whole, the Department of the Interior increased its fuels treatments four-fold since 1996. In 2000, the BLM will continue these efforts and plans to complete 300,000 acres of fuel reduction treatments.

The BLM continues to make progress in western Oregon with implementation of the Forest Plan. Now in its fifth year, the Plan is shifting into a new phase of implementation that focuses more intensively on the survey and management of special status species, building on the past successes of watershed analyses. The BLM requests $925,000 in 2000 to update some of these analyses to be compliant with the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act. We also remain committed to offering the full allowable sale quantity (ASQ) of 213.5 MMBF of timber that is called for under the Plan.
The BLM's continued participation in the Recreation Fee Demonstration program has largely been a success. In 1999, the BLM's recreation fee demonstration program expanded to include 67 fee projects; collections totaled $3.5 million and are used by the BLM for on-the-ground work, maintenance and education at the sites of origin. The BLM has entered into many creative partnerships to make this project work, including an agreement with the Pueblo of Chochiti that grants access to Tent Rocks through Pueblo property in exchange for 20% of the revenues that are used for a Pueblo scholarship fund and to fund a part-time position to monitor and patrol the National Recreation Trail.

A major push is underway by the BLM to repair damaged riparian areas in order to restore key wetland/aquatic habitat by improving water quality, correcting streambank erosion, and restoring habitat for fish and wildlife. In 1999 the BLM plans to continue riparian restoration work by assessing 1,460 miles of riparian habitat, 10,000 acres of wetlands, and restoring 800 miles of plant and animal habitat. Where practical, this work is done collaboratively with tribes and state and local governments that support efforts with matching funds. Efforts in East Douglas Creek, Colorado, are representative of the BLM and local landowners working together to improve an overgrazed riparian zone where fish and wildlife habitat have been restored to functioning conditions and are less susceptible to erosion and invasion of non-native plant species.

In 2000, the BLM budget request includes a large decrease for land and resource information systems. A program reduction of $16.5 million is tied to changes in bureau-wide implementation that grew out of the ALMRS operational assessment, test, and evaluation, conducted in 1998. $19.1 million is requested to revise the strategy, plans and schedule to emphasize a more modular approach to land and resource information systems development.

We fully understand that budgets continue to be constrained, that difficult choices will need to be made, and that there will be increased pressure on the BLM to develop innovative solutions to accomplish its mission. However, the initiatives presented in this budget exemplify the BLM's commitment to preserving and restoring our public lands for the use and enjoyment of current and future generation. Moreover, they address our most challenging needs to date on lands and issues as diverse as any of those in the Department of the Interior. We look forward to working cooperatively with the Subcommittee in meeting these challenges.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my opening remarks. I welcome your questions.

LINK TO MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BLM'S BUDGET

Statement Of Tom Fry
Acting Director, Bureau Of Land Management
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The BLM continues to make progress in western Oregon with implementation of the Forest Plan. Now in its fifth year, the Plan is shifting into a new phase of implementation that focuses more intensively on the survey and management of special status species, building on the past successes of watershed analyses. The BLM requests $925,000 in 2000 to update some of these analyses to be compliant with the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act. We also remain committed to offering the full allowable sale quantity (ASQ) of 213.5 MMBF of timber that is called for under the Plan.
The BLM's continued participation in the Recreation Fee Demonstration program has largely been a success. In 1999, the BLM's recreation fee demonstration program expanded to include 67 fee projects; collections totaled $3.5 million and are used by the BLM for on-the-ground work, maintenance and education at the sites of origin. The BLM has entered into many creative partnerships to make this project work, including an agreement with the Pueblo of Chochiti that grants access to Tent Rocks through Pueblo property in exchange for 20% of the revenues that are used for a Pueblo scholarship fund and to fund a part-time position to monitor and patrol the National Recreation Trail.

A major push is underway by the BLM to repair damaged riparian areas in order to restore key wetland/aquatic habitat by improving water quality, correcting streambank erosion, and restoring habitat for fish and wildlife. In 1999 the BLM plans to continue riparian restoration work by assessing 1,460 miles of riparian habitat, 10,000 acres of wetlands, and restoring 800 miles of plant and animal habitat. Where practical, this work is done collaboratively with tribes and state and local governments that support efforts with matching funds. Efforts in East Douglas Creek, Colorado, are representative of the BLM and local land owners working together to improve an overgrazed riparian zone where fish and wildlife habitat have been restored to functioning conditions and are less susceptible to erosion and invasion of non-native plant species.

In 2000, the BLM budget request includes a large decrease for land and resource information systems. A program reduction of $16.5 million is tied to changes in bureau-wide implementation that grew out of the ALMRS operational assessment, test, and evaluation, conducted in 1998. $19.1 million is requested to revise the strategy, plans and schedule to emphasize a more modular approach to land and resource information systems development.

We fully understand that budgets continue to be constrained, that difficult choices will need to be made, and that there will be increased pressure on the BLM to develop innovative solutions to accomplish its mission. However, the initiatives presented in this budget exemplify the BLM's commitment to preserving and restoring our public lands for the use and enjoyment of current and future generation. Moreover, they address our most challenging needs to date on lands and issues as diverse as any of those in the Department of the Interior. We look forward to working cooperatively with the Subcommittee in meeting these challenges.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my opening remarks. I welcome your questions.

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