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BLM in the Spotlight

Renewable Energy with Responsible Practices

By
Vanessa
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BLM Colorado Renewable Energy Team

With the influx of “green” technology and information regarding climate change, more and more Americans are looking to renewable energy.

The push for renewable energy is also evident within our administration. As part of that effort, the Bureau of Land Management Colorado has created a new Renewable Energy Team.

The five-member team based in Monte Vista, Colo., consists of program leader Joe Vieira, NEPA Coordinator Nancy Keohane, Archeologist Alicia Beat, Realty Specialist Jeff Brown, and Wildlife Biologist Gale Finan – all of whom have direct experience working with renewable energy projects.

“Our job is to review the use of our public lands for renewable energy generation while protecting the important natural biological and cultural resource values of the land,” Vieira said. “Our team recognizes that we are entering a new realm of uses for public lands and that there is an extraordinary potential for

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producing low-carbon energy.”

This team provides an opportunity for the BLM to focus resources to process renewable energy applications on public lands. The team is currently working on projects related to solar, wind and possibly geothermal.

“There are legitimate public concerns about the use of their public lands and our team is responsible for ensuring that those concerns are addressed,” Vieira said.

BLM Colorado received almost \$4 million under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Renewable Energy Authorizations, which includes funding for eight projects to support large-scale production for renewable energy development.

At the national level, the BLM is working with states, stakeholders, local communities, and other federal agencies to map out "renewable energy zones" around the country where we will give priority to large-scale renewable energy projects. The Interior is also investing \$41 million through the President's economic recovery plan to facilitate a rapid and responsible move to large-scale production of renewables on public lands.

*BLM Colorado
Renewable
Energy. . .*

Biomass – BLM Colorado produces thousands of tons of biomass annually through forestry, fuel hazard reduction, and range improvement projects. The most active renewable biomass programs are: providing wood chips to Black Hills Power in Cañon City, Colo., providing dead and dying Mountain Pine Beetle infested trees to contractors who supply pellet plants in northwest Colorado, and providing thousands of cords of firewood for home and business heating throughout western Colorado.

Solar – Last year, four Solar Energy Study Areas were identified in the San Luis Valley to look at their potential for large-scale solar projects. A draft of that analysis is expected to be released late this summer. This process was part of a national effort led by Sec. of the Interior Ken Salazar.

Geothermal – In the last year, BLM Colorado received three nominations for geothermal parcels in Colorado. One of those parcels is located on BLM lands, another is located on split estate (private surface with BLM minerals), and the other is located on U.S. Forest Service lands. BLM is currently working with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to address geothermal

Employee Spotlight

BLM Colorado Welcomes New State Director

BLM Colorado employees greeted their new State Director, Helen Hankins, on Feb. 1, 2010. Before moving to Colorado, Helen served as the BLM Associate State Director in Arizona.

Helen began her career in 1970 as a clerk typist in the BLM's work study program in the Albuquerque District. After earning a degree in geology from the University of New Mexico, Helen worked at the Phoenix Training Center (now the National Training Center) and later at Durango.

In Durango, Helen enjoyed seeing the area's cliff dwellings and watching archaeological excavations near what is now the Anasazi Heritage Center. She recalls fondly riding horseback to conduct compliance work in the mountains around Silverton.

In 1979, Helen accepted the district geologist position in the Anchorage District, Alaska. Over the next eight years, Helen worked at the district and state level as a geologist.

Helen moved to Washington DC in 1988, working in the BLM's national Division of Budget for two "intensive" years. Helen's next assignment was the Kobuk District Manager in Alaska, where she experienced the thrill of landing on the Yukon River in a float plane.

In 1995, Helen transferred to Elko, Nev., where she served as District Manager.

“For me this was like going to college again, because there were many new things that I had to learn about – activities and programs that didn't exist in Alaska,” Helen said. “The

leasing in terms of coordination and identifying concerns.

Wind – Currently, no commercial wind developments exist within BLM-managed lands in Colorado. However, there are two wind testing facilities in the Northwest and Front Range District Offices for potential commercial development. We are also working on four more wind testing facility applications.

In the News

[Raise fines for damages to public lands, senators urge \(2/10/10\)](#)

- Two Colorado Democrats introduced a bill that would allow for drastically increased fines for damage to public lands caused by recreationists.

[BLM wants to thin land near Perins Peak \(2/10/10\)](#)

- The Bureau of Land Management plans to thin about 300 acres of vegetation on public lands west of Durango and adjacent to the Perins Peak State Wildlife Area.

[Colorado to get \\$30 million in federal money to clear beetle-killed forests \(2/09/10\)](#)

- Colorado will get a \$30 million chunk of federal money to make 3 million acres of beetle-killed forest safer.

[Lawmakers trying to protect river rafters \(2/08/10\)](#)

DENVER — Wearing life vests and carrying paddles, commercial Colorado river rafters vowed Monday to fight for their right to navigate the state's whitewater rivers after a Texas development company threatened to shut them down.

[San Juan National Forest accepting applications for Artist-in-Residence Program \(2/04/10\)](#)

- The San Juan National Forest is accepting applications for its Aspen Guard Station Artist-in-Residence Program until March 1.

[Prosecutor: Artifacts informant clean \(2/02/10\)](#)

- SALT LAKE CITY - The undercover operative in a federal bust of artifact trading collected about \$7,500 a month for secretly recording transactions with collectors and sellers across the Southwest for more than two years, new court documents say.

[Colorado officials to consider new regulations for uranium mining \(2/01/10\)](#)

- DENVER (AP) — The Colorado Mined Land Reclamation Board will consider tightening oversight of uranium mining.

most difficult task in Elko was the restoration of hundreds of thousands of acres after the 1999 fire season."

After working in Elko, Helen became the Arizona Associate State Director in 2007. Helen married Michael Mauser in Durango in 1976. They have hosted 11 Rotary youth exchange students from eight different countries. They have two cats. Helen is active in Toastmasters, and participated in a Spanish-English Toastmasters club in Phoenix.

Helen and Michael enjoy international travel, particularly when it involves hiking or backpacking. A high point of those travels was climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.

Helen has more than 35 years of service with the BLM, and loves the public lands and the challenges and the opportunities they provide.

"I applied for the State Director position in Colorado because of the outstanding and interesting work that is going on here and the opportunities to take advantage of many existing partnerships. My experience tells me that these things exist because of the top notch employees in Colorado," Helen said.

Ask BLM

Question: Which BLM Colorado field office manages one of the largest concentrations of marine fossils in North America?

Answer: The Kremmling Field Office manages the Kremmling Cretaceous-Ammonite Locality.

If you have something you want to learn about, "Ask BLM" at Colorado_News@blm.gov

Press Releases since Jan. 15

[BLM Seeks Public Input on Forestry Proposal \(2/12/10\)](#)

[BLM oil and gas lease sale nets \\$139,233 \(2/11/10\)](#)

[Members Still Sought for Uncompahgre RMP Advisory Group \(2/02/10\)](#)

[Southern Colorado interagency spring prescribed burn program to commence \(2/02/10\)](#)

[BLM seeks public comments on proposed Hartsel to Fairplay powerline \(2/02/10\)](#)

[Cedar Mountain road closure protects nesting raptors \(2/01/10\)](#)

[Secretary Salazar Appoints Alan Gilbert as Senior Advisor for the Rocky Mountains and Southwest \(2/01/10\)](#)

[BLM Defers Leasing Geothermal Parcel Near Buena Vista \(1/28/10\)](#)

[BLM office in Silt renamed the Colorado River Valley Field Office \(1/28/10\)](#)

[BLM Looking for Public Input Into Recreational Opportunities \(1/28/10\)](#)

[Secretary Salazar Announces New Appointments to Bureau of Land Management Resource Advisory Councils \(1/21/10\)](#)

[Helen M. Hankins Appointed as BLM Colorado State Director \(1/19/10\)](#)



Places to Visit

Canyon Pintado National Historic District

Canyon Pintado National Historic covers 16,000 acres of public land along 15 miles of State Highway 139, part of the Dinosaur Diamond Scenic and Historical Byway.

Canyon Pintado (Spanish for "Painted Canyon") received its name in 1776, when Fathers Dominguez and Escalante noted numerous examples of ancient Native American rock art as they traveled through the Douglas Creek Valley.

The prehistoric Fremont culture and the historic Ute Indians created much of the rock art that is visible in the canyon today. There are seven interpretive sites along State Highway 139 exhibit, several prehistoric rock art panels and one historic cabin. Visitor orientation kiosks, including restrooms and picnic tables, are located at the south end of the historic district and near the center, at the East Four-Mile Draw site.

A brochure with map is available from the BLM White River Field Office in Meeker, Colo, the Colorado Welcome Center at Dinosaur, the Rangely Chamber of Commerce, and the Rangely Outdoor Museum.

Visitor Activities

Picnicking, hiking, rock art viewing, archaeological site, historic site,

Hot Topics

Rural Fire Assistance - What is That?

*By Lynn Barclay,
Fire Mitigation/
Education Specialist*

The application period for the Rural Fire Assistance program will soon be here. The start date for application submission is March 1 through April 1, 2010. This is a Department of Interior administered program.

The RFA program is designed to provide financial assistance to rural fire departments to acquire the necessary wildland fire equipment, training, and personal protective gear needed safely to fight wildland fires. The program was established after the National Fire Plan was instituted in 2001 following the intense 2000 fire season, allowing federal agencies to develop closer working relationships with communities and other partners. This direction included helping small fire departments increase their wildland fire response capabilities.

Rural fire departments, often comprised mostly by volunteers, are an important piece of the firefighting effort and help cover millions of acres with initial attack response on private and public lands. Many departments train with federal fire personnel. Priorities for funding include: communication equipment, such as radios; wildland engine equipment; personal protective clothing and gear (PPE), including pants, shirts, goggles, fire shelters, and helmets; wildland specific tools; and training.

To qualify, the departments must serve communities of 10,000 households or less, provide at least 10% matching funds, and have a current wildfire response agreement through the Colorado State Forest Service. Many departments who participate in the RFA program would not be able to equip their members with the necessary gear to safely fight wildland fire without these funds.

For more information regarding this program you can contact one of the Colorado BLM Mitigation/Education Specialists: Cañon City, Ed Skerjanec, 719-269-8561; Montrose, Chris Barth, 970-240-5317; Grand Junction, Doug Paul, 970-244-3106; Durango, Craig Goodell, 970-385-1207; and Craig, Lynn Barclay, 970-826-5096.

Boulder County Good Neighbor Agreement

*By Vanessa Delgado,
public Affairs
Specialist*

mountain biking, and scenic drives. The area contains etched (petroglyph) and painted (pictograph) panels, including zoomorph (animal), anthropomorph (human), and abstract figures. Hundreds of additional rock art panels can be found within the historic district and along Dragon Trail, south of Rangely. Many of these are easily accessed from the highways or from back country roads and trails.

Directions

From the junction of State Highways 64 and 139 east of Rangely, travel south on 139. The district begins about three miles south and continues for 15 miles.

Permits, Fees, Limitations

None

Contact Information

BLM - White River Field Office
220 East Market Street
Meeker, CO 81641
Tel: (970) 878-3800

[Visit us online](#)

Federal, state and private cooperation remains the driving force in a six-year-old program to maintain fire-safe communities. The Boulder County Good Neighbor program is a partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Forest Service and private land owners from the Gold Hill, Sunshine, Rowena and Sugarloaf areas in Boulder.

The Good Neighbor is the first of its kind for BLM Colorado. The agreement was established between the BLM Royal Gorge Field Office and the Board of Governors of the Colorado State University System. The Board of Governors is acting through Colorado State University to benefit the CSFS in order to reduce hazardous fuels and complete watershed restoration activities. This agreement makes it possible for agencies and private land owners to work cooperatively to implement fuels reduction services on BLM lands in Boulder County when similar fuels reduction services are conducted by the CSFS on adjacent state or private lands. This cross boundary management enhances the implementation of the National Fire Plan.

Given the success of this program and the importance of fire safety, the Good Neighbor program has expanded to include other nearby communities as well. During the early 80s, homeowners in these areas were devastated by the Black Tiger Fire, which was one of Colorado's largest urban interface fire and resulted in several lost homes.

Communities have an active role in the wildfire education program, and have been working to complete defensible space on their private property. Two thousand acres of dispersed BLM lands in these residential areas can potentially be treated simultaneously to create continuous fuels treatments. Treatments such as hand thinning and piling projects, chipping projects, and Hydro-Axe projects are completed where the terrain is suitable. Other critical planning and treatment activities include establishing evacuation routes. Coordination, public meetings, and field days with individual land owners make this program a success.

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