

## *Landscapes of the American Spirit*



The Madison River above the Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness Area in southwestern Montana. *BLM photo*

This year marks the 10th anniversary of BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). The NLCS contains some of the West's most spectacular landscapes. It includes over 886 federally recognized areas and approximately 27 million acres of national monuments, national conservation areas, wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, national scenic and historic trails, and conservation lands of the California Desert.

Montana's NLCS lands include Pompeys Pillar and the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, the Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness Area, the Lewis and Clark and Nez Perce national historic trails, the Upper Missouri Wild and Scenic River, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, and 39 wilderness study areas. Turn to page 6 to learn more.

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## Montana State Director, Associate Retire

Gene Terland, State Director for the Bureau of Land Management in Montana and the Dakotas, retired in April. Terland was at the Montana post since 2006. A Montana native and Montana State University graduate, his BLM career spanned 36 years. Prior to coming to Billings he served in Oregon, Idaho, Alaska and Utah working his way up from a range technician to the top field position in the agency. Terland and his wife, Dee, currently make their home in Columbus, Mont.

A month later, Montana's Associate State Director Howard Lemm announced his retirement effective at the beginning of July. Lemm is a native of Twin Bridges, Mont., and a Montana Tech graduate who began his 32-year federal career as a petroleum engineer for the U.S. Geological Survey in Billings. He held posts in Colorado and Utah with the Minerals Management Service and BLM before returning to his home state. A diehard Yankee fan, he and his wife, Robin, plan to stay in Billings "at least to start with."

Having both the associate and the state director leave in close succession is actually not unusual, at least here in Montana. Jerry Meredith and Marty Ott retired within about a month of one another in 2005, and Roberta Moltzen transferred to a Forest Service job in Georgia shortly after state director Mat Millenbach retired in 2002.



Gene Terland



Howard Lemm

# BLM, PPL CELEBRATE LAND EXCHANGE ON HAUSER LAKE

*David Abrams, Butte Field Office*

As a chilly wind blew in off Hauser Lake, the small crowd huddled under the pavilion at White Sandy Recreation Site. The weather couldn't dampen their spirits, however—they were there to celebrate the ceremonial transfer of a strip of land from landowners Dave and Shelli Hoerning to the BLM's Butte Field Office.

The innovative land use transaction, which will provide more public recreation opportunities at Hauser Lake, was completed by BLM, the Hoernings and PPL Montana in early spring 2010, and representatives from all three parties and their guests gathered on April 23 to celebrate the exchange.

The transaction, known as the Causeway Land Exchange, protects

the investments made by PPL Montana and the BLM at White Sandy, protects the views enjoyed by Hauser Lake visitors and provides more opportunities for the public to enjoy the lake.

The BLM, PPL Montana and the Hoernings, who live in Helena, began talking in 2002 about a property exchange that would allow the Hoernings to build a home in an area where subdivisions and residential development already exist, while at the same time conserving and freeing up land for public use. Ultimately, an exchange agreement was reached which consolidated five non-contiguous, intermingled parcels into a 681-acre block of public land, creating more than two-and-a-half miles of continuous lakeshore for public use.

“The win-win expression is often over-used these days, but it really applies here,” said Rick Hotaling, district manager for the BLM's Western Montana District. “The Hoernings now have a parcel of land that they can use, and the Bureau and PPL Montana can continue working together to provide public recreational opportunities here at Hauser Lake.”

PPL Montana contributed \$1.4 million to acquire, design and develop the White Sandy Recreation Site at Hauser Dam. The company also contributed \$400,000 to expand the dam's causeway and reconstruct the access site. In addition to its initial contributions, PPL Montana continues to provide \$50,000 a year for the operation and maintenance of recreational sites at Hauser Dam.

“This land dedication is a great example of what can happen when people work together to reach an agreement that benefits the public and protects and expands the outdoor recreational resources of our state,” said David Hoffman, director of external affairs for PPL Montana.

“We thank Dave and Shelli Hoerning and the staff of the Bureau of Land Management for their cooperative spirit and concern for the protection of our state's natural resources,” Hoffman said.

Hauser Lake and nearby Lake Helena are popular sites for recreational activities such as fishing and hiking. Numerous campgrounds dot the river above and below the dam. PPL Montana's Holter Dam, located 29 miles downstream, offers additional recreational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts.



During a celebration ceremony on the shores of Hauser Lake, Mark Summer of American Land Exchange points out the parcels of land the BLM acquired from local landowners. *Photo by David Abrams*

# BLM Law Enforcement Ranger Named “TOP COP”

*Craig Flentie, Lewistown District*

BLM Law Enforcement Ranger Alexandra Burke of the Glasgow Field Office, was recently honored by President Obama during a Rose Garden ceremony at the White House for her selection as one of the recipients of the prestigious 2009 TOP COP Award.

This national recognition is awarded to a select few each year by the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) and pays tribute to the men and women in law enforcement for their outstanding service to America’s communities. Each year the NAPO receives and reviews hundreds of nominations from across the United States.

Ranger Burke was nominated for this outstanding honor for her quick thinking and courage during a January 17, 2009, sniper-style shooting incident in Glasgow, Montana.

Saturday, January 17, 2009, began like most other Saturdays in Glasgow. Business owners were opening their stores; area ranchers were feeding their livestock; and restaurants were serving breakfasts and piping hot coffee to customers. The topics of conversation for the morning included the high school basketball team, the weather, cattle prices, and the ever-wide variety of other important, local topics considered by most Saturday morning coffee clubs.

However, by the end of the day, all conversation in Glasgow and much of Montana would focus on one terrible incident.

Late that Saturday afternoon, a sniper-style shooter concealed himself near the parking lot at the Francis Mahon Deaconess Hospital. A short time later he fired his first shots of the day and a 37-year old emergency medical technician and mother of four fell, fatally wounded. A female nurse (working her shift at the hospital) and her husband rushed to provide assistance to the fallen woman and both were shot and wounded. The nurse’s husband (who was hit in the thigh) was able to



BLM Law Enforcement Ranger Alexandra Burke and U.S. Border Patrol Agent Phillip Wright (center) along with the FLEOA Board at the Top Cop awards ceremony.

return to his vehicle, call 911, retrieve a firearm and exchange gunfire with the shooter.

Officers with the Glasgow Police Department quickly arrived and also exchanged gun fire with the shooter. During this exchange, the shooter was wounded in the wrist and fled on foot.

An unsettling sense of disbelief surrounded citizens at the scene.

However, for law enforcement there was no time for hesitation.

In the next few moments, the Glasgow police requested assistance from all available law enforcement entities; began locking down the town as a means of protecting citizens; and started searching for the shooter.

It was Ranger Burke’s day off, but when she learned of the incident she quickly returned home, put on her BLM uniform, drove her patrol vehicle into Glasgow, and responded to the call for assistance. She soon teamed up with a Border Patrol Agent (Phillip Wright) whom had also responded to the request for assistance. They both began searching the area where the suspect was last seen, while other law enforcement personnel began searching house to house. The Glasgow police also responded to a confession phoned in by a local resident that proved false and only consumed their time and effort.

Near dusk, Agent Wright and Ranger Burke were able to sort out the killer's tracks in the snow and took up the trail. They had followed the sign for about two miles along the Milk River corridor when they were joined by two other law enforcement officers, including a K-9 officer from the Fort Peck Indian Tribal Police.

The shooter's trail was now leading the officers near an abandoned house, barn and corrals along the Milk River when something happened that resembled a page out of a fiction novel.

A corral full of sheep near the house had been watching the officers as they approached in the darkness (it was now nearly 11:30 p.m.) which, all things considered on this day, seemed normal. Then suddenly, and in near unison, the sheep turned their focus in another direction. Something or someone concealed in the dark had drawn their attention. The officers noticed this change of behavior and each fell back on his/her training and instincts to be mentally and physically prepared for what, if anything, might happen next.

Ranger Burke then heard Agent Wright shout the command "drop the knife and show your hands." The suspect stepped out of the cover provided by trees and darkness with a large boning knife in hand. The officers again ordered the suspect to drop the knife, but he had other designs for the next few moments. The K-9 officer released his dog, which charged the suspect. With a wild swing through the cold night air, the suspect hit the dog in the mouth with his knife, breaking a tooth and causing the dog to disengage.

At this point the suspect immediately raised his knife and charged Ranger Burke and the K-9 officer. In turn, both officers raised their weapons. The K-9 officer fired first, but missed the charging suspect. Ranger Burke then fired one shot from her service-issued Remington 870 shotgun. The suspect's charge ended as he collapsed in the snow, dead, a few feet from where Burke stood.

The circumstances of that last confrontation left no doubt about right or wrong; no time for further negotiations, no time for hesitation, and no other choice. It was the worst case scenario that law enforcement officers train for, but hope to avoid throughout their careers. Ranger Burke reacted in strict accordance with the training required of BLM law enforcement rangers.

With that last exchange, the search and confrontation portions of the sniper incident in Glasgow drew to a close. However, other portions of the incident lingered on for some time.

Law enforcement officers continued the investigation in an effort to answer questions about motive versus random acts of violence. Eventually, the town of Glasgow recovered its comfort level and the topics of conversation evolved back to the high school basketball team, cattle prices and other local subjects typical of coffee club debates.

However, in the long term, the victims' families were changed; some forever.

And the law enforcement officers involved with the closest details of the day will always carry those events with them.

For her actions, BLM Law Enforcement Ranger Alexandra Burke was one of the 2009 TOP COPS recently honored in the Rose Garden. Other 2009 TOP COP recipients include other law enforcement officers involved with the Glasgow sniper incident and the Fort Hood Police Officers who responded to the November 2009 mass shootings on the army base just outside Killeen, Texas.

"I was deeply honored to stand beside all of these law enforcement officers," Burke added.

In addition, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association has honored Ranger Burke with a Bravery Award and the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund named her the April 2010 Officer of the Month.

## ***NLCS ... Something for Everyone***

Whether you're a history buff, a hiker, a river floater or whitewater rafter, like viewing wildlife or spectacular scenery, or maybe just want to get it away from it all, these areas have something for you.

### **Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail**

Under the command of Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, the members of the Corps of Discovery traveled over 3,700 miles between May of 1804 and September of 1806. Their journey followed the courses of the Missouri and Columbia rivers. Nationally, the BLM manages about 330 miles of land along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Of the 330 BLM miles, 310 are in Montana and include the crown jewels of the trail--Pompeys Pillar and the Upper Missouri River Breaks national monuments.

### **Pompeys Pillar National Monument**

During his return trip to St. Louis, William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition climbed the Pillar and carved his signature and the date in the sandstone. Clark wrote, "This rock I ascended and from it's top had a most extensive view in every direction on the Northerly Side of the river high romantic Clifts approach & jut over the water for Some distance both above and below...I marked my name and the day of the month and year."

While archeological digs and other recent research have uncovered artifacts that may have been left by the Corps of Discovery, Clark's inscription is still the only remaining physical evidence of Lewis and Clark's passing visible on their actual route. This historic carving on the sandstone butte that Clark called a "remarkable rock" has inspired generations of visitors for more than 100 years.

### **Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument**

The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument covers about 375,000 acres of BLM-administered public land in central Montana. These lands hold a spectacular array of plant life, wildlife, unique geological features, endless recreational opportunities and significant historical and cultural values. The rugged landscape has retained much of its unspoiled character over the centuries and, as a result, offers outstanding opportunities for solitude and dispersed recreation. In some areas, the BLM lands are

intermingled with State of Montana lands and private property. The monument designation applies only to the BLM-managed lands. Landowner permission is required prior to using private property for any activity.

### **Upper Missouri River Wild and Scenic River**

The 149-mile Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River flows through the monument. The land and the rugged, surrounding uplands (commonly call the Missouri Breaks) are defined in part by their history. The entire region was the homeland and lifeblood of American Indians. The river served as the pathway for Lewis and Clark, then the waterway for steamboats and a drawing card for fur trappers and traders. Later, the river and the Missouri Breaks were sanctuaries for desperados trying to stay a step ahead of the law.



White Cliffs of the Missouri. *BLM photo*

### **Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness Area**

The Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness area is one of the four units of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area. It was the first BLM-managed wilderness in the nation. The 6,000-acre area offers beautiful wilderness scenery plus exciting whitewater rafting featuring the famous Class IV-V "Kitchen Sink" rapids. The 1,500-foot cliffs that border the canyon provide a dramatic backdrop for nature study, hiking, rafting and fishing along the nine-mile Bear Trap Canyon National Recreation Trail. The trail follows the river the length of the canyon but can only be accessed from the north end (no through-hiking).

### **Nez Perce National Historic Trail**

The 1877 flight of the Nez Perce from their homelands while pursued by U.S. Army Generals Howard, Sturgis, and Miles, is one of the most fascinating and sorrowful events in western U.S. history. Chief Joseph, Chief Looking Glass, Chief White Bird, Chief Ollokot, Chief Lean Elk, and others led nearly 750 Nez Perce men, women, and children and twice that many horses over 1,170 miles through the mountains, on a trip that lasted from June to October of 1877.

Their desperate and circuitous route as they tried to escape the pursuing white forces is what we now call the Nez Perce National Historic Trail. Their four-state route, dictated by terrain and strategy, measured over 1,170 miles. From first to last, a warrior force that never exceeded 250 men fought 20 engagements with pursuing forces which totaled some 2,000 soldiers plus uncounted civilian volunteers and support from Nez Perce enemies. The Nez Perce were finally

captured on October 5 by Col. Miles, just 40 miles short of their Canadian goal.

The trail enters Montana along the Clark Fork of the Yellowstone. It then heads north to the Bear's Paw Mountains, ending 40 miles from the Canadian border.

### **Continental Divide National Scenic Trail**

The 3,100-mile long Continental Divide National Scenic Trail runs from Canada to Mexico through the states of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Crossing the spine of the North American continent numerous times, it traverses some of America's most spectacular and isolated scenery, offering views unlike any other trail in the world. The BLM manages a segment of the trail in southwestern Montana. This segment crawls through the Centennial Mountains from Monida to Red Rock Pass. The trail passes through some of the most scenic country in southwestern Montana.

## **Several events have been scheduled throughout the country to highlight NLCS units. Two Montana events will mark the NLCS's anniversary.**

### **Fort Benton Montana Summer Celebration June 26-28, 2010**

A display at the Missouri River Breaks Interpretive Center in Fort Benton will feature a variety of NLCS related material, both national and Montana units. The booth will have "hands on" activities, brochures, pins, and Montana NLCS unit specific information brochures, a running slide show of Montana NLCS Highlights, and banners depicting some of the beautiful places that make up the National Landscape Conservation System. Staff will be available to answer questions and promote the NLCS.

Visitors can also spend time exploring the interpretive center, visit a the 2nd US Cavalry Association Encampment, a Living History Presentation at Old Fort Park, tour Old Fort Benton and the Museum of the Northern Great Plains, take part in a Fun Walk/Run – 1 mile, 5K, 10K, or browse "Art on the Levee" in Old Fort Park. For more information, check out these links:

<http://www.fortbenton.com/sumcel/>  
<http://www.fortbenton.com/>

### **Clark Days at Pompeys Pillar National Monument July 24-25, 2010**

A display at the Pompeys Pillar National Monument Interpretive Center will feature a variety of NLCS related material, both national and Montana units. The booth will have "hands on" activities, brochures, pins, and Montana NLCS unit specific information brochures, a running slide show of Montana NLCS Highlights, and banners depicting some of the beautiful places that make up the National Landscape Conservation System. Staff will be available to answer questions and promote the NLCS.

Visitors can also visit the interpretive center or climb to the top of the monument to view Clark's signature. Or, they can gather round the campfire to listen as Sergeant Pryor relates his tale of floating down the Yellowstone to the Missouri River aboard a bullboat made from buffalo hides, and hear how Crow Indians captured the expedition's entire horse herd. Dry camping will be allowed onsite Saturday night, July 24, 2010. For more information, check out these links:

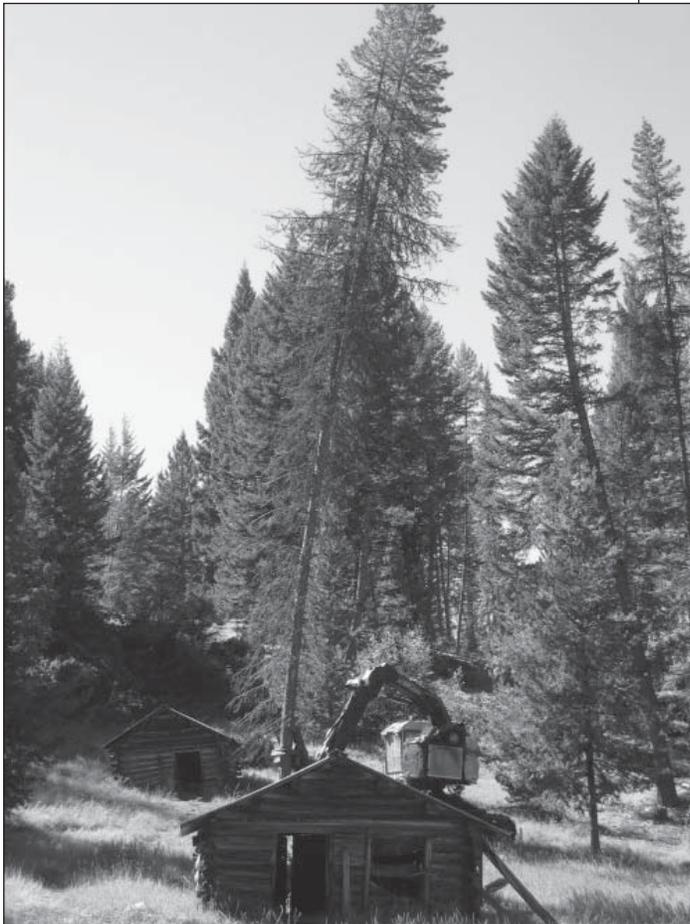
<http://www.pompeyspillar.org/about.html>  
<http://www.pompeyspillar.org/news.html>

# MISSOULA FIELD OFFICE AWARDED FOR FUELS PROJECT AT GHOST TOWNS

*David Abrams, Western Montana District*

The BLM's Missoula Field Office recently received one of three bureau-wide awards for its hazardous fuels reduction work at Garnet and Coloma ghost towns.

The National Fire Management Award recognizes "individuals or groups who have substantially advanced resource management through collaboration, the integration of programs, and accomplishment of interdisciplinary management objectives to improve land health."



*Photo by David Abrams*

The Missoula Field Office learned about its national-level recognition during an annual fuels review on May 7.

"I am extremely proud of my staff," said Nancy Anderson, Missoula Field Office Manager. "They care deeply about the health of the forests entrusted to their care. Their hard work in the area of hazardous fuels reduction and forest health is deserving of this special recognition."

Garnet and Coloma, located east of Missoula, began in the 1890s as mining towns. During their heyday, the towns had more than 1,000 residents.

Over time, fire has posed a significant threat to the towns due to the surrounding heavy fuels. In recent years, the rate of fuel buildup has increased significantly due to the mountain pine beetle infestation. The beetles have killed close to 90 percent of the lodgepole pine greater than 5-inch diameter breast height around Garnet and Coloma.

In 2006, through a stewardship contract with Cky-ber, Inc., the Missoula Field Office completed a pilot project which treated 26 acres near Garnet. This successfully demonstrated that hazardous forest fuels could be reduced without damaging cultural and historic features.

During Phase II, through a stewardship contract with Pyramid Mountain Lumber Co., an additional 304 acres surrounding Garnet and Coloma were treated. The treatment included the mechanical removal and utilization of hazardous fuels through a variety of methods. The collaborative nature of this project allowed for the enhancement of public educational opportunities with regard to fire and hazardous fuel reduction.

The project also included the construction of approximately two miles of new interpretive trails that enhance visitor experiences at Garnet.

# Lovell Man Wins National Volunteer Award

Greg Albright, MSO

Last February when BLM's national office sent out a call for nominations for the annual "Making a Difference" volunteer awards, it was a no-brainer for Wild Horse Specialist Jared Bybee and Billings Field Manager Jim Sparks.

Three years ago, Matt Dillon, director of the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center in Lovell, Wyo., approached the BLM about volunteering and doing some data sharing. BLM jumped at the idea that has flourished since its inception.

Working together was a natural. The center is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the Pryor Mountain mustangs, their evolution, history, habitat needs, and historical significance; the BLM manages the horses and the range they occupy just north of Lovell along the Montana-Wyoming border.

Dillon's volunteer efforts run the gamut from the purely academic to callused hands-on field work. He has organized people to help install range projects and remove old fences on the horse range--projects that directly benefited both the horses and the rangelands. He was also instrumental in forming a partnership with environmental groups to work on a scientifically designed precipitation study in the Pryor Mountains. Data from the study's remote precipitation collection sites provides BLM with better site-specific information.

Dillon tracks, documents, and maintains a database of every wild horse in the Pryor herd. This information helps the

Billings Field Office to better understand herd dynamics, band locations, and to identify missing animals. During last September's Pryor Mountain wild horse gather, his information helped the BLM to make sound decisions for the herd with respect to removals, retentions, and fertility control treatment.

But it wasn't all fun and games. During the same gather, he was available for horse observation, identification and documentation, and routinely worked 16-hour days, often in adverse weather conditions and in a hostile political climate. Though he was the target of verbal abuse and heckling from gather opponents, he remained completely professional focusing on the needs of the wild horses.

On May 5, Dillon received the BLM's "Making a Difference" Award during a ceremony in Washington, D.C. He was one of only five individual volunteers recognized nationally this year. The award was begun in 1995. Factors influencing the selection of award recipients include the caliber and extent of their service and the program needs they have filled.

Matt Dillon truly "makes a difference" by raising public awareness about the importance of conserving and protecting the public lands every time he talks to a visitor at the Lovell Center he runs. The significance of his volunteer contributions has been multiplied through new volunteers that have signed on as a result of his



BLM Montana/Dakotas Acting Associate State Director Diane Friez, award winner Matt Dillon, and BLM Director Bob Abbey at the Making A Difference Award ceremony in Washington, D.C.

example. Collectively, the hours contributed, products, and equipment that he is responsible for have exceeded a value of \$100,000.

And his role as an ambassador didn't stop after the May 5 ceremony. After the awards were handed out, he accompanied Don Glenn, the head of BLM's wild horse program, to Capitol Hill where Matt shared his views on genetics, fertility control and overall wild horse management with staff of a congressman who has been critical of the program.

While Dillon doesn't always see eye-to-eye with the BLM on every aspect of the horse program on the Pryors, he shares the agency's focus on the well-being of the range and the horses that live there. He continues to be a part of the solution and makes a difference day in and day out.

# Dogged Work Brings Rare Honor for Scout

*Article by Zach Benoit, reprinted with permission of the Billings Gazette*

In the past five years, only two Montana Boy Scouts have received the William T. Hornaday Award, and only 1,100 nationwide have earned it since 1917.

For nearly a year's worth of conservation education and projects, Scott Robertson of Billings, 12, joined that exclusive club on March 25, 2010. Described by the Boy Scouts of America as "an Olympic medal bestowed by the Earth," Hornaday Awards are given to Scouts who commit a substantial amount of time to conservation through earning merit badges and completing conservation projects.

"It feels really exciting to get the awards," said Robertson, who is a seventh-grader at Castle Rock

Middle School. "I thought it was going to be less exhilarating."

To earn the award, Scott had to earn at least five merit badges from a list of 21 laid out by the Boy Scouts of America and plan, lead and complete a project in natural resource conservation. He earned his badges in environmental science, forestry, fish and wildlife management, bird study, and pulp and paper, said his father Chris Robertson.

"He really has the desire for outdoor activities and projects," Chris Robertson said.

Scott, one of the 13 members of Boy Scout Troop 28, had earned those badges by last April and



*Jack Sherick, Scott, and Heather O'Hanlon (l to r) at the Court of Honor.*

from there he tackled the project. He designed a brochure on fire-resistant plant species suitable for Montana's climate and a series of wildfire prevention posters, both of which were created for the Bureau of Land Management.

The hardest part, Scott said, was researching and putting together the facts and information for the brochure and posters. He had some help getting started from his dad and Heather O'Hanlon, a fire mitigation education specialist with the BLM's Billings office who spoke to his troop earlier that year, but he did the rest of the work on his own.

"He did such a great job with it," O'Hanlon said. "For us, it's a great way to get fire information into younger age groups. I think when you have a product like that, one that people can identify with, I think people pay attention more to the material."

O'Hanlon liked his work so much that she has decided to debut it at the BLM's booth at a Lockwood Fire safety event in May.

Scott was presented with the award March 25, 2010, at his troop's Scout of Honor, a semi-annual event designed to recognize individual scouts' and the troop's achievements. Jack Sherick, assistant scout executive for the Montana Council, came from Great Falls to present the award.

Chris Robertson said that now Scott plans on achieving the next levels of the Hornaday Award—bronze and silver—which require him to earn more merit badges and plan and complete several more conservation projects.

"It was very fun," Scott said. "I love doing this kind of stuff anyway, though."

## **The Hornaday Award**

This awards program was created to recognize those that have made significant contributions to conservation. It was begun in 1914 by Dr. William T. Hornaday, director of the New York Zoological Park and founder of the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. Dr. Hornaday was an active and outspoken champion of natural resource conservation and a leader in saving the American bison from extinction.

The Hornaday Awards are highly prized by those who have received them: Approximately 1,100 medals have been awarded over the past 80 years. These awards represent a substantial commitment of time and energy by individuals who have learned the meaning of a conservation/environmental ethic. Any Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, or Venturer willing to devote the time and energy to work on a project based on sound scientific principles and guided by a conservation professional or a well-versed layperson can qualify for one of the Hornaday Awards. The awards often take months to complete, so activities should be planned well in advance.

# A Distinction for a Remote BLM Parcel

*Craig Flentie, Lewistown District*

A BLM parcel about 12 miles north of Winnett, Mont., was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of its military contributions to the United States during a time when much of the world was at war.

At first glance, this parcel looks like many other BLM parcels in this area: a remote, gently sloping drainage of mostly flat, mixed-grass prairie. There are few trees or natural features to draw your attention.

If you visit this BLM parcel today you'll notice unusual circular patterns that were plowed into the landscape decades ago and you'll find scattered scraps of metal that provide no clues about their origin. For the most part, the only sounds you'll hear are the songs of Western meadowlarks on the wind or the low, guttural bellow of a nearby Angus bull.

Today's setting is nearly tranquil.

However, this parcel's history is very distinct from other BLM lands. Just over 67 years ago it was requisitioned into military use by the Department of War and its use was dedicated solely to the U.S. Army Air Corps. After the Air Corps completed the prerequisite design and construction work, the site became known as the Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range.

The 150-acre Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range (plus a buffer zone of about 2,250 surrounding acres) played a contributing role in 1943, as the United States was developing the technology to use high altitude bombing as a means of bringing WWII to an end.

The setting was not nearly as peaceful then as it is today.

In 1943, the skies above Winnett rumbled day and night with the sound of B-17 heavy bomber squadrons (15-18 planes per squadron) flying out of Lewistown, Great Falls, Cut Bank and Glasgow in combat formation to drop strings of 100-pound inert/dummy bombs on the Lewistown Pattern

Bombing Range. The young pilots, bombardiers and other flight crew members (a typical flight crew consisted of 10 men) were using this range to perfect their bombing accuracy with the use of a new, secret bombsight before they were deployed into combat. The new bombsight was rumored to have the accuracy to "drop bombs into pickle barrels."

The circular, earthen bombing range is a huge bull's eye, 1,000 feet in diameter with five concentric rings spaced 100 feet apart. The individual rings were originally plowed 18 – 24 inches wide and 6 – 10 inches deep.



This aerial photo shows the Lewistown Practice Bombing Range which is still visible today; however, time and vegetation changes have made it less obvious. BLM photo

The center of the target is a circle, 200 feet in diameter. During its use in 1943, the center of the target was marked with a red, wooden pyramid 20 feet square by 20 feet tall. All that remains of the pyramid today are a few scraps of red, wooden material strewn across the acreage.

The metal fragments scattered across the site are the remains (nose cones, cylinders and tail fins) of the countless 100-pound inert bombs dropped on the earthen bull's eye. Each inert bomb (about four feet long and eight inches diameter) was equipped with a spotting charge (a cylinder containing three pounds of gun powder and an impact fuse) that would ignite upon impact, producing a white smoke as evidence of where the bomb hit.

The National Register nomination package for the Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range was com-

piled by Zane Fulbright, a BLM archaeologist in Lewistown, and Benjamin Miller, an archaeology technician who worked several seasons in Lewistown. The nomination package reveals a remarkable set of stories that weave their way through many chapters of our country's Army Air Corps history between 1942 and 1945.

Some of these stories are perhaps still known by a few long-time area residents; most were probably never known; but all have ties to the Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range and the skies over Winnett.

### **A Sense of Urgency**

In 1939, the Army Air Corps had 17 bombing practice ranges scattered throughout the United States. However, at about that same time, the President's Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense was warning of a world conflict and advised then President Franklin D. Roosevelt that the United States should accelerate its efforts to create military training facilities.

In December 1941, the United States was pulled into World War II. Soon, U.S. and Allied Forces were battling German and Japanese forces on numerous fronts in Europe and the South Pacific.

In 1942, the Army requisitioned the use of these 2,401 remote acres for the Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range (2,078 acres from the Department of Agriculture and 323 acres from Petroleum County). The isolated country and lack of lights visible at night made this undeveloped area ideal for training missions. Flight crews compared night maneuvers over this remote site as similar to flying over a blackened-out England.

By late 1945, the Army Air Corps had nearly 800 practice ranges and associated training facilities scattered across the nation.

### **The Advent of the B-17 Bomber**

The first B-17 rolled out of a Boeing Aircraft Company hanger to take flight in 1935. Later that same year the U.S. ordered 13 of these aircraft. However, world events would quickly accelerate the need for B-17s and between 1935 and 1945, the U.S. government purchased 12,732 of the sturdy B-17s.

The Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range was one of only a hand full of such ranges built and used for B-17 bombing practice runs in Montana and the only one still present on the landscape today.

The B-17 earned the nickname "flying fortress" as it was heavily armed with 50-caliber machine guns (as many as 13 guns located at strategic ports from nose to tail) and because the plane could withstand heavy combat damage and still return its crew safely home. A squadron of B-17s was quickly recognized as an able combatant by enemy pilots.

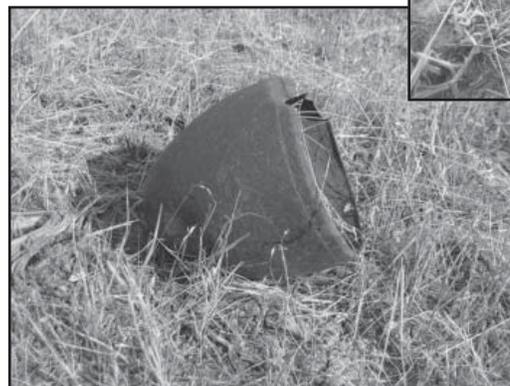
Still 4,735 B-17s were lost to combat missions during WWII.

### **Secrecy**

The Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range was one of several primary training sites in the northwest dedicated to perfecting the Norden Bombsite, which promised to be so accurate it would present a huge high altitude aerial bombing advantage to its owner. In a time of world war, such a promise came with the need for absolute secrecy about the bombsite's design and the location of the models in use. The promise also required young bombardiers to swear an oath of secrecy and death if necessary to protect the new technology.



Some of the bomb fragments still found on the old Lewistown Practice Bombing Range. *Photos by Zane Fulbright*





A fragment from an inert practice bomb dropped in 1943 (lower left) lies beside a weather-cracked sandstone rock, with rings of the Lewistown Practice Bombing Range faintly visible in the distance (upper left).  
*Photo by Zane Fulbright*

Before each practice run, the flight crew bombardier would remove a Norden Bombsite from specially designed storage vaults and install it in the nose cone of his assigned B-17. After each practice bombing run, the bombardiers would then return the Norden Bombsite to the special storage vaults for safe keeping. Armed guards were always present when the Norden sites were taken from and returned to the storage vaults. One of those storage vaults can still be found at the Lewistown Airport.

The Norden Bombsite was designed to compensate for wind speed, altitude and true groundspeed to deliver an on-site hit. Upon the final approach to a target, the bombardier using the Norden Bombsite assumed the B-17's autopilot mechanism and actually flew the plane until the bombing run was completed.

There was much debate about the true accuracy and advantage offered by the Norden Bombsite. However, some bombardiers swore by its accuracy; and what better endorsement could the site have?

### **A Spy in the Mix**

The Norden Bombsites used at the Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range were designed by Carl Norden, a Dutch engineer who immigrated to the United States in 1904. And although its design specifics and storage locations were closely

guarded secrets, in 1942, a German spy (Herman Lang) who worked in the Norden Factory, in New York City, sold the design to Germany.

Later in the war, the Luftwaffe began using a bombsite similar to the Norden. However, timing and practice gave the U.S. the advantage in using the Norden Bombsite and high altitude aerial bombing.

### **From Practicing Over Central Montana to Combat over Germany**

After repeated practice runs over the Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range in 1943, the Montana bombardment groups, including Lewistown's 615th Bomber Squadron, were detailed into combat over Germany.

The Montana-trained squadrons flew 1,263 combat missions; dropped 71,128 tons of bombs on enemy targets; and shot down 1,018 enemy aircraft.

The Montana-trained crews earned Presidential Unit Citations for valor and fortitude, and their unwavering courage and unbowed bravery and were said to "shine as this nation's bright pride."

The Montana bombardment groups lost 548 B-17s in combat.

## The Timeline to Being Decommissioned

In 1942, the Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range was requisitioned into military use. In 1943, the skies above Winnett were busy with squadrons of B-17s as the flight crews practiced their war-time bombing skills. In 1944 and early 1945, the Montana bombardment groups served with courage and honor in the skies over Germany.

Early in 1945, the United States and the Allied Forces could see their strategic efforts bringing the war to a conclusion.

In May of 1945 (shortly after breaking German supply lines, defeating German forces in numerous battles across occupied Europe, Hitler's suicide and the collapse of absolute German military order) German forces began surrendering along numerous fronts in Europe.

On July 26, 1945, the U.S. and Allied Forces issued the Potsdam Declaration outlining the terms of surrender for Japan. On July 28, the Japanese Prime Minister announced that the Japanese government would ignore the declaration. On August 6, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima; and on August 9, an atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. On August 15, 1945, a stunned Japan announced its surrender to the Allied Forces and World War II drew to a close.

Just as quickly as it was commissioned into service, the Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range was

decommissioned back to its original use. In 1945, the Army Air Corps decommissioned the Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range acreage back to the Department of Agriculture and Petroleum County. When the Grazing Service and the General Land Office combined to become the Bureau of Land Management in 1946, the land transferred from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of the Interior.

Today, the acreage is dedicated to livestock grazing.

## Some History Should Never Be Lost

On March 10, 2010, the Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The site merited this distinction because of its contributions to the World War II era in our country's history and because the bombing range is still visible today.

The old Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range maintains a high degree of integrity and still serves as a silent, but visible reminder of a time when our country shared a unified mission. Perhaps (as time dulls our memory of places and events) this listing on the National Register of Historic Places can help current and future generations remember the significance of our country's involvement in WW II; the sacrifice of those who served in the military then; and those who serve today.



One of the few remaining Norden bombsight security/storage vaults remains at the Lewistown Airport. *Photo by Zane Fulbright*

## Attention BLM Retirees

### The BLM Retirees Association

Stay in touch! The BLM Retirees Association has a social gathering at 11:30 a.m. on the first Tuesday of even-numbered months at the Windmill (3429 TransTech Way) in Billings. If you would like to receive email or postcard notifications of these meetings, please contact Alice Slagowski at (406) 259-9319 or [asluggo@bresnan.net](mailto:asluggo@bresnan.net).

### The Public Lands Foundation

The Public Lands Foundation (PLF) offers new retirees a free one-year membership. If you're interested, contact David Mari, Montana PLF Representative, at (406) 538-7121, or email [dmari@earthlink.net](mailto:dmari@earthlink.net) (please note "PLF" on the subject line).

What is the PLF? It works to keep America's public lands in public hands, managed professionally and sustainably for responsible common use and enjoyment.

The goals of the PLF are to:

- Keep lands managed by the BLM in public ownership and open to use by the public.
- Support multiple use management under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.
- Encourage professionalism by BLM employees.
- Increase the public's understanding of and support for the proper management of the public lands.

Although PLF membership consists largely of retired BLMers, current employees and anyone interested in the goals of the organization are welcome to join.

### Get on the NoteWorthy News Mailing List

The Montana/Dakotas BLM also produces the NoteWorthy News, a monthly electronic newsletter for employees and retirees. If you would like to receive a copy, send your email address to [aboucher@blm.gov](mailto:aboucher@blm.gov).

### Retired since May 1, 2010:

Michael Birtles — 30 years  
Supervisory Land Surveyor/Cadastral Survey,  
Montana State Office

Patricia Cook — 31 years  
Land Law Examiner, Montana State Office

Gloria Gunther — 29 years  
Supervisory Range Technician (Fire),  
Eastern Montana/Dakotas District Office

Richard Maggio — 35 years  
Assistant Field Manager, Dillon Field Office

Bureau of Land Management  
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<http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en.html>

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