



Connecting People to Their Public Lands 2015

An Update on BLM Education, Interpretation, Volunteer, and Youth Employment Activities



NEW MEXICO/ OKLAHOMA/TEXAS

By the Numbers

Program Participants	185,106
Volunteer Hours	51,166
Volunteer Contributed Labor	\$1,180,400
Youth Hires	181

Partnerships enabled BLM New Mexico to engage new communities and expand opportunities for youths and adults to play, learn, serve, and work on public lands in 2014. Community support for the establishment of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, which took place in May, provided a dramatic demonstration of the power of partnerships.

Through a partnership with New Mexico State University's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program, students and teachers from underserved communities took part in field trips to several national monuments. Thanks to a Department of the Interior/Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) volunteer who serves with the BLM's partner Rivers and Birds, fifth graders learned about watersheds. From water resources and wild horses to prehistoric creatures and ancestral cultures, these students connected classroom learning to the real world through BLM education programs. In addition, interpretive programs and displays at places such as El Malpais National Conservation Area helped connect visitors to the geology, culture, and ecology of the area.

Establishing connections was integral to many Take It Outside! programs as well. Youth from the Acoma Pueblo connected with their elders, culture, and public lands through a series of field trips offered by the Acoma Hiking

Club and the Grants Field Station. Rangers at El Malpais led family night walks, encouraging participants to experience the sounds and smells of the wilderness. And for the fourth year in a row, the Oklahoma Field Office and its partner, Mustang Heritage Foundation, cosponsored Camp Wildfire at several locations. Through hundreds of education and interpretation programs, BLM New Mexico reached more than 185,000 students, teachers, and visitors in 2014.

BLM New Mexico volunteers contributed service valued at nearly \$1.2 million in 2014. Off-road vehicle enthusiasts cleaned up recreation sites, while volunteers from the New Mexico SiteWatch program monitored paleontological and archaeological sites. Several National Public Lands Day events in the state were held in coordination with friend groups and other partners. Young adults working with the BLM through the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and Groundwork Doña Ana, a community organization, helped organize work projects and kid-friendly activities at several National Public Lands Day events. Young people from Pueblo de Cochiti and Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument served as rangers, while interns from the Chicago Botanic Garden assisted with seed collection and vegetation inventories. Youth crews in Farmington helped with wildlife guzzlers and fence projects, while other crews in the state assisted with rangeland monitoring and trail projects. During 2014, BLM New Mexico hired 181 young adults on the payroll and through partners.

Read on for a sample of more ways that BLM New Mexico engaged citizens of all ages in 2014.



PLAY

Themed Hikes Inspire Interest in El Malpais

Kids and adults alike had numerous opportunities to explore El Malpais National Conservation Area thanks to a series of interpretive hikes offered throughout the year. Rangers, who were dressed in period costume, offered hikes to historic homesteads, checking out plants and wildlife along the way. In October, hikes to an abandoned haunted homestead offered photographers a chance to capture dramatic shots in the eerie evening light. Rangers also continued their popular Sunday morning Art Walks, leading artists and photographers to inspiring locations within the national conservation area. During summer night hikes, visitors of all ages had ample opportunities to learn about and appreciate New Mexico's largest conservation area.



SERVE

Riders Remove Trash from Popular Recreation Areas

Mountain bikers, off-highway vehicle enthusiasts, and other volunteers lent a hand on National Public Lands Day in the Farmington area. National Public Lands Day events were held at Alien Run Mountain Bike Trail, Glade Run Recreation Area, and Piñon Mesa Recreation Area—all popular destinations for recreationists on wheels. At Alien Run, nearly 200 volunteers collected six dumpsters full of trash, amounting to 300 cubic feet. Additional volunteers went to work at Glade Run and Piñon Mesa recreation areas, contributing 768 hours of service and collecting 294 cubic feet of trash, which included tires, refrigerators, and air conditioners.



LEARN

Interactive Adventures Help Children Explore the Past

Hundreds of schoolchildren in Oklahoma and Texas participated in lively, outdoor, and hands-on archaeological adventure lessons thanks to the expanded archaeological outreach by the BLM Oklahoma Field Office. Lessons focused on interactive demonstrations of prehistoric hunting techniques and archaeological site stewardship. Students developed critical thinking skills by creating their own interpretations of past lifeways through direct contact with historical artifacts. The Oklahoma Field Office's expanded partnerships in 2014



involved museums, libraries, and professional societies as well as the launch of a new partnership with Project Archaeology, the first one established in Oklahoma. In a sign of good things to come, teachers participated in a Project Archaeology workshop held in early October of 2014.



WORK

The "Green Team" Interprets Trackways and Other Sites

For the first time in 2014, the BLM Las Cruces District worked with Groundwork Doña Ana to organize the BLM "Green Team" to work on a variety of natural resource projects. Through a grant from the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps, the team received training and became Certified Interpretive Guides as designated by the National Association for Interpretation. Ranging in age from 16 to 21 years old, 13 youth guides led interpretive tours and conducted education outreach programs for Prehistoric Trackways National Monument, Dripping Springs Natural Area, and other district recreation sites. When the youth were not delivering programs, team members organized cleanups, worked on trails, and created kid-friendly activities, from planting seeds to identifying lizards.



The BLM would like to thank its partners for helping to connect visitors, especially young people, to the natural world and inspiring them to play, learn, serve, and work outdoors.

