

March 26, 2009

## **BLM'S 2009 "MAKING A DIFFERENCE" NATIONAL VOLUNTEER AWARD WINNERS**

### **VOLUNTEER WINNERS (ALPHABETICAL ORDER BY STATE)**

**"NICK'S INTERNS," KING RANGE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA (NCA), CA:** Ray and Marie Raphael founded Nick's Interns in memory of their son, who worked with the BLM King Range NCA trail crew and local conservation organizations throughout his high school and college years. The organization exposes southern Humboldt County youth to environmental careers and positive adult role models—very important in a rural, economically-depressed area that presents few career opportunities apart from those offered by the "underground economy." Ray and Marie raise money to hire high school interns as workers and college interns to provide crew leadership. In 2008, Nick's Interns were a critical component of King Range NCA operations during a busy summer season. They performed trail maintenance on six hiking trails; maintained recreation and administrative sites; removed invasive weeds; monitored fishers and surveyed steelhead; worked on watershed restoration; and developed interpretive materials. Nick's Interns' most significant 2008 contributions benefited the Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail. The students built new trail segments, created crib walls, installed directional signs, built kiosks, and constructed a new day-use trailhead. This trail now receives national attention from mountain biking enthusiasts and the International Mountain Bicycling Association, and was the subject of a feature article in *Bike* magazine.

**THE SEA RANCH CALIFORNIA COASTAL NATIONAL MONUMENT TASKFORCE, CA:** Under a stewardship agreement with BLM, the 45 volunteers of The Sea Ranch Association's taskforce monitor and document human disturbances on rocks and islands within BLM's California Coastal National Monument, along the northern Sonoma County coastline. In 2008, The Sea Ranch stewards expanded the program to include year-round monitoring of the Monument's major seabird colonies and resident marine mammals. Stewards use data-intensive ground and airplane observations of breeding seabirds to document nesting success, even funding nine overflights of seabird colonies within one year. At every opportunity, the taskforce has used ingenuity, technical expertise, and scientific methods to develop and refine monitoring protocols, document a baseline for marine wildlife use of Monument islands in northern Sonoma County, and maintain high-quality, biologically-significant information in great detail.

**VOLUNTEERS FOR OUTDOOR COLORADO, CO (BLM STATEWIDE):** Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) engages citizens in public lands stewardship. Every year, VOC leads thousands of volunteers in caring for Colorado public lands by planting trees, fixing trails, battling weeds, and improving public places. VOC provides trained volunteers and crew leaders for BLM projects across the state and has standardized training practices to reduce duplication and confusion. A VOC clearinghouse maintains training information, materials, and expertise. BLM-Colorado has utilized VOC to train volunteers and build capacity at almost all of its field offices. In 2008 alone, VOC provided BLM with more than 4,500 hours of volunteer project time and trained 500+ volunteer crew leaders and ten BLM staff

members. VOC members also updated and enhanced the organization's volunteer information/recruitment website and database, "VOutdoors"; BLM staffers and other administrative users will be trained in its use during the 2009 season.

**JOANNE & DON MURRAY, NV (MULTIPLE BLM-NV SITES):** Each year, Joanne and Don Murray log more than 3,000 volunteer hours, trek thousands of miles, and influence hundreds of visitors to BLM public lands. The Murrays' activities form the cornerstone of site stewardship programs in multiple BLM jurisdictions throughout western Nevada. They build and expand stewardship opportunities, raise public awareness about conservation and protection of public lands, ensure public safety and access, and protect irreplaceable cultural and paleontological resources. Under Joanne's direction, local volunteers, including students, monitor 80+ archaeological and paleontological sites for three BLM field offices and the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon-Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area. In 2008, Joanne expanded the stewardship program to include monitoring of the Ruhenstroth Paleontological Area of Critical Environmental Concern, which hosts a unique array of vertebrate fossils. Working with the Nevada Rock Art Foundation, Don documented rock art sites, inked pictograph drawings for reports, and completed other technical paperwork. Recently, Don created a database for GPS site data, and he regularly provides BLM with detailed spreadsheets of stewardship reports.

**KATHY & BRUCE SALSBERY, LAKE VALLEY HISTORIC TOWNSITE, NM:** Kathy and Bruce Salsbery are the recreation hosts at this remote silver-mining ghost town within BLM's Las Cruces District. The original schoolhouse serves as the visitor center, which Kathy and Bruce open, staff, and clean at least five days a week. They improve walking trails and interact with visitors, who appreciate their personal interest in Lake Valley, their obvious enthusiasm for the townsite's history, and their dedication to its preservation. The Salsberys manage to infuse the town's tale with lots of small details, folklore, and humor. And their maintenance services have saved BLM thousands of dollars in labor. They've cleared brush and weeds, repaired propane leaks, screened in shed bottoms, constructed a 300-foot walking trail, and even stabilized a historic building. At their own expense, Kathy and Bruce also established an internet account for Lake Valley, which has permitted efficient interaction among BLM, New Mexico State agencies, ghost town aficionados, and potential site visitors.

**WILLAMETTE RESOURCES AND EDUCATIONAL NETWORK (WREN), EUGENE, OR:** In 2008, WREN implemented an environmental education and outreach program in the West Eugene Wetlands and coordinated the stewardship activities of a large number of BLM volunteers. Since its establishment, WREN has served more than 22,000 participants of all ages—6,000 in 2008 alone—through school and interpretive programs conducted from the 30 foot-diameter yurt that functions as the WREN outdoor classroom. WREN has raised public awareness of the importance of conserving and protecting public lands. Its members have also supported partnership and stewardship activities through cleanups of public lands, restoration of native plant species, student field trips, classroom presentations, curriculum development, and outreach at outdoor festivals and other events. In 2008, WREN expanded its environmental education partnership sphere to include groups such as the Lane Arts Council, the North American Butterfly Association, and the University of Oregon.

**CINDY OSTER, GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT, UT:** Cindy Oster is the volunteer coordinator and Director of Programs for Grand-Staircase Escalante Partners, a support organization for the Monument. In 2008, Cindy personally volunteered over 800 hours of her time and coordinated the work of dozens of other volunteers, who contributed 10,000+ hours to BLM. Cindy initiated a matching grant for equestrian trailhead development from the State of Utah Parks and Recreation, and created the Equestrian Back Country Patrol program. Program activities incorporate both in-house and on-the-ground training within the Monument, and have resulted in the development of a five-county cooperative equestrian trail map. Cindy's program facilitates equestrian activities within the Monument while also increasing public awareness of some of the most beautiful and wild places in the Southwest. Cindy is tireless in her efforts to build relationships with individuals, schools, service groups, and BLM staff. She maintains the Monument's volunteer database and is always the first to say "thank you" to the volunteers who donate their time to the Monument nearly every day.

### **WINNING BLM EMPLOYEE**

**PAUL TANNER, AMARILLO, TX:** For 10 years, Paul Tanner, a natural resource specialist, has been the volunteer coordinator for BLM's Amarillo Field Office, whose primary function is the production and sale of helium. The office also administers 12,000 acres within the Cross Bar Cooperative Management Area—the only BLM land in Texas—whose management has been Paul's responsibility. Almost from the outset, Paul wisely sought help with the enormous job of restoring the Cross Bar's ecological balance, first by recruiting volunteers from West Texas A&M University. As word spread about this exciting restoration project, volunteer interest increased dramatically. In 2008, student and other volunteers working on the Cross Bar donated more than 17,000 hours of service toward projects involving fire, shortgrass prairie birds, and Antelope Creek archaeology. Diverse Cross Bar volunteers have also worked on erosion control projects, road and trail rehabilitation, tamarisk eradication, cottonwood planting, and fence removal. In addition, Paul coordinates National Public Lands Day (NPLD) projects on the Cross Bar, continuing riparian restoration activities that were begun on NPLD 2001. During FY 2008, Paul even co-produced a book entitled *A Guide to Common Plants Found on the Cross Bar Cooperative Management Area*, the result of two summers' of extensive research and photography. True to form, Paul's partner in the endeavor was a student volunteer from the University of Washington.