

National Landscape Conservation System

America's National Conservation Lands



America's Newest Conservation System

If there is such a thing as the quintessential American landscape, it likely lies within the realm of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the nation's largest collection of public lands. An agency of the Department of the Interior, the BLM oversees 245 million acres—13 percent of the nation's land. Few realize, however, that more than 10 percent of those lands are a part of the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2010.

The NLCS includes more than 866 areas that have been specially designated by Presidents or Congress for their special values, including national monuments, national conservation areas, wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, and national scenic and historic trails. They range in size from the 51-acre Pompeys Pillar National Monument in Montana—which still bears Captain William Clark's carved signature from the Lewis and Clark expedition—to the vast 1.9-million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah, where extraordinary and significant dinosaur fossil discoveries have been made.

Created in 2000 by former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, the NLCS brought these special places managed under BLM's multiple-mandate into a single system where conservation is the overriding goal. NLCS lands are managed to conserve, protect, and restore the exceptional

scientific, recreational, cultural, and ecological values for which they were designated. The system was made permanent by the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act.

NLCS areas are some of America's best kept secrets, even though many—such as the spectacular Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area near Las Vegas—lie just minutes from major metropolitan areas. Others, like Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness in New Mexico, are extremely remote, offering solitude and self-discovery in a primitive, backcountry setting. Within the NLCS you can explore slick-rock deserts, remote forested coastlines, and deep canyons on wild, free-flowing rivers. Other areas serve as laboratories for studying early historic and prehistoric cultures, paleontology, and wildlife. NLCS areas remain primitive and largely undeveloped; a number of them support traditional activities such as Native American cultural and religious uses, hunting and fishing, and livestock grazing.

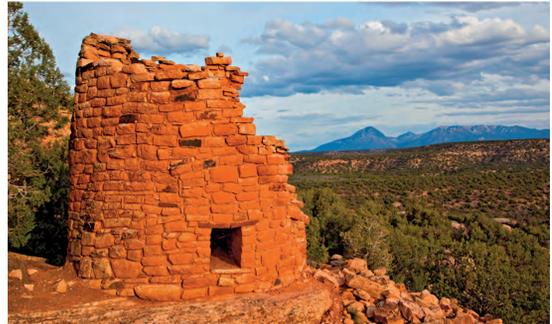
Wallace Stegner once called such lands "the geography of hope." "We simply need that wild country available to us," Stegner wrote, "even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures." Such places abound in the NLCS, where Americans can learn about their past, renew their spirits, and help preserve America's newest conservation system.

Preserving Our Past

A critical part of the BLM's mission in numerous NLCS areas is the study and preservation of thousands of archaeological sites from cultures that flourished on these lands long ago. The highest density of such sites in the nation lies in the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in southwestern Colorado, where Ancestral Pueblo people built thriving communities between AD 500 and 1300, replete with towers and ceremonial structures known as kivas. Less than an hour drive north of Phoenix lies the rugged, canyon-carved Agua Fria National Monument, where the Puebloan people of the Ferry Mesa Tradition built ingenious features to collect and direct water for their crops. The spectacular Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, located near the little-visited north rim of the Grand



Archaeological site in the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, Colorado



Restoring the Land

Some lands within the NLCS have been affected by past activities. In many of these areas BLM staff and local volunteers are working hard to restore the land to healthy conditions where native plants and animals can thrive. On the dramatic fish block massif of the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area (CMPA) in southeastern Oregon, wildcat exchanges with private ranches have created more than 100,000 acres of contiguous wilderness, along with the nation's first Roadhead Trail Reserve to improve stream health and fish habitat. Similarly, in northern California's Headwaters Forest Reserve—where the BLM now protects an old growth redwood forest once scheduled for harvest—the agency has taken out eroding logging roads and culverts, and replanted redwood seedlings to improve water quality in the headwaters of the Elk River and Salmon Creek, both are spawning grounds for coho and chinook salmon, and steelhead trout. The Headwaters Forest Reserve is also

home to threatened marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls—two flagship species of old growth forests that have suffered from habitat loss. Citizens play an important role in restoration activities as well. The Student Conservation Association (SCA) has helped obliterate old roads in California's Granite Mountain Wilderness and maintain sections of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Volunteers are helping to restore the grounds at the Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area located on California's central coast. The area's native coastal vegetation, including two sensitive plant species, had been threatened by a massive invasion of iceplant and other nonnative plants. Through the continued efforts of local citizens, the iceplant is being removed, and native species are returning.



A Place for Wildlife

As urban areas, agriculture, roads, and water projects increasingly alter the geology and hydrology of our landscape, space for wildlife has grown increasingly scarce. That's why many areas in the NLCS were established to protect and conserve vital wildlife habitat.

The rugged cliffs above Idaho's Snake River, for example, provide nesting habitat for one of the densest concentrations of breeding raptors in the world. Each spring about 800 pairs of falcons, eagles, hawks, and owls return to the 465,000-acre Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area to mate and raise their young. Other such areas include the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in southwestern Oregon, which boasts incredibly diverse flora and fauna from the wet side of the Cascades as well as the dry Great Basin. More than 200 bird species and 100 species of butterflies have been sighted in the 52,900-acre monument. Further south, several NLCS areas



in Arizona provide important riparian habitat for some 200 species of neotropical songbirds that migrate each year to and from Central and South America. Arroyo Canyon Wilderness in the NLCS was established to protect and conserve native fish, more than any waterway in Arizona. The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area is a prime habitat for coastrimids, numerous lizards, and a record nine species of native fish, more than any waterway in Arizona. The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area is one of the premier birding spots in the nation, frequented by some 350 bird species—roughly half the known species in North America.



Learning from the Land

Many NLCS areas contain world-class research sites where scientific discoveries are helping us better understand our planet and ourselves.

New Mexico's magnificent Fort Stanton Cave—part of the Fort Stanton-Shovry River Cave National Conservation Area—provides an undisturbed snapshot of geologic history. The cave is like a time capsule of earlier climate eras, says Dr. Penelope Boston, director of cave and karst studies at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology. "You can essentially peel back the layers of time like pages in a book and read the history of the climate of the region." In Las Chienegas National Conservation Area in Arizona, scientists from the BLM and the Nature Conservancy, local ranchers, and



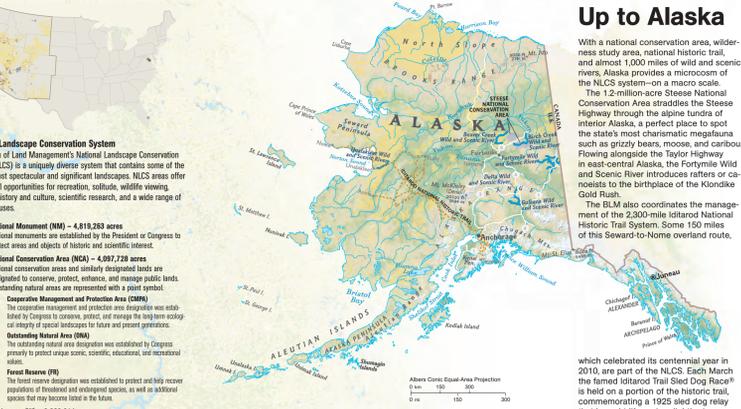
other partners closely monitor grazing effects to help protect the Southwest's still remaining desert grasslands. The desert rocks of Utah's Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument contain one of the most complete fossil records in the world, spanning some 200 million years. Hundreds of dinosaurs and other fossil species have been found there, allowing scientists to piece together the events that led up to the complete collapse of the Mesozoic world 65 million years ago. In an ancient New Mexico tidal flat—now Pheasanton Trackways National Monument—the movements of ancient reptiles, amphibians, arthropods, and sea creatures have been frozen in the sediments for almost 300 million years.



A Legacy of Stewardship

Aldo Leopold once wrote that a land ethic "reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land." NLCS areas offer plenty of opportunities to practice that conviction.

Citizen volunteers are critical to the care and maintenance of these sites and to the educational programs some areas offer. Numerous support groups have formed to organize such activities at many sites. The Friends of the Ironwood Forest, for example, hold regular "walks" to root out stands of buffelgrass—a fast-growing fire-prone invasive species that threatens the 129,000-acre Ironwood Forest National Monument near Tucson, Arizona. Members of the Pueblo de Cochiti are managing partners with the BLM at the Kaaba-Kulture Tent Rocks National Monument in central New



Up to Alaska

National Landscape Conservation System
The Bureau of Land Management's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) is a uniquely diverse system that contains some of the nation's most spectacular and significant landscapes. NLCS areas offer exceptional opportunities for recreation, solitude, wildlife viewing, exploring history and culture, scientific research, and a wide range of traditional uses.

- National Monument (NM)** - 4,819,363 acres
National monuments are established by the President or Congress to protect areas and objects of historic and scientific interest.
- National Conservation Area (NCA)** - 4,697,728 acres
National conservation areas and similarly designated lands are designated to conserve, protect, enhance, and manage public lands. Outstanding natural areas are represented with a quiet symbol.
- Cooperative Management and Protection Area (CMPA)**
Cooperative management and protection areas are established by Congress to conserve, protect, and manage the long-term ecological integrity of special resources for future and present generations.
- Outstanding Natural Area (ONA)**
The outstanding natural area designations were established by Congress primarily to protect rare scenic, scientific, educational, and recreational values.
- Wild and Scenic River (WSR)** - 2,410 miles
The least adverse designation was established to protect and help recover portions of free-flowing wild and scenic rivers, as well as additional riparian lands for the betterment of the land.
- Wilderness (W)** - 4,662,214 acres
Areas where the earth and its community of life are essentially unmodified, they retain a general character, without permanent improvements, and generally appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.
- Wilderness Study Area (WSA)** - 12,789,291 acres
Roadless areas with wilderness characteristics. Areas are affected primarily by the forces of nature, provide maximum opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined types of recreation, and may have ecological, geological, educational, historical, scientific, or scenic qualities.
- National Historic Trail (NHT)** - 5,343 miles
Extended trails that closely follow a historic trail or route of travel of national significance. Designation identifies and protects historic routes, historic remnants, and artifacts for public use and enjoyment. The Bureau of Land Management is one of several agencies responsible for trail management.
- National Scenic Trail (NST)** - 658 miles
Extended trails that provide maximum outdoor recreational potential and promote conservation and enjoyment of the various qualities—historic, historical, natural, and cultural—of the areas through which they pass. The BLM is one of several agencies responsible for trail management.
- Wild and Scenic River (WSR)** - 2,410 miles
Free-flowing waterways possessing outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values. The Bureau of Land Management is one of several agencies responsible for wild and scenic river management. The map segments highlighted are the BLM-administered wild and scenic river segments.
- BLM-Administered Land**
Over lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

With a national conservation area, wilderness study area, national historic trail, and almost 1,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers, Alaska provides a microcosm of the NLCS system—on a macro scale. The 1.2-million-acre Steese National Conservation Area straddles the Steese Highway through the alpine tundra of interior Alaska, a perfect place to spot the state's most charismatic megafauna such as grizzly bears, moose, and caribou. Flowing alongside the Taylor Highway in east-central Alaska, the Fortymile Wild and Scenic River introduces rafters or canoeists to the birthplace of the Klondike Gold Rush.

The BLM also coordinates the management of the 2300-mile Iditarod National Historic Trail System. Some 150 miles of this Seward-to-Nome overland route, which celebrated its centennial year in 2010, is part of the NLCS. Each year, the famed Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race[®] is held on a portion of the historic trail, commemorating a 1925 sled dog relay that brought life-saving diphtheria serum from the railroad at Nenana to Nome.



A Piece of the East

While the BLM has historic connections to the wide open spaces of the American West, it also manages three NLCS areas in the East that provide glimpses into American history.

On the Florida coast, the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area features the iconic 108-foot tall lighthouse that still shines over the confluence of the Loxahatchee and Indian Rivers, just as it did when constructed in 1890. The area celebrates more than 5,000 years of human habitation, from the early Jeaga Indians to Civil War blockade runners. Over 25 special status species are protected here. Remnants of ancient Pleistocene dunes support endemic plants in sandy remnant of southwestern deserts, and manatees, brown pelicans, and wading birds can be seen in nearby waters.

Further north, the BLM manages a segment of two trails not far from the nation's capital. The Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Conservation Trail follows a series of encampments and roads used by Washington's Continental Army and Rochambeau's French troops during their march from Newport, Rhode Island, to Yorktown, Virginia, where they defeated the British in 1781. The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail is a network of locally managed trails in a corridor between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Allegheny Highlands.



Yours To Explore

One of the greatest aspects of NLCS areas is that many are virtually unchanged from a time when our nation was new and these lands were wild frontier. Most sites have no amenities or rangers to guide you—they are yours to explore and discover on your own with topo map or GPS in hand. Designated wilderness areas and wilderness study areas in particular are some of the most rugged and remote lands in the nation, offering adventurous visitors plentiful solitude and a rare escape from civilization.

In the nearly 270,000-acre Cuylenne River Wilderness in southwestern Idaho, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, and mountain lions for crumbler humans. Here hikers and paddlers on the area's wild and scenic rivers can explore sinuous canyons carved into the high desert plateau. In

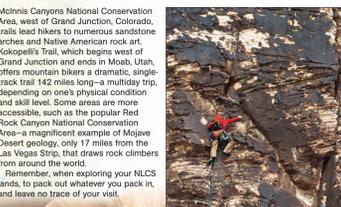


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