

# HONORING OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS: OUR 2000 VOLUNTEER AWARD WINNERS



*BLM's 2000 "Making a Difference" National Volunteer Award winners pose in the South Penthouse following the award ceremony. Pictured (l. to r.) are: Tony Lutonsky, Roger and Etha Brand, Jerry Vertrees, Grant Madden, Susanne and Mike DeCenso, Jory Fisher, Sue McMurray, Garth Elliott, Catherine O'Riley, Suzzy McCoy, Linda Elliott, Fred Osterhagen, Riley McCoy, and Joe Ross. Not pictured is winner Sheila Brewer, who was unable to attend.*

Eight outstanding BLM volunteers and two exceptional BLM employees were honored on May 23, 2001, at BLM's annual "Making a Difference" National Volunteer Awards Ceremony. The awards recognize exemplary volunteer contributions made in the year 2000 on behalf of this country's public land resources.

At the ceremony, which was held in the South Penthouse/Terrace of the Main Interior Building in Washington, D.C., Acting BLM Director Nina Hatfield said, "This year's recipients represent outstanding service to America's 264 million acres of public lands and the natural and cultural resources found on them." These winners

represent only a small portion of the exceptional contributions that are being made every day by thousands of people on public lands throughout the country.

The BLM recruits 17,000–20,000 volunteers each year to perform a variety of jobs. Collectively, they donate about 1 million hours in a given year. In Fiscal Year 2000, the value of this work was nearly \$12 million. But the benefits can be measured in more than just dollars. Many volunteers bring specialized skills to the job, contributing scarce expertise. In some remote areas, campgrounds and other recreation sites would be closed were it not for volunteer assistance. Additionally, volunteers come to understand many of the challenges that BLM faces and gain a sense of ownership for the public lands they serve.

A national panel of BLM and partner organization representatives selected the winners from a large pool of nominations submitted by 10 BLM State Offices and the National Office of Fire & Aviation. Award recipients are chosen for “Making a Difference” in management and conservation of the public lands and their resources, rather than for length of service or number of hours contributed.

BLM initiated its “Making a Difference” National Awards in 1995, holding its first recognition ceremony in 1996. This year’s observance marked the sixth annual presentation of these awards.

## VOLUNTEERS

### ROGER AND ETHA BRAND

*Fishermen’s Bend Recreation Site,  
Salem, Oregon*

Over the past 9 years, Roger and Etha Brand, a husband-and-wife team from Redding, California, have volunteered over 1,200 hours of their time each season at BLM’s Fishermen’s Bend Recreation Site near Salem, Oregon. Their contributions have included campground and day-use site hosting, staffing of the site’s main office, operation of the local recycling program, and performance of virtually any odd job that has arisen at the site’s many diverse facilities. In addition, Roger, a retired mechanic, has kept all of the site’s equipment and tools in good repair, saving BLM thousands of dollars.

### SHEILA BREWER

*BLM Field Office, Albuquerque, New Mexico*

Over the last 4 years, Sheila Brewer has worked with BLM’s Albuquerque, New Mexico, Field Office archaeologists to record and compile site inventory records for hundreds of American Indian rock art sites within the El Malpais National Conservation Area. Sheila’s work has included locating, sketching, and photographing her finds and completing written records for each rock art panel; in fact, each site inventory takes almost 8 hours to complete. Sheila has also regularly staffed BLM’s El Malpais Visitor Center and has even developed illustrated plant

identification books, including dried specimens, for both visitor and BLM staff use. In all her activities, she strives to promote awareness and stewardship of our public lands, sometimes by leading school group programs and tours for professional archaeologists. Not one to rest on her laurels, Sheila is also developing a “Geologic Road Log” as a traveler educational tool for a scenic drive along New Mexico Highway 117.

### JOY FISHER

*BLM State Office, Lakewood, Colorado*

A 12-year volunteer with BLM’s Colorado State Office, 89-year-old Joy Fisher has averaged more than 25 hours of volunteer labor per week, donating over 15,600 hours during her tenure there. Joy has been responsible for maintaining and updating more than 50,000 land records and the Historical Index for BLM-Colorado’s 8.3 million acres of surface lands and 27 million acres of mineral estate. She maintains a master set of records in the State Office, and ensures that records in 15 field offices are accurate, intact, and up-to-date. Meticulous, professional, and well-organized, Joy can be counted on to provide accurate information and fast access to records that are critical to the work and livelihoods of historians, lawyers, title companies, mining companies, ranchers, farmers—and land managers such as BLM.

### GRANT MADDEN

*Dripping Springs Natural Area,  
Las Cruces, New Mexico*

Grant Madden has contributed approximately 20,000 hours of his time to BLM over the past 8 years—the equivalent of a 10-year full-time staffer! As one of four regular caretakers at the Dripping Springs Natural Area near Las Cruces, New Mexico, Grant staffs the Visitor Center, assists maintenance workers, picks up trash, and answers visitors’ questions. As if that weren’t enough, Grant provided hours of fire support during New Mexico’s severe 2000 fire season, including fire weather reporting, dispatching, driving, and working in the ground support unit at the interagency staging area. Grant has also provided leadership in using Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to map the Dripping Springs National Recreation Trail and other features of the Natural Area. He has also contributed labor for installation of water catchments, substituted for campground hosts at other BLM-Las Cruces recreation sites, and performed field patrols of Wilderness Study Areas. It is estimated that the monetary value of Grant’s contributions to BLM over the course of his volunteer career is approximately a quarter of a million dollars.

## RILEY AND SUZY MCCOY

*Rhyolite Ghost Town, Beatty, Nevada*

As BLM's winter caretakers of the Gold-Rush-era Rhyolite Ghost Town near Beatty, Nevada, Riley and Suzy McCoy have each contributed well over 6,200 hours of volunteer time to this historical site. Suzy has completed a Class II Cultural Inventory of historical features and artifacts within the town, publishing her findings in a 300-page document that includes maps, photographs, and drawings. The publication was distributed to, and is used by, BLM, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the Nevada Historical Society.

Suzy also wrote an informational brochure about the town of Rhyolite, which has been translated into several different languages. In Riley's time at Rhyolite, he has given several tours a day of its famous "bottle house"—including one for the Governor of Virginia—and has participated in the filming of a number of documentaries. He also answers visitor questions about the town, aids stranded tourists, repairs BLM signs, assists BLM staff in creating diversion ditches, picks up trash, patrols the town to prevent looting and damage, and has also helped to repair the bottle house roof. Both Suzy and Riley also serve as volunteer District Archaeological Technicians for BLM.

## JERRY VERTREES

*Snake River Birds of Prey National  
Conservation Area, Boise, Idaho*

As an individual volunteer at BLM-Idaho's Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, Jerry Vertrees has educated school children about the area and its famous wildlife, staffed information booths at community events, overseen environmental education programs, supervised National Public Lands Day construction projects, and monitored spring and summer recreational activities within the National Conservation Area. Jerry also contributes labor as part of Snake River Raptor Volunteers, Inc., training and supervising other volunteers, disseminating information, and serving as a community liaison. He has also conducted multiday Wilderness Study Area monitoring trips, replaced signs, inventoried roads, and performed other functions on remote lands administered by the BLM-Owyhee Field Office. To stay informed, Jerry frequently attends BLM-convened gatherings, such as Resource Advisory Council meetings, and avidly reads community-oriented natural resource articles and documents.

## VOLUNTEER GROUPS

### BLACK ROCK DESERT VOLUNTEERS

*Black Rock Desert, Winnemucca, Nevada*

A combined core group of 24 individual volunteers and representatives from 7 volunteer and user groups, the Black Rock Desert Volunteers protect and enhance northwestern Nevada's Black Rock Desert, America's largest playa (dry lake bed). Among their innumerable contributions, the Volunteers help to educate visitors about the area's diverse natural, cultural, and recreational resources; operate visitor contact stations; and participate in resource management activities such as visitor-use data collection, wilderness boundary marking and monitoring, and GPS mapping of permitted events and their potential effects. They also have contributed to land use planning efforts and environmental impact statements, assisted with volunteer training, and instructed "Leave No Trace" and "Tread Lightly!" ethics and techniques at large events such as the annual Burning Man arts festival. Getting their hands dirty is all in a day's work for these volunteers, too: in one day in 1997, for example, some of the Black Rock Desert Volunteers cleaned up an illegal dump on the western playa edge, piling up—by hand—9 tons of wood and 16 tons of metal, including 26 miles of barbed wire.

### UPPER MISSOURI NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVER TEAM

*Lewistown, Montana*

This diverse team of volunteers is responsible for innumerable public services that benefit thousands of visitors to Montana's Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River, one of the routes used on Lewis and Clark's famous 1805 expedition. At recreational campgrounds along the river, Team members have caulked restroom walls and painted floors, installed signs and lighting, provided educational materials, taught "Leave No Trace" ethics, and even developed a newsletter to spread information about current events and projects along the river. They've also accomplished work to benefit the river and its surroundings by planting tree saplings in remote areas. Over the last three visitor seasons, the Team has registered more than 13,000 visitors and volunteered thousands of hours to support recreation in this area.

## BLM EMPLOYEES

### JOE ROSS

*BLM Volunteer Coordinator, Roseburg, Oregon*

As the Roseburg District Office's Volunteer Coordinator, Supervisory Multiple Resource Specialist Joe Ross took the initiative to conduct a volunteer program needs analysis. Since presenting his findings to his District management team, he has been chairing a volunteer program committee to steadily implement recommendations for improving the District's volunteer program. Joe's efforts have resulted in clear definitions of volunteer program roles and responsibilities, the incorporation of diverse populations into BLM's volunteer workforce, and the development of productive partnerships with community schools and other youth organizations. Joe has also set up a "Linking Girls to the Land" partnership with the local Girl Scout Council to facilitate Girl Scout outdoor education programs. As Roseburg's Team Leader for National Public Lands Day (NPLD) 2000, Joe developed partnerships with numerous public and private organizations; thanks in large part to his efforts, on that one day, more than 360 volunteers completed 10 projects on public lands, worth an estimated \$200,000. Joe's NPLD 2000 efforts have also been recognized by Oregon's "Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism" (SOLV) organization, whose Board unanimously voted to bestow on BLM-Roseburg its award for "Best Partnership Development." The Governor of Oregon presented the award in a May 2001 ceremony.

### TONY LUTONSKY

*BLM Archaeologist, Albuquerque, New Mexico*

Over the past 5 years, Archaeologist Tony Lutonsky has developed a dedicated and effective cadre of volunteers to assist BLM-Albuquerque in locating and monitoring archaeological sites within the District. Tony's group of volunteers has collectively put in many hundreds of hours gathering data on public lands, monitoring public use, and raising awareness of the importance of conserving public lands and their resources. Tony takes the time and effort to instruct each volunteer in site identification and recording and in conducting cultural resource clearances for proposed actions on public lands. The volunteers now collect data and assist Tony in writing his reports. They also provide routine patrols to protect archaeological resources and sometimes "catch someone in the act." Three years ago, for example, patrolling volunteers noted suspicious activity by some visitors at a site and radioed their location and other information to law enforcement, who ultimately arrested the suspects. On a weekly basis, Tony makes a special effort to join his volunteers in the field for training, mentoring of new group members, or just keeping up with news from the group's long-time volunteers. Tony's personal approach to volunteer supervision builds strong partnerships and creates dedicated public land stewards.

# NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY

September 23, 2000, saw the seventh annual celebration of National Public Lands Day (NPLD), the nation's premier workday on behalf of America's public lands. The nationwide event was coordinated by the nonprofit, D.C.-based National Environmental Education & Training Foundation (NEETF), with participation by eight Federal land management agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency, private partner groups, and local and national sponsors, including Toyota USA.

In 2000, the BLM hosted an extraordinary variety of work and educational activities at a record-breaking 50 sites from Florida to Alaska, enlisting the aid of more than 6,000 volunteers of all ages, backgrounds, and skill levels. At Virginia's Pohick Bay Regional Park, for example, volunteers built an erosion-control retaining wall and rerouted two sections of trail. At Cochiti Lake in New Mexico, a lakeshore cleanup project took center stage for the day. And at Badger Springs, the gateway to Arizona's Agua Fria National Monument, volunteers collected 60–75 large bags of trash and an assortment of oversized garbage, with prizes awarded for the most "interesting" items collected.

At the Wedge Overlook in Utah, volunteers—including then-BLM Director Tom Fry—laid concrete for a ramp accessible to persons with disabilities, built 700 feet of



*The Jupiter Inlet Natural Area in Florida welcomed nearly 100 volunteers on National Public Lands Day. These students spent much of the day removing exotic plant species from the tract.*

buck and rail fence, and removed old tires from the Sid's Mountain Wilderness Study Area. "National Public Lands Day is a terrific opportunity for Americans to experience firsthand their public lands and give something back to their country," Fry said. "As the event grows each year, more and more people are becoming involved in public land stewardship. We at the Department of the Interior feel that it is extremely important to restore and protect these unique open spaces in the face of growing development. National Public Lands Day is an occasion to celebrate public lands and the open spaces they guarantee."

At other BLM locations around the nation, NPLD participants improved wildlife habitat, stabilized stream channels, painted, trimmed, revegetated, scrubbed, weeded,

and otherwise pampered the irreplaceable cultural and natural resources on BLM's public lands.

All told, this year 50,000 NPLD volunteers performed work with a value of \$8 million at more than 270 sites in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The value of

this event extends far beyond what is accomplished on this one day, however. By exposing Americans to the spectacular resources on the public lands and affording them the opportunity to contribute their labor, NPLD nurtures a sense of stewardship and conservation and encourages public lands volunteerism during the rest of the year.



*National Public Lands Day near Dillon, Montana, involved plenty of work and some living history, too. At the Beaverhead River Land Acquisition/Pipe Organ site, local historian Steve Morehouse talked to Scout volunteers about Lewis and Clark, who camped there in 1805.*