BLM Mission:

It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Map: Public Lands Managed by the BLM

This map is available online in larger sizes for viewing and downloading. Click on the filenames to view the larger images:

- 1288 x 760 Pixel Map (94 KB)
- 4168 x 2460 Pixel Map (429 KB)


BLM Facts:

- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for managing 258 million acres of land--about one-eighth of the land in the United States--and approximately 700 million acres of subsurface mineral resources.
- Most of the lands the BLM manages are located in the western United States, including Alaska, and are dominated by extensive grasslands, forests, high mountains, arctic tundra, and deserts. The BLM manages a wide variety of resources and uses, including energy and minerals; timber; forage; wild horse and
burro populations; fish and wildlife habitat; wilderness areas; archaeological, paleontological, and historical sites; and other natural heritage values.

- The Bureau of Land Management administers public lands within a framework of numerous laws. The most comprehensive of these is the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). All Bureau policies, procedures and management actions must be consistent with FLPMA and the other laws that govern use of the public lands.

**History of the BLM**

**The BLM Today**

**Additional Information on BLM**

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**History of the BLM**

The BLM's roots go back to the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. These laws provided for the survey and settlement of the lands that the original 13 colonies ceded to the Federal government after the War of Independence. As additional lands were acquired by the United States from Spain, France, and other countries, Congress directed that they be explored, surveyed, and made available for settlement. In 1812, Congress established the General Land Office in the Department of the Treasury to oversee the disposition of these Federal lands. As the 19th century progressed and the Nation's land base expanded further west, Congress encouraged the settlement of the land by enacting a wide variety of laws, including the Homesteading Laws and the Mining Law of 1872.

These statutes served one of the major policy goals of the young country--settlement of the Western territories. With the exception of the Mining Law of 1872 and the Desert Land Act of 1877 (which was amended), all have since been repealed or superseded by other statutes.

The late 19th century marked a shift in Federal land management priorities with the creation of the first national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges. By withdrawing these lands from settlement, Congress signaled a shift in the policy goals served by the public lands. Instead of using them to promote settlement, Congress recognized that they should be held in public ownership because of their other resource values.

In the early 20th century, Congress took additional steps toward recognizing the value of the assets on public lands and directed the Executive Branch to manage activities on the
remaining public lands. The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 allowed leasing, exploration, and production of selected commodities such as coal, oil, gas, and sodium to take place on public lands. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 established the U.S. Grazing Service to manage the public rangelands. And the Oregon and California (O&C) Act of August 28, 1937, required sustained yield management of the timberlands in western Oregon.

In 1946, the Grazing Service was merged with the General Land Office to form the Bureau of Land Management within the Department of the Interior. When the BLM was initially created, there were over 2,000 unrelated and often conflicting laws for managing the public lands. The BLM had no unified legislative mandate until Congress enacted the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

In FLPMA, Congress recognized the value of the remaining public lands by declaring that these lands would remain in public ownership. Congress also gave us the term "multiple use" management, defined as "management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people."

The BLM Today

Increasingly, the BLM has had to address the needs of a growing and changing West. Ten of the 12 western States with significant proportions of BLM-managed lands have among the fastest rates of population growth in the United States.

The American public values balanced use, conservation, environmental management, recreation, and tourism. Public lands are increasingly viewed from the perspective of the recreational opportunities they offer, their cultural resources, and--in an increasingly urban world--their vast open spaces. However, against this backdrop, the more traditional land uses of grazing, timber production, and mining are still in high demand.

The BLM's task is to recognize the demands of public land users while addressing the needs of traditional user groups and working within smaller budgets. Fortunately, the public, constituent groups, and other agencies and levels of government have proven eager to participate in collaborative decisionmaking. These diverse partners have joined with us in developing many partnerships that benefit the public lands and everyone who relies on them.

Perhaps one of the Bureau's greatest challenges today is to develop more effective land management practices, while becoming more efficient at the same time. We are proud of the significant steps we and our partners have already taken to reduce administrative
costs, streamline work processes, focus on customer service, and improve accountability to the American people.

As the BLM is entering the 21st century, we look forward to continuing our service to the public while strengthening our partnerships with all who use or care about the public lands. Working together, all of us can succeed in restoring and maintaining the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

(Back to top of this page)