



Connecting People to Their Public Lands 2022

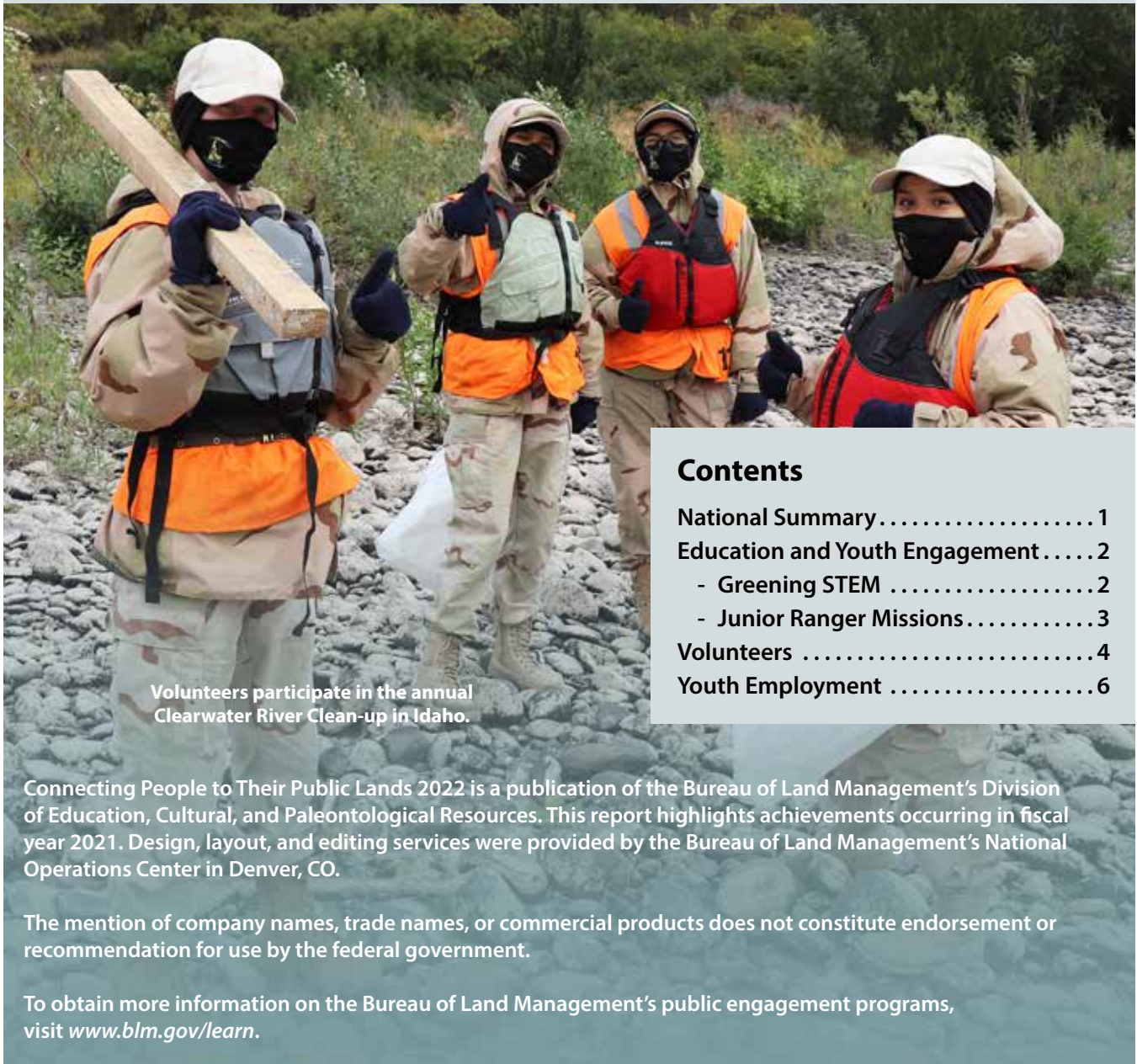
BLM Education, Volunteers, and Youth Employment Activities



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



Volunteers participate in the annual Clearwater River Clean-up in Idaho.

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Connecting People to Their Public Lands 2022 is a publication of the Bureau of Land Management's Division of Education, Cultural, and Paleontological Resources. This report highlights achievements occurring in fiscal year 2021. Design, layout, and editing services were provided by the Bureau of Land Management's National Operations Center in Denver, CO.

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To obtain more information on the Bureau of Land Management's public engagement programs, visit www.blm.gov/learn.

National Summary

Education, volunteers, and youth employment programs enable the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to achieve its mission by offering ways for people of all ages to engage with public lands.

The BLM is fostering the next generation of responsible land stewards through education experiences and activities that ignite a spark of interest to learn more about natural and cultural resources. These experiences connect people with ways to discover and explore some of America's most spectacular landscapes, historical and cultural sites, diverse wildlife, unique rock formations, native plants, and they build an appreciation for an ownership of public lands. Volunteers help the BLM to complete unfunded work that otherwise would not be accomplished. The BLM works hand-in-hand with communities to engage people of all ages and backgrounds in meaningful and mutually beneficial service on their public lands. The BLM uses several youth employment programs, such as the Public Lands Corps (PLC). These service corps organizations provide a cost-effective way to accomplish mission-critical work through partnerships.

As the BLM entered a second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency provided a broader range of programs throughout the country. Local BLM offices were required to follow constantly changing local government guidelines, which lead to inconsistent programming. Some states were allowed to resume school fieldtrips while others were not; federal government guidelines reduced the BLM's ability to hold large gatherings, which impacted educational events and volunteer days; and routine COVID-19 testing delayed youth corps members' work days. For these reasons, there were inconsistencies in program and participant numbers. Through all these challenges, many BLM offices were able to adapt and find creative ways to continue offering education, volunteers, and youth employment programs.

The BLM recognizes that these programs are human-centered programs. People have an amazing capacity to affect change on public lands. Functioning ecosystems can be undone by new invasive species, human-caused wildfires, and recreational impacts. The education, volunteers, and youth employment programs have proven to be effective at creating an informed knowledgeable stewardship, gaining public trust, supporting conservation, and achieving legal mandates.



Education and Youth Engagement: Partnerships and Technology Expand BLM Programs

The BLM's education programs are as diverse as the lands the agency manages. This diversity is reflected in the way field offices design and implement programs that meet land management goals and support community needs. The BLM's National Office supports education programs through partnerships with national organizations that are implemented at the local level. Partnerships are instrumental in accomplishing the agency's work. For every dollar the BLM spends on education programs, a partner spends 46 cents. In 2021, the BLM used these funds to successfully launch and expand two nationally supported programs, Greening STEM and Junior Ranger Missions.

Greening STEM

 The BLM has partnered with the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) to provide opportunities and funding for Greening STEM projects on BLM lands. The Greening STEM approach is an adaptable framework that can be used to address education standards and real-world problems. Greening STEM promotes partnerships where formal and informal educators can collaborate to design, develop, and co-deliver standards-based STEM activities.

Through these projects, the BLM and NEEF seek to advance mutual STEM education goals by providing program participants with access to authentic STEM experiences that use the environment and the agency's unique mission as a context for engagement. BLM Greening STEM projects use STEM-focused content, instructional strategies, training approaches, collaboration, and technology to assist school educators and BLM staff in implementing and enhancing learning in and outside of the classroom, with a primary focus on BLM-related subject matter.

In May of 2021, NEEF partnered with the BLM and the Colorado Canyon Association for a Greening STEM demonstration project at McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area. This project provided a hands-on, experiential program to students who learned about the impact of invasive species, specifically Russian knapweed, on the riparian corridor of the Colorado River. As part of the project, students recorded data on invasive species

density and reported data to the BLM. They also learned about the viability of biological control methods, such as introducing Russian knapweed gall wasps in an area infested with Russian knapweed.

The BLM continues to collaborate with NEEF to build the capacity of BLM field sites, using components of NEEF's Greening STEM model to design and deliver enriching hands-on programming. Additional funding is planned to issue grants for the 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 academic school years.



Highschool students enjoy the Colorado River on a Greening STEM project in McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area.



Junior Ranger Missions

The BLM continues to seek new ways to engage young people and their families with enhanced recreation and visitor experiences and to provide activities that promote learning and a shared conservation stewardship. To connect today's youth with their public lands and nurture the next generation of public land stewards, the BLM is working to incorporate new technologies into education and engagement programming.

The BLM's Junior Ranger Missions uses the Agents of Discovery mobile gaming application to expand and diversify educational programming and create new ways to learn and play outside. By using the technology from the Agents of Discovery platform, BLM sites create interactive, location-based "missions" that are full of challenges to

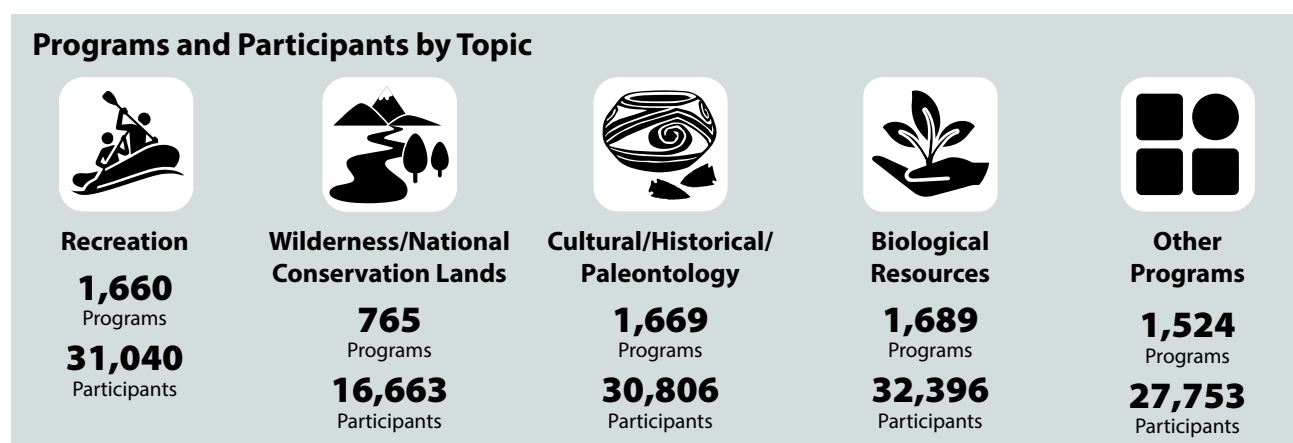
engage youth and families with their public lands. This allows the BLM to pair a technology with the devices kids are already using to facilitate an immersive learning experience outdoors.

To continue to grow this approach, in 2021, the Division of Education, Cultural, and Paleontological Resources supported the initiation of seven new Agents of Discovery licenses, greatly expanding the number of Junior Ranger Missions locations and the reach of the program. Currently, there are 20 locations across the BLM where visitors can find this interactive technology. As the program continues to grow, the BLM will work to create "National Missions" that can be played at home, at schools, and on public lands, encouraging the public to engage with BLM lands near and far.

Education and Youth Engagement



Value	
BLM Annual Work Plan (not salary)	\$893,715
BLM Budget Proposal Submission Projects	\$257,972
Partner Funded	\$538,848
Outside Grant Funded	\$383,642



Some education and engagement programs covered more than one topic. In these instances, participants were counted for each relevant program topic. Therefore, the total number of participants in this table will appear greater than the actual total.

Volunteers: Performing Work Essential to the BLM's Mission

The BLM Volunteer Program is an essential component of the BLM mission, cultivating community-based conservation, public-centered stewardship, and partnerships through public service. Volunteers enable the BLM to complete unfunded work that otherwise would not be accomplished. The BLM works hand-in-hand with communities and partners to engage people of all ages and backgrounds in meaningful and mutually beneficial service on their public lands.



The Federal Land Policy and Management Act directs the BLM to recruit volunteers and use funding to support and facilitate BLM-administered activities. Volunteers contribute time, services, and skills benefitting all BLM program areas. These include environmental conservation, recreation, education, interpretation, cultural and historical site management, wilderness and wilderness study areas, and the wild horse and burro program. In 2021, volunteers continued their support of critical BLM functions and services, even while facing the challenges and restrictions resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 12,500 volunteers donated 525,000 hours to the BLM in 2021 (the equivalent of 292 work years), resulting in a cost savings of over \$15 million to the agency.

For the American public, the rewards of volunteering with the BLM include opportunities to learn new skills and to meet interesting, dedicated, and highly motivated people. Volunteer recruitment and retention is coordinated by local bureau field offices, and through the *Volunteer.gov* web portal. This portal offers volunteer opportunities from multiple federal agencies across the country.

The annual Making a Difference National Volunteer Awards allows the BLM to recognize volunteer contributions in multiple categories, acknowledging achievements by outstanding individuals and groups. In 2021, the BLM honored seven outstanding volunteers. Fittingly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was held live via Zoom. BLM Deputy Director for Policy and Programs, Nada Wolff Culver, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, Laura Daniel-Davis, offered heartfelt remarks to personally thank award winners and all BLM volunteers. State and local leadership presented the awards in California, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, and Wyoming.

National Public Lands Day, held on the last Saturday in September, is another key volunteer program initiative. Annually, more than 90 BLM field offices host thousands of volunteers at events in observance of this national celebration. The BLM is the leading federal partner for this national service day.



Two volunteers aid in the removal of graffiti at a National Public Lands Day event in California.



The 2021 BLM Making a Difference volunteer award winner Sandy Hayden participates in invasive species removal at Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area.



BLM volunteers participate in a National Public Lands Day maintenance project at Bradfield Bridge campground in Colorado.

Volunteers

Hours Worked and Value of Work by Program Area



Recreation
258,738
 Total Hours
\$7,384,383
 Value of Work



**Biological Resources/
 Riparian Resources**
60,220
 Total Hours
\$1,718,679
 Value of Work



**Cultural/Historical/
 Paleontology**
32,587
 Total Hours
\$930,033
 Value of Work



Wilderness
10,352
 Total Hours
\$295,446
 Value of Work



Wild Horse and Burro
71,137
 Total Hours
\$2,030,250
 Value of Work



Education/Interpretation
24,645
 Total Hours
\$703,368
 Value of Work



Other
 (Includes Cadastral, Minerals,
 Support Services, etc.)
68,267
 Total Hours
\$1,948,340
 Value of Work

Total

525,946
 Total Hours

\$15,010,499
 Value of Work

A BLM volunteer assists with a boundary marking project.



Youth Employment: Amid a Pandemic, Youth Corps Continue to Develop Conservation Leaders of Tomorrow

The BLM understands that the health and productivity of public lands depends on people who are informed and willing to assist in protecting and restoring America's natural and cultural legacy. As the agency entrusted to protect 10% of lands in the United States, the BLM must nurture and train the next generation of young people to conserve public lands. Youth employment programs are essential to engage people in work on behalf of the American public. These programs help foster meaningful connections between people and their public lands, expand human understanding of the BLM's complex multiple-use mission, and inspire conservation stewardship and service.

For more than 30 years, nonprofit conservation organizations have partnered with the BLM to help support its mission and engage the next generation of public land stewards. These partnerships have involved tens of thousands of participants as crew members and interns with youth service corps organizations.

The BLM supports a vibrant program that engages youth in public lands stewardship ethics and builds a future federal workforce. This is accomplished by emphasizing the Public Land Corps (PLC). The PLC program works with qualified youth and conservation/service corps to provide opportunities and education for young adults in natural and cultural resource professions. The PLC hiring authority offers opportunities to attract and launch the next generation of conservation leaders. It is often associated with engaging youth in project-based work experiences, and these hands-on experiences often lead to entry-level careers with federal land management agencies. Many youth corps organizations have been offering undergraduate and graduate students the same opportunity to participate in the PLC program in recent years.

Emerging youth corps professionals often bring scarce technical skills (geographic information systems, engineering, web-design) to the sponsoring agency. The PLC Initiative also provides opportunities for veterans to develop skills in a variety of public land management disciplines such as wildland fire or landscape restoration, while the BLM benefits from their military experience and work ethic.

As Covid-19 impacted the world, the BLM PLC program was not immune to the pandemic. Youth service corps organizations were confronted with challenging decisions about how they would operate during this



The Southwest Conservation Corps' Ancestral Lands youth crew assisted a professional stabilization crew at a prehistoric masonry pueblo at Lowry Pueblo National Historic Landmark.



Southwest Youth Conservation Corps members work in the Menefee Mountain Wilderness Study area (WSA) and Weber Fire burn scar, using backpack sprayers to treat noxious weeds.



The Midland Hills Trail, managed by the Royal Gorge Field Office, received much-needed maintenance by Southwest Conservation Corps to support the increased recreation visitation.

difficult period. Many corps across the country were forced to reassess their operations or halt operations altogether.

During this time, the BLM-partnering conservation corps continued work on projects such as enhancing wildlife habitat, maintaining trails, reestablishing campgrounds, and other tasks. The BLM had 850 corps participants in fiscal year 2021, and these corps participants completed work on 123 projects that equaled 236,581 hours worked. The success of the PLC program is attributed not only to the Department of Interior's priority of modernizing the workforce, but also to its goal of expanding the participation of diverse audiences in public lands conservation and stewardship. Initiatives like these are instrumental in bringing communities together, educating the public about protection, and addressing public land issues through a community-led effort.



Youth Employment

Youth hiring data combines the Public Lands Corps (PLC) and Civilian Climate Corps (CCC) programs. The term "hire" is defined as a corps member that has dedicated 80 or more hours on a project.

PLC and CCC Youth Hires by Type



Work Crews
1,101



Paid Internships
75



Research Technicians
18



Not Reported
8

PLC and CCC Youth Hires by Program Area



Recreation
288



Cultural/Historical/
Paleontology
36



Biological Resources
480



Wilderness
12



Other
386

Total Number of Youth Hiring Projects Reported

93

Total Number of Hours Worked for Youth Hires

783,284

Total Number of Youth Hires

1,202

