

## Example: California Nominee for ARC Legends Award



Jim Jennings, BLM Bishop F.O.  
351 Pacu Ln. Bishop, CA 93514  
760-872-5020(Office) 760-872-5050(Fax)  
[jjennings@blm.gov](mailto:jjennings@blm.gov)

### Award Criteria Narrative:

**1. Quantifiable improvements in recreation opportunities or recreation participation by one or more categories of the American public, especially young people.**

Jim has served as an Outdoor Recreation Planner with the Bishop Field Office for two decades with an additional decade of service in other BLM offices throughout California. During Jim's tenure in Bishop, his positive impact to the eastern Sierra community has been immense, effective, and durable. He has used an integrated community approach to galvanize different recreation groups within the community, and then motivated these groups to form coherent community stewardship groups to improve public land health in the eastern Sierra.

One notable accomplishment was Jim's exemplary performance in developing vehicle use designations during the late 1980's and early 1990's. As the BLM and a group of public interests painstakingly and contentiously struggled over each route to determine which would remain open or be closed, Jim ably convinced the group to scuttle this ineffective and inefficient approach. He crafted an alternative strategy to assist the agency and the public to first focus on a broader approach using the Semi-Primitive component of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) concept. Using this concept, he fashioned a strategic compromise that all parties ultimately honored and implemented. In effect, Jim was able to maintain motorized access opportunities and develop a

management and implementation system resulting in greater user accountability and promotion of user ethics. In 2005, it also led to the creation of stewardship community groups beginning in Lone Pine, CA where citizens would rally together to take direct care of adjoining public lands.

In the late 1990's, Jim provided leadership and direction for a recreation phenomenon that overwhelmed the Chalk Bluff area of public and private lands immediately outside Bishop. Bouldering, an offshoot climbing sport where recreationists free climb house-sized boulders using only "crash pads" and sticky sole shoes, found a new home at Chalk Bluff. Containing hundreds of world class climbing boulders, the area incurred skyrocketing use from a few hundred per year to 20,000 visitors within 18 months. Many were young, in college or high school - - looking for winter rock climbing when Bishop's weather is fair. Many were attracted to the area's uniqueness and travelled from foreign countries like France, Japan, Canada, Britain, Australia, etc.. Most visitors preferred to camp in lieu of using existing lodging. Dispersed camping, sanitation problems, etc. increased tremendously, creating impacts similar to the Moab mountain bike craze of the early 1980's.

Jim galvanized a disorganized and eclectic group of local climbers to form a local activist group; concurrently, he developed a relationship with the Access Fund to provide support to BLM and the newly formed climbing group. Using the semi-primitive ROS concept initiated for vehicle use designations 15 years earlier, he framed a user ethics strategy with accompanying flyers, media releases, meetings, etc. and steered the activist group to take direct action themselves to care for public land resources. With no money, he took an abandoned quarry pit nearby and converted it to a primitive campground, advertising it as the "trendy" place for the climbers to camp, realizing their desire to socially congregate as an "après boulder" experience would attract them. The idea worked - - - relieving camping pressure on non-suitable public land locations as well as USFS and private land locations. The "Pit" now accommodates some 20,000 campers per year, mostly climbers. A toilet was installed at the site. Within three years, it was paid off with campground fees, resulting in a very low cost operation.

## **2. Reliance upon partnerships with profit/non-profit organizations in the private sector.**

In the past two decades, Jim has cultivated a long list of public and private partners who support public lands health and maintenance. He formed strategic relationships with the Inyo National Forest, the City of Los Angeles, numerous chambers of commerce, and special interest groups to implement the semi-primitive concept mentioned above across jurisdictional boundaries in the east Sierra. He also formed essential partnerships to create a national award winning motor touring guide. Multiple chambers of commerce, government agencies, local organizations, and others contributed resources to publish this noteworthy document. A second motor touring guide was published expanding the partnership base further. This second guide, covering the north half of the field office area, has been the most popular visitor services information in the county.

**3. Use of creative solutions and programs, and demonstrated efforts to share news of creative solutions within the agency.**

The dissemination of Jim's creative approaches has been widespread within the region, the BLM, and the broad national community. He is well regarded in all levels of the BLM because of his notable successes in Bishop. The semi-primitive concept of vehicle use management has been published in a various publications including several local newspapers, a National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) newsletter, off-highway periodicals, and other documents. The concept has been the subject of BLM seminars and conferences. Additionally, the results of BLM's bouldering management success has been published in the Access Fund newsletter, been a topic at BLM recreation conferences, and also presented at national climbing related workshops/conferences. Mick Ryan, a web savvy bouldering marketer, published an on-line article about BLM's effectiveness in managing the bouldering issue entitled "To Publish or Not Publish" - - crediting Jim with positively influencing guide book authors, like himself, to use discretion when marketing public lands recreation opportunities. Jim's work has also been documented in a textbook entitled "The Amenity Migrants – Seeking and Sustaining Mountains and their Cultures". The author states "... the BLM has achieved admirable results in building collaborative relationships with recreational amenity migrant groups in the region, particularly ORV groups." (pg. 47)

**4. Community Support for the individual's work reflected in awards, roles, etc.**

Jim's involvement within and acknowledgement by the eastern Sierra communities is immense. He has acted as a liaison to the local Chamber of Commerce Board, served as an officer of the Coalition for Unified Recreation in the East Sierra (CURES), been a board member of the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association (ESIA), assisted with the organization of numerous local community events, and provided vehicle access management perspectives to the BLM Washington Office when requested. He is often requested by community groups to serve as a technical advisor to local ad hoc committees investigating regional public lands issues. He is also requested to serve on hiring panels for various recruitment positions by the Forest Service, the Chamber of Commerce, and others.

Jim has received dozens of BLM star and annual performance awards over the years for his high caliber work in the eastern Sierra. He has received at least two national awards: the DOI Cooperative Conservation Award (2008) for his leadership in organizing Lone Pine, CA residents to form a stewardship group to care for the Alabama Hills, a breathtaking public land expanse where hundreds of movies, commercials, and still shoots are filmed. He also received an environmental interpretation award for "excellence in interpretation" from the National Association of Interpretation (NAI) in 2003 for his collaborative work producing the Inyo County Motor Touring Guidebook.