

2009 ARC Beacon Award Nomination

Bureau of Land Management National Landscape Conservation System & Community Partnership Office Education, Interpretation, and Partnerships Division

BLM proudly nominates the National Landscape Conservation System's Landscape's Education, Interpretation, and Partnerships (EIP) Division for the 2009 American Recreation Coalition Beacon Award. This BLM Division is using technology to provide a variety of innovative resources which help visitors to the public lands and gateway communities who serve public land visitors. The Learning Landscapes website highlights partnerships with the National Geographic Society and numerous tourism organizations who promote sustainable travel and tourism, stewardship, and publics who use and are concerned about public lands. This website helps visitors to obtain information about the wide-ranging, dispersed, and diverse opportunities for recreation on 256 million acres of public land. By organizing information both geographically and thematically, the Learning Landscapes website provides visitors with a variety of ways to learn about all that BLM has to offer. The following brief descriptions highlight some of the major resources available on the website.

Geotourism

(http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/Education_in_BLM/Learning_Landscapes/For_Travelers.html)

and

(http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/Recreation/recreation_national/tourism__community.html)

These sections (sample provided for only this section below) of the website focus on geotourism—tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents. They illustrate how BLM's tourism program helps diversify and stabilize the economies of local communities. The program also sustains domestic tourism opportunities that provide valuable community amenities, attract businesses, protect sensitive resources, and improve the quality of life for visitors and local residents alike. Links to partner websites provide even more information.

Tourists and Travelers

They are the places you know about and the places you never imagined - cacti and canyons, arroyos and outcrops, glacial ice fields and frozen tundra, wide-open vistas and solitary hideaways. They are your public lands. As intriguing and diverse as America itself, public lands are host to a number of outstanding places to hike, camp, fish, hunt, mountain bike, watch wildlife, or just kick back and relax.



Get Ready!

Take whirlwind tours of the amazing natural and cultural resources found on public lands. [More>>](#)

Get Set!

Raring to go beyond armchair travels? Visitor information is just a click away. [More>>](#)

Go!

Once you have decided to visit your public lands, learn more about BLM opportunities. [More>>](#)

Tourism & Community Services Program

Tourism & Community Services Program

Tourism Strategy Sample Plan

Partners & Links

Contacts

Some of the fastest growing segments of the travel and tourism industry – outdoor recreation, nature, adventure, and heritage tourism – also happen to be key components of the BLM-managed public lands. Recreation and tourism are significant economic drivers, and they are identified together as one of the top three industries in the 12 western states where the vast majority of the BLM’s 258 million acres of Public Lands are found.

BLM’s tourism and community services program helps diversify and stabilize the economies of local communities. The program also sustains domestic tourism opportunities that provide valuable community amenities, attract businesses, protect sensitive resources, and improve the quality of life for visitors and local residents alike.



The BLM works with the tourism industry and gateway communities to:

- Encourage development of sustainable travel and tourism within gateway communities and support community-based conservation;

- Emphasize BLM outdoor recreation, National Landscape Conservation System units, and heritage tourism attractions that influence the social, economic, and environmental interests of gateway communities;
- Improve BLM relationships with community, state, and individual travel and tourism partners to stimulate public involvement with the public lands; and
- Sustain social, economic, and environmental viability of rural communities, including communicating a sustainable stewardship message to those communities and their visitors.

The tourism industry is an important socioeconomic element in all types of communities, including rural areas, large metropolitan areas, and Native American communities. BLM’s involvement with the tourism industry is important to enhancing the quality of life within communities where there is interest in expanding outdoor recreation-based tourism, nature-based tourism, and heritage-based tourism. Working with tourism partners, in turn, can help protect natural and heritage resources on the public lands, as well as provide critical economic opportunities in local communities.

Travel & Tourism Sustainable Practices

For the health and long-term viability of the public lands, it is critical that sustainable practices are pursued related to travel and tourism. The term “sustainable”, as it relates to rural, natural and cultural tourism, is defined by the following key actions:

- Contribute to conservation of biodiversity;
- Nurture the well being of people;
- Include an interpretive/learning experience;
- Involve responsible action on the part of tourists and the tourism industry;
- Stress local participation, ownership and business opportunities – particularly for rural populations;
- Emphasize delivery of goods and services to small groups by small-scale business; and
- Focus on low consumption of non-renewable resources.

Heritage Tourism & Geotourism

Over 81percent of American adults take in some form of cultural/arts/heritage activity while on their travels. “Geotourism” is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographic character of the place being visited, as well as its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well being of its residents. Its benefits extend to those tourists who are conscious of the environment and are inclined to seek culture and unique experiences when they travel. A desire to learn fuels this interest and demands special care to ensure a truly authentic experience – a special niche for BLM with its cultural and natural attributes less-developed attractions.

BLM Travel & Tourism Policy

The BLM attempts to manage the public lands to provide for the benefits sought by outdoor recreation participants; to help ensure recreation public land users demonstrate responsible outdoor recreation behavior; and to maintain or enhance the positive economic and social impacts on gateway communities and on their affiliated small businesses.

For a description of BLM’s policy goals related to travel and tourism, see the **BLM’s Priorities and Goals for Recreation and Visitor Services** (Goal 3, Objective 3).

Tourists and Travelers (click on link to see a full description)

(http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/Education_in_BLM/Learning_Landscapes/For_Travelers.html)

This section of the website uses a variety of innovative tools to entice visitors to BLM lands, including virtual tours of natural and cultural resource sites, links to Interpretive and Visitor Centers, highlighted sites from the National Landscape Conservation System, and thematic suggestions for adventures in geology, biking, and wildlife viewing—to name but a few. In addition, an interactive map provides links to “vacations to the past” in 12 BLM states.

Children and Families (click on link to see a full description)

(http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/Education_in_BLM/Learning_Landscapes/For_Kids.html)

and

(http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/Education_in_BLM/Learning_Landscapes/For_Students_of_all_Ages.html)

These two sections of the website focus on recreational and other opportunities that BLM provides for children and families. Families are encouraged to “Take It Outside” and connect with their public lands through outdoor activities that improve health and nurture the next generation of public land stewards. The Kids page features the “Walk on the Wild Side” activity book, the Junior Explorer program, Homework Helpers, and interactive games, which introduce young people to BLM natural and cultural resources, highlighting specific locations in many instances.

Volunteers and Voluntourists (click on link to see a full description)

(http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/Education_in_BLM/Learning_Landscapes/for_volunteers.html)

and

(http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/Education_in_BLM/Learning_Landscapes/For_Travelers.html)

These two sections promote recreation on BLM public lands but also highlight the importance of giving back. BLM’s Recreation Program is one of the major beneficiaries of the work of BLM volunteers and these two web pages demonstrate some of the ways in which volunteers

contribute. There are also links to volunteer opportunities, including volunteer vacations and Take Pride in America's Voluntourism site.

Partnerships with for-profit and nonprofit organizations in the private sector

Partnerships are key to BLM's Tourism program. Spearheaded by the National Geographic Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations, a series of "MapGuide" projects present opportunities to inform visitors and communities about public lands and create a network for the support of grassroots projects that implement sustainable principles. Partnerships with a variety of regional and state tourism agencies ensure the kind of coordination that allows gateway communities and local businesses to reap the benefits of providing visitor services to public land users.

Efforts to share news of creative solutions within the agency

While the Tourists and Travelers website is available to the public, it also serves as a communication tool for BLM. Agency employees wishing to work with gateway communities and tourism offices can consult the website for best practices and creative solutions. For instance, the "In the Spotlight" section on the front page of the Learning Landscapes website currently highlights collaborative efforts to foster sustainable travel and tourism in the Greater Yellowstone region.

Community support for the work of this initiative, as reflected in awards, community boards and committees

The series of "MapGuides" represent the ultimate example of community support for the Geotourism initiative. Community members at all levels work together to select those features that truly make their locations special.

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