



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

A Critical Call to Restore Our Public Lands

November 2024





Pacific Crest National
Scenic Trail in California

SUGGESTED CITATION:

Bureau of Land Management. 2024. A Critical Call to Restore Our Public Lands.
U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Washington, DC.

DISCLAIMER:

The mention of company names, trade names, or commercial products does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use by the Federal Government.

PRODUCTION SERVICES PROVIDED BY:

Bureau of Land Management
National Operations Center Information and Publishing Services Section
P.O. Box 25047
Denver, CO 80225

Cover photo: Deschutes Wild and Scenic River in Oregon

CONTENTS

The Call.....ii

Face the Restoration Challenge.....2

The Largest Land Manager in the United States.....4

 Trace the Legacy.....4

 Modern Developments.....6

 Current Challenges and the Path Forward.....7

Restoration Goals on Public Lands.....8

 1. Ensure Clean Water.....8

 2. Protect Communities from Wildfire.....10

 3. Promote Productive Rangelands.....11

 4. Provide Healthy Fish and Wildlife Habitat.....13

 5. Deliver Exceptional and Unique Outdoor Recreational Experiences.....14

Advance Restoration in the BLM.....16

 Enhance Restoration Partnerships.....17

 Expand the Use of Native Seeds.....18

 Focus Restoration Investments.....19

 Better Integrate Restoration Programs.....20

Next Steps.....21

Sources.....22



San Luis Valley in Colorado

THE CALL

Public lands have long shaped the American experience. They serve as tangible expressions of the nation's values, ambitions, and collective identity.

In 1893, standing atop Pikes Peak in the Front Range of Colorado, Katharine Lee Bates began to compose a poem to encapsulate the breathtaking scenery before her. "America the Beautiful" celebrates the rich and diverse bounty of the country, positioning these qualities as essential to the identity of its people. Embodying a spirit of gratitude and hope, the poem is one of the nation's most cherished anthems. It highlights the profound connection between the American people and their land, one that fosters a deep sense of appreciation and stewardship.

Today, this bond remains as vital and impactful as it was in Bates' time.

Managed for and on behalf of the American people, public lands continue to help define the country and shape its future. Public lands provide essential services, such as food and fiber, clean drinking water, recreational and cultural opportunities, habitat for fish and wildlife, and forage and timber.

As important as these lands are to the country's past and future, they have long been impacted by a legacy of use and are currently experiencing rapid and significant ecological change.

Today, the American experience in Colorado's Front Range—and across the American West—is markedly different. Increased rates of extreme events, from wildfires, droughts, floods, heatwaves, and

invasions of nonnative plants and animals, have battered and degraded western landscapes. Clear summer days are often obscured by smoke. Rivers and streams, when incised and dry, no longer nourish fish, agriculture, and communities. Picturesque landscapes that have long helped define the American legacy, when overwhelmed by wildfire, no longer sustain nature, recreation, and industry.

The health of America's public lands is central to the health of the American people across the country—in big cities and small towns alike. The need for large-scale restoration has never been more clear or imperative. Without ecological restoration, many western landscapes are limited in their capacity to provide what the American people need and expect.

In response to this critical need, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)—the largest land manager in the country—is launching this restoration blueprint to build upon and increase the scale and efficacy of its efforts to restore public lands. The success of the BLM's existing efforts to restore degraded lands and protect those at risk instills hope that broadscale change is possible through strategic investment, focus, and partnership.

Through restoration, we can rejuvenate our public lands and ensure they continue to provide the beauty, resources, and experiences vital to American culture and prosperity for current and future generations to come. The long-term success of this blueprint hinges on the collaboration of partners who understand the critical importance of healthy public lands for the future of the country, and who will join the BLM in taking up this call.





Sacramento River in California

FACE THE RESTORATION CHALLENGE

The BLM has a vital responsibility to manage public lands for multiple uses while safeguarding natural, historical, and cultural resources. However, millions of acres of these lands are currently degraded or facing significant risks, hampering the BLM's ability to effectively fulfill its mission. To address this challenge, ecological restoration must be a central feature of the BLM's management portfolio today, and for decades to come.

Given the substantial and increasing ecological challenges facing public lands, significant investment is necessary to ensure these lands continue to meet the needs and expectations of the American people. Currently, approximately 12% of the BLM's [budget](#) is allocated across 10 national programs to on-the-ground restoration, excluding administrative and personnel costs.



Recent investments from Congress have provided much-needed support to increase the amount of restoration work the BLM delivers. The BLM prioritized and concentrated these supplemental funds into multiyear restoration investments with partners. This strategic approach demonstrates the benefits of restored public lands to people and nature when restoration actions are long-term commitments deployed through partnerships at meaningful scales.

Further restoration investment by the BLM will continue this general approach of supporting long-term commitments in prioritized areas. To support these efforts, leases can be issued, offering permittees and partners avenues to invest in and restore public lands or to offset impacts of a particular action.

This blueprint supports enhancing quality of life for communities and restoring healthy lands and waters. To do so, the

blueprint focuses the BLM's restoration funding on the following goals:

1. Ensure Clean Water
2. Protect Communities from Wildfire
3. Promote Productive Rangelands
4. Provide Healthy Fish and Wildlife Habitat
5. Deliver Exceptional and Unique Outdoor Recreational Experiences

This blueprint also introduces the BLM's approach to advance restoration, better ensuring the efficacy of restoration actions in maintaining and improving the services public lands provide.



Aftermath of the Mullen Fire, which went through Wyoming and Colorado

THE LARGEST LAND MANAGER IN THE UNITED STATES

The BLM manages more surface land—approximately 245 million acres or

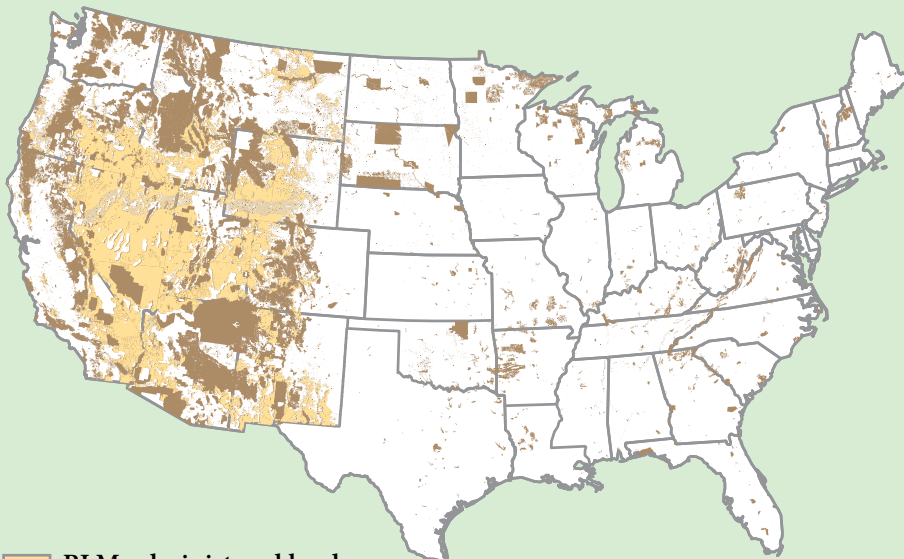
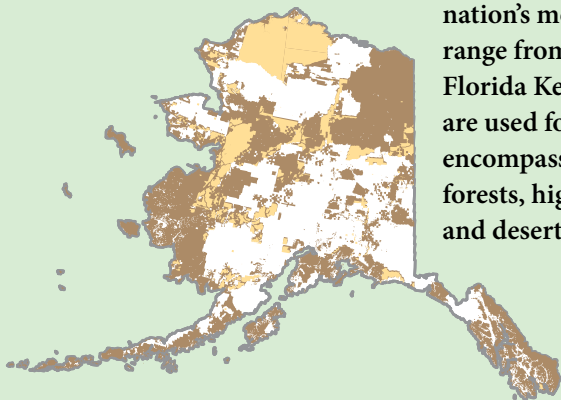
1 out of every 10 acres in America—



and more subsurface mineral estate—approximately 700 million acres—than any land steward in the country. The majority of these lands are in the American West,

including Alaska. In managing this immense landmass, the BLM permits public use of the land, such as energy development, grazing, mineral extraction, recreation, and conservation, while ensuring public lands are sustained for current and future generations.

YOUR PUBLIC LANDS

The public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management are owned by all Americans and contain some of the nation's most spectacular landscapes that range from Alaska's North Slope to the Florida Keys. America's public lands are used for a variety of purposes and encompass large expanses of rangelands, forests, high mountains, arctic tundra, and deserts.



-  BLM-administered land
-  BLM-administered subsurface minerals



Trace the Legacy

The BLM's origins trace back more than 200 years and are closely tied with America's western expansion. For Indigenous Peoples who have inhabited lands now managed by the BLM since time immemorial, western expansion is closely intertwined with their separation, both physically and culturally, from their ancestral homelands.

To facilitate western expansion, the General Land Office, a precursor to the BLM, was established in 1812 to oversee the disposition of millions of acres of



Two photos to the left: BLM staff members measure and examine native and nonnative grass growth in the 1960s

Below: Cadastral survey crew in New Mexico in 1967



land. In doing so, the General Land Office largely promoted transportation, resource extraction, and homesteading to power economic growth. Land grants for wagon roads were approved, establishing processes that would later be used extensively for transcontinental railways. Rivers and streams were channeled and dammed for irrigation and power. Reserves for timber and minerals were established ushering in new industries in forestry and mining. The Homestead Act of 1862 opened the floodgate for settlement in the West.

In the early 20th century, after many decades of unregulated use, Theodore Roosevelt, among many others, popularized the idea that natural resources have intrinsic value beyond extraction and needed to be conserved for future generations. This era saw the establishment of hundreds of national forests, parks, monuments, and reserves.

At the same time, unregulated agricultural practices that sought to maximize economic outputs produced drastic booms and busts that ultimately led to the Dust Bowl. In response, Congress authorized

the first grazing district on public lands in 1928 where an association of ranchers in Montana leased lands and instituted conservative grazing practices. The idea spread, and ranchers from across the West petitioned for similar grazing reserves. To support these efforts, all vacant public lands in the West were withdrawn from entry for anything other than mineral use, so that grazing districts could be set aside, and the remaining public lands classified for their best use. In 1934, the U.S. Grazing Service was established, and in 1946, it was merged with the General Land Office to form the BLM.

Modern Developments

New laws passed by Congress in the 1960s and 1970s brought transformative change to the BLM. Among these, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 defined the BLM's mission, directing the agency to carry out the dual mandate of managing public lands for multiple use and sustained yield while conserving natural, historical, and cultural resources for current and future generations.

The BLM's movement toward fulfilling both aspects of its mission advanced in the 1990s and 2000s as it worked to provide more comprehensive and sustainable solutions. For example, recognizing the compatibility of sustainable ranching and range management, the BLM established environmental standards and guidelines for grazing on public lands.

As new technologies and scientific advancements revealed the broadscale changes affecting land health, particularly from wildfire, the significance of native plant communities became essential to the BLM mission. In response to critical shortages of native seed following extensive wildfires in 1999 and 2000, Congress directed the establishment of a program to develop native plant materials (i.e., seeds and young plants), and in the early 2000s, the BLM created a regional seed warehouse to primarily provide seeds for post-wildfire restoration in the Great Basin.

In 2007, the BLM initiated the Healthy Lands Initiative, an early effort designed to implement restoration practices to achieve

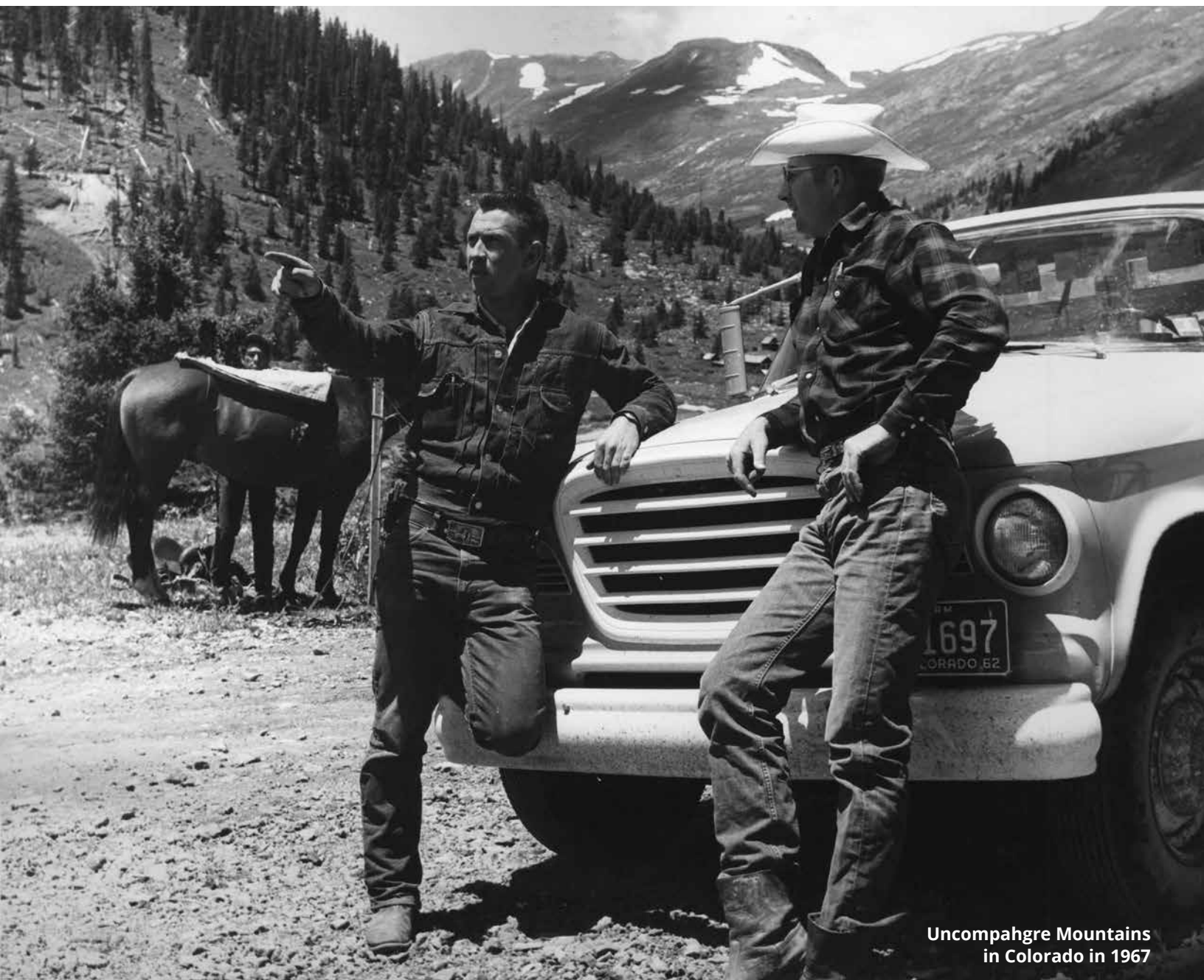
broadscale improvement in land health in prioritized areas. The effort was supported by the release of the 2008 Integrated Vegetation Management Handbook, which aimed to unify the BLM's programs towards common management goals.

In 2009, Congress established the National Landscape Conservation System, commonly called National Conservation Lands, to "conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations."

Built on this history, the BLM has been working to address drought, invasive plants, and catastrophic wildfires.



**William Townsend, range conservationist
in Cañon City, Colorado, in 1958**



Uncompahgre Mountains
in Colorado in 1967

Current Challenges and the Path Forward

The public lands managed by the BLM are a testament to two centuries of western lands powering the nation's growth. Today, new, serious, and compounding challenges have emerged. Severe wildfires, prolonged drought, catastrophic flooding,

heatwaves, the proliferation of invasive species, and increasing demands for extractive and recreational uses make the need for ecological restoration increasingly apparent and necessary. These impacts are changing the way of life in the American

West. This restoration blueprint aims to enhance the scale and efficacy of the BLM's restoration actions to ensure these lands continue to meet the needs and expectations of the American people, both now and for future generations.

RESTORATION GOALS ON PUBLIC LANDS

Healthy public lands play a significant role in maintaining the livelihoods and lifestyles of the American West, furthering the prosperity of the country. To ensure public lands sustain this prosperity into the future, this blueprint focuses BLM restoration actions to deliver important services to people and nature.

- An estimated 1 in 10 Americans in the West receives drinking water from BLM-managed rivers and streams.
- The BLM manages more than 250,000 miles of rivers and streams, marking significant potential for restoration actions along this extensive riparian system.
- More than 80% of western wildlife species depend on rivers and streams at some point in their life cycle.
- In 2021, 70% of BLM-managed lands in the continental United States were stricken by severe or extreme drought.

1. Ensure Clean Water

As steward of more than 250,000 miles of rivers and streams, the BLM plays an essential role in ensuring a clean water supply for people and wildlife. However, these water sources are increasingly threatened, impacting water quantity, quality, timing, and distribution. In many western watersheds, rising temperatures and altered precipitation patterns are leading to reduced winter snowpacks and earlier spring runoff, resulting in diminished surface and groundwater availability during late summer and early fall months.

The consequences of these environmental changes are profound. Communities face jeopardized drinking water supplies, declining fish populations, impacts on agricultural and livestock operations,

disrupted recreational activities, compromised power generation, and an increased risk of wildfire—all stemming from reduced water availability. The Colorado River Basin, a vital resource for 40 million people across seven western U.S. states, 30 Tribal nations, and northern Mexico, exemplifies this crisis. The basin is currently facing its 22nd consecutive year of drought, marking the driest conditions in over a century. This prolonged drought severely affects the waterways that provide irrigation for approximately 90% of the winter vegetables consumed nationwide, highlighting the importance of these water sources for national food security.

When they are healthy, western rivers and streams meander across expansive floodplains, which act like sponges,



A recreational segment of the Colorado River in Utah

retaining and slowly releasing water throughout the summer. These floodplains also serve as natural firebreaks, provide important wildlife habitat, and blunt downstream flooding during heavy storms. BLM-managed rivers and streams also create pockets and pools of cold water that influence the survival of culturally and economically important fisheries, such as salmon, steelhead, and trout. These cold water refugia are found across diverse landscapes, from the sagebrush deserts of the Great Basin, to sweeping vistas of Wyoming, to more than 70 million acres of legendary fish habitat in Alaska.

To manage these incredible resources, the BLM is turning to nature—the planet’s

best engineer. Nature-based solutions offer cost-effective approaches, such as projects that mimic wood structures traditionally built by beavers. These efforts connect rivers to their floodplains as nature intended, improving fish habitat and increasing water quality and storage.

By collaborating with partners and strategically focusing resources,

the BLM aims to restore more than 500 miles and 20,000 acres of BLM-managed rivers and streams by 2030.

New large-scale national partnerships—such as those with The Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited—are designed to leverage the BLM’s capacity

to restore aquatic systems. By focusing investments in restoration landscapes, habitat improvements are happening across entire watersheds rather than in small, isolated areas.

To facilitate this work, the BLM is actively engaged in a [consortium](#) that connects researchers, practitioners, and partners. A recent collaboration with Utah State University has developed tools to prioritize, implement, and monitor restoration actions in rivers and streams. This approach enables the BLM to identify river and stream segments that will benefit most from restoration efforts and that are most likely to succeed, ensuring effective use of taxpayer dollars.



THE HEART OF THE HUMBOLDT

Nestled in the arid landscapes of northeastern Nevada, Maggie Creek—a tributary of the Humboldt River—serves as a vibrant lifeline for people and nature. Forty miles from Elko, this vibrant waterway has resulted from an inspiring journey of partnership and investment that spans nearly three decades.

The BLM Elko District, in collaboration with Maggie Creek Ranch and a host of dedicated partners, embarked on a mission to revive the creek, helping to return the iconic Lahontan cutthroat trout to historic spawning grounds. What began as mitigation to gold mining impacts, the restoration effort evolved into a dynamic partnership that fundamentally revitalized this watershed to the

benefit of people and nature. Through innovative strategies—including targeted seeding, careful management of livestock grazing, and introduction of fish passage structures—the changes at Maggie Creek are remarkable. Nevada is getting drier, but Maggie Creek is getting wetter.

The story of Maggie Creek is one of resilience and cooperation, showcasing how dedicated partnerships can transform landscapes and restore resilience to natural systems. These efforts offer a hopeful framework for future aquatic restoration projects across the West.



Maggie Creek in Nevada





Carr Fire in California in 2018

- More than 80 million acres of BLM-managed public lands require fuel reduction treatments to lessen the risk of catastrophic wildfire.
- About 38% of BLM-managed public lands in the lower 48 states are in the wildland urban interface.
- The BLM manages 72% of all Department of the Interior lands that have a high or very high risk of wildfire.

2. Protect Communities from Wildfire

Over the past three decades, the number and severity of wildfires in the country has surged dramatically.

From 1984 to 2020, burned areas in the U.S. increased fivefold.

This alarming trend is driven by an unnatural buildup of fuels resulting from a history of aggressive wildfire suppression and a proliferation of invasive species which speed up the frequency of wildfire. Compounded by increased temperatures and prolonged drought conditions, what used to be a summer fire season has now transformed into a year-round threat, placing unprecedented pressure on BLM land managers and firefighters.

The urgency of this crisis is most acutely felt in the wildland urban interface, where wildfire-prone landscapes meet human communities. Nearly 40% of BLM-managed public lands in the contiguous

United States lie within these vulnerable zones, making the stakes higher than ever.

In densely populated southern California, the BLM actively safeguards at-risk communities through targeted fuels management treatments and public education. In 2022, the Border 32 wildfire served as a stark reminder of this threat. This wildfire in San Diego County resulted in fatalities, extensive property damage, and thousands of acres scorched. However, without proactive measures taken by the BLM, local governments, and residents, the impact could have been far worse.

The Border 32 wildfire occurred within the Southern Border Fuels Management Initiative, a collaborative effort led by the BLM alongside the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County, the San Diego County Fire Authority, and local residents. In anticipation of potential wildfires, the BLM implemented vegetation projects to reduce

fuel buildup, provide safe evacuation routes, protect homes, and guide wildfires away from Kuchamaa Mountain, an area culturally significant to Tribes. To complement fuels management efforts, the initiative also offered workshops and training to educate residents on hardening homes, vegetation clearance, and other practices.

For the BLM, the challenge is no longer only a question of where lands will burn, but also when—and how to effectively mitigate impacts before and after a wildfire. The BLM stands at the forefront of this effort, committed to protecting communities, reducing wildfire risks, and recovering scorched landscapes. By combining fuels management with community engagement, the BLM is aggressively working to minimize the risk and impact of wildfires in changing western landscapes.

SEEDS OF RECOVERY

The incidence and severity of wildfires are escalating, with an average of 1.5 million acres of BLM-managed public lands burning each year between 2017 and 2023. In response to these wildfires, the BLM uses seed to restore vegetation, stabilize soils, and support natural recovery efforts.

If 60% of burned acres require seeding, an estimated **10.8 million pounds of native seed would be needed annually to effectively address the impacts of wildfire on these public lands.** To put that in perspective, this amount of seed could fill nearly three Olympic-sized swimming pools. Unfortunately, this demand far exceeds (1) commercially available native seed, (2) the BLM's current budget for seed purchases, and (3) the BLM's climate-controlled seed storage capacity.

Currently, the BLM purchases on average **2.2 million pounds of seed** each year, which includes both native and nonnative varieties, at an average annual cost of approximately \$19 million. Although additional funding increased storage capacity at the BLM's National Seed Warehouse to an estimated **3.7 million pounds of seed**, this enhancement is only a short-term solution and still falls significantly short of the growing demand.

3. Promote Productive Rangelands

The cowboy spirit and vast expanses of open country are powerful symbols of American culture. That enduring spirit and tradition are alive today on public lands, where generational family businesses steward the land to produce food that helps feed the country. Spanning from the Canadian border to the desert Southwest, BLM-managed rangelands are vital working lands. These grasslands and shrublands, including sagebrush, not only provide essential feed and water to livestock but also support iconic wildlife, offer unique recreation opportunities, and bolster local economies.

However, rangelands face significant challenges, including devastating wildfires and widespread drought. The primary threat arises from invasion of nonnative species which disrupt the generation of new plant life essential to the people and wildlife that live here.

Long-term monitoring of BLM-managed rangelands has revealed alarming levels of native plant displacement by invasive annual grasses, such as cheatgrass and medusahead. The invasion is rapidly spreading across the West. Even a 1% presence of these nonnative grasses in an otherwise healthy landscape can dramatically increase wildfire frequency. A burned landscape, in turn, allows for more invasive grasses which outcompete slower-growing native plants, which then fuel more wildfire. This vicious cycle transforms diverse, healthy landscapes into highly flammable grass monocultures that are bad for wildlife and livestock.

Yet, despite these challenges, collaborative efforts by the BLM and its partners provide hope. Since fiscal year 2021, the BLM has actively removed invasive species on at least 1.6 million acres of public lands. By implementing land health standards and

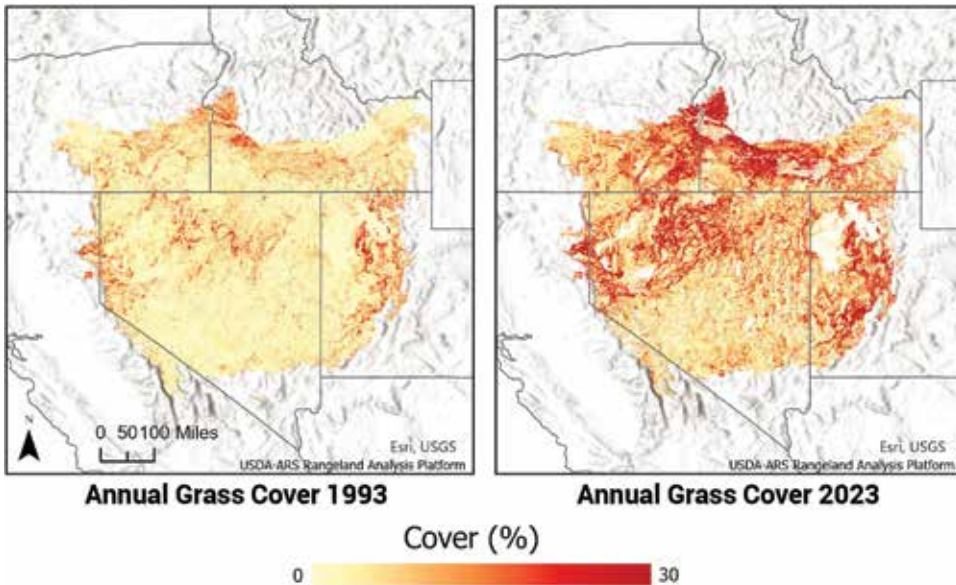


Reseeding effort after the Soda Fire in Idaho

Rancher on BLM-managed lands in Colorado

working closely with ranchers to adopt sound range management practices—such as resting grazing allotments and timing grazing to favor native plant growth—the BLM can help reduce the spread of invasive grasses. Recently, the BLM has piloted efforts to grant ranchers greater flexibility,

encouraging innovation in how and when they use public lands for livestock grazing. This approach not only helps strengthen ranching operations, it also enhances the BLM’s efforts to sustainably manage these crucial landscapes during a time of increasing change for America’s rangelands.



- Nearly 90 million acres—more than half of BLM-managed rangelands—have at least 1% cover of invasive species, which increases the frequency of wildfire events.
- More than 34% of grazing allotments on BLM-managed public lands are considered unhealthy (i.e., moderately to severely) largely due to the wildfire-invasive cycle.

SAGEBRUSH SYNERGY

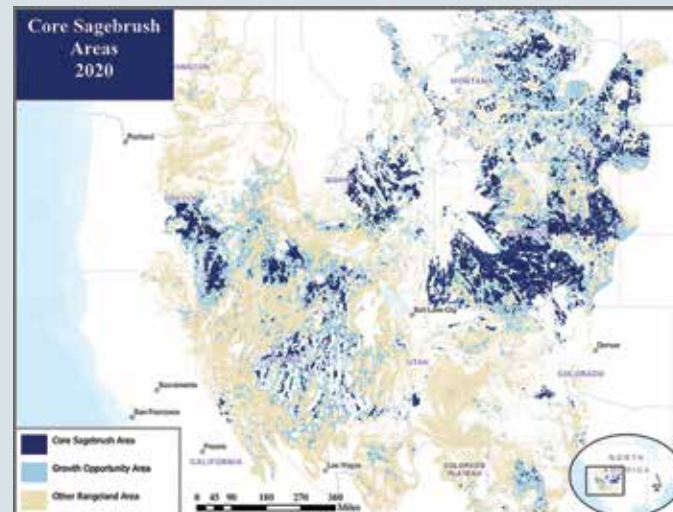
Sagebrush rangelands are the largest contiguous ecosystem in the continental United States, covering roughly one-third of the lower 48 states. This iconic landscape, however, is rapidly disappearing. A 2022 [report](#) from the U.S. Geological Survey revealed that approximately 1.3 million acres of sagebrush have been lost or degraded each year over the past two decades, primarily due to the vicious cycle of invasive grasses and wildfire.

In response to this pressing challenge, the BLM has partnered with organizations like the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to help develop the [sagebrush conservation design](#). This rangewide tool includes mapped areas of remaining healthy sagebrush, referred to as “cores,” alongside the lands best suited to expand and connect

ecosystems, known as “growth opportunity areas.” Notably, the BLM manages half of all remaining cores and nearly half of all growth opportunity areas.

The BLM is actively embracing a “defend and grow the core” strategy, collaborating with partners to identify collective priority areas for restoration. By using a shared strategic framework, field staff from various federal, state, and Tribal agencies, along with national partners and local collaboratives, are synchronizing their efforts. The BLM is actively investing in these prioritized areas through congressionally appropriated funding for sage-grouse conservation and fuels

reduction. This coordinated approach ensures that the collective investment far exceeds the sum of its parts. Together, the BLM and its partners are optimizing their impact, providing the best opportunity to conserve these vital sagebrush rangelands.





Near Upper Kanab Creek in Utah

4. Provide Healthy Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Healthy fish and wildlife habitat is a cornerstone of the BLM's multiple-use management. With other federal, state, and Tribal management agencies, the BLM manages habitat for more than 3,000 species, including threatened and endangered species, across some of the nation's most ecologically diverse and unique landscapes.

Public lands provide the space and bounty for nature to thrive. Fish and wildlife habitat provides hunting and fishing opportunities, subsistence and gathering activities, and recreational wildlife viewing. The health of fish and wildlife serves as a key indicator of the overall condition of our lands and waters. Habitat restoration

efforts by the BLM and its partners help maintain the broader ecological integrity of our natural world.

To address the diverse threats facing fish and wildlife habitat, the BLM implements targeted restoration and stewardship actions. Restoring wetlands in sagebrush steppe can significantly boost the survival rates of sage-grouse chicks. Removing aquatic barriers in rivers and streams opens vital spawning and rearing habitats for migrating salmon, steelhead, and trout. Proper design and maintenance of trails, roads, and other infrastructure reduces habitat fragmentation and disturbance to sensitive species.

With vast expanses of public lands, the BLM conserves habitat at scales that make a lasting difference. For example, collaborative efforts with western states are improving big game habitat in winter ranges and migration corridors. Since 2018, these efforts have improved habitat in more than 3 million acres, including 1 million acres in state-identified migration corridors. Through continued collaborations with organizations like the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#), the BLM works to safeguard habitat for some of the largest and most important ungulate populations in North America.

SALMON AT THE CROSSROADS

Since time immemorial, runs of Pacific salmon have profoundly shaped ecosystems, cultures, communities, and local economies. For many Indigenous peoples, salmon is more than a resource; it is a cornerstone of identity, a way of life, and the prime source of food sovereignty. Anadromous fish migration is a natural wonder as salmon and steelhead populations return from the ocean to travel up rivers and streams to the same places each year, going as far inland as Idaho and previously as far as northern Nevada. While the BLM works on fisheries habitats across the range of all Pacific salmon species, Alaska represents a unique focus with a diversity of critical partnerships. Alarming declines in Pacific salmon populations have led to closures in subsistence fishing, leaving empty smokehouses and disrupting traditions of those who have depended on these fish for more than 10,000 years.

One threat to salmon populations stems from the structural changes to rivers and streams in interior Alaska caused by historic placer mining. Prior to regulations, placer mining inflicted lasting damage by eroding

streambanks, disconnecting floodplains, removing native vegetation, and widening stream channels—all detrimental to the health of salmon and other aquatic species. In response, the BLM is actively collaborating with Tribes, state and local governments, and partner organizations to mitigate these legacy impacts and restore vital aquatic habitats.

For the past decade, the BLM launched several abandoned mine land restoration projects aimed at piloting and refining effective restoration techniques, including along Nome Creek in the White Mountains National Recreation Area. The efforts have restored important aquatic habitat and prevented heavy metals from leaching into waterways, and they have also laid the groundwork for a BLM technical assistance program that partners with today's mining industry to enhance the rehabilitation of habitat when mining finishes. Working in this way, the BLM is both rectifying mistakes of the past while providing the tools needed to foster a more sustainable future.



5. Deliver Exceptional and Unique Outdoor Recreational Experiences

Outdoor recreation on public lands offers invaluable benefits to our nation and awe-inspiring experiences to the millions of visitors it draws every year. For outdoor enthusiasts, these unique experiences

- Outdoor recreation on BLM-managed public lands has increased 40% since 2012, booming to more than 80 million visits in 2023.
- In FY 2022, visitor spending associated with recreation on BLM-managed public lands supported 73,000 jobs and \$11.1 billion in economic output.



promote physical and mental well-being. For local communities, public lands act as powerful economic engines, driving tourism, creating jobs, and boosting property values. Cherished “[lands to love](#)” deliver exceptional experiences that strengthen community bonds and inspire stewardship of natural resources. Nowhere is that more evident than on National Conservation Lands—15% of BLM-managed public lands—and home to some of America’s most spectacular landscapes, including national monuments, national conservation areas, national scenic and historic trails, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness areas.

As more people seek the outdoors, visitation to public lands is surging. The health and accessibility of these lands is a significant factor that draws visitors. By contrast, wildfire-charred landscapes are less visited. Scenes of trash and misuse sully the user experience. Investments in restoration are vital to ensure trails, campgrounds, and visitor centers remain inviting, accessible, and valued.

To tackle these challenges, the BLM’s “[Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation](#)” aims to enhance the management of resilient recreation on

public lands. This strategy prioritizes outdoor recreation across the entire BLM and actively engages stakeholders to ensure a sustainable future for outdoor experiences.

By focusing restoration on improving key recreational experiences, the BLM not only enhances the health of public lands but also strengthens the bond of stewardship between the nation and its treasured landscapes. This commitment to restoration ensures that present and future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy the unique and rewarding recreational opportunities that public lands provide.

RED ROCK RESILIENCE

In the predawn hours, nestled among the sandstone canyons just north of St. George, Utah, the breathtaking Red Cliffs National Conservation Area awaits those eager to visit its dramatic red rock formations. At the confluence of the Great Basin, Mojave Desert, and Colorado Plateau, this remarkable public landscape serves as both playground and sanctuary.

Once a quiet stopover for travelers, St. George has transformed into one of America’s fastest-

growing cities. This rapid growth is reflected in the rising number of visitors to Red Cliffs, with visitation skyrocketing from 130,000 in 2013 to more than 600,000 a decade later.

Amidst this influx, a diverse array of partners, volunteers, students, and professionals comes together to ensure Red Cliffs is prepared for new adventurers while safeguarding its delicate canyons and sensitive plants and wildlife, including desert tortoises. In 2023, after visitors inadvertently created a braided

network of social trails on steep, sandy slopes, crews from the American Conservation Experience collaborated with BLM staff to restore the area and define a single trail. Local volunteers from the Outback Hiking Club planted more than 400 nursery-grown native species along the trail to restore the area and discourage off-trail hiking.

This collaborative spirit exemplifies the BLM’s path toward managing resilient recreation of public lands.

ADVANCE RESTORATION IN THE BLM

To effectively implement restoration as outlined in this blueprint, the BLM is reimagining its approach to deploying restoration across all of its programs, aiming to enhance both the scale and effectiveness of its efforts.

The BLM is rising to the challenge of restoring public lands by (1) enhancing

restoration partnerships, (2) expanding the use of native seeds (3) focusing restoration investments and (4) better integrating restoration programs.

It is through partnership and focus on restoring public lands that the BLM can ensure sustained yield for future generations.



Seed collection in the Lander Field Office in Wyoming



FOUNDATION FOR AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS

As the official charitable partner of the BLM, the Foundation for America's Public Lands plays a vital role as a convener, collaborator, and fundraising catalyst. The foundation works with the BLM to help ensure the health and sustainability of America's public lands today and for future generations.

Enabled by congressional charter in 2017, the foundation works closely with the BLM, local communities, and partners to bolster support for public lands, including through restoration. The BLM and the foundation share a vision of ensuring the long-term health and sustainability of public lands through partnership. The foundation's work will bridge gaps in BLM capacity, engage private funders and corporations, and provide essential resources to communities and organizations to better enable partnership with the BLM. Early investment by the foundation includes efforts to address drought in the Colorado River Basin, demonstrating how restoration of public lands works to deliver important services to people and nature.



Rimrock Historic and
Recreational Area in Wyoming

Enhance Restoration Partnerships

Success of this blueprint relies on the BLM's long history of partnerships and cultivating new relationships with federal agencies, states, Tribes, communities, organizations, permittees, and private enterprises.

Conservation organizations, including hunting and fishing organizations, are particularly invested and remain important in getting restoration projects implemented on the ground and ensuring they meet community needs. These nongovernmental partners contribute significantly across all phases of the restoration process: designing projects, navigating permitting and contracting processes, monitoring effectiveness, and coordinating multiple restoration projects across landscapes and jurisdictions to amplify benefits. Work with the Intermountain West Joint Venture illustrates the value of thoughtful

partnership. Restoration coordinators and partner biologists coordinated by Joint Venture work alongside BLM field staff, supporting not only project implementation, but also serving as important local ambassadors helping to ensure BLM efforts are designed to support community goals and wellbeing.

Although the BLM oversees vast public lands, the majority of fish and wildlife species are managed by state and Tribal agencies. To further strengthen these critical partnerships, the BLM will invest in efforts to expand use of agreements through good neighbor authority, which allows states, Tribes, and communities to implement work on BLM-managed public lands.

Originating from trust responsibilities and government-to-government consultation requirements, the BLM's relationship

with Tribes extends beyond traditional partnership. The BLM is working to ensure Tribal input, including Indigenous Knowledge, is broadly incorporated into land management decisions, including restoration actions.

The BLM's work with permittees adds another essential layer of partnership. Multigenerational ranching families, for example, hold a stewardship ethic to the land and have a vested interest in sustainable land use to ensure future productivity. Decades of collaboration with ranching communities to achieve land health standards and invest in restoration actions to improve rangelands have fostered landscapes where both people and nature thrive.

Expand the Use of Native Seeds

Harnessing the power of natural features is one of the most effective ways to restore public lands. These types of nature-based solutions include efforts to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire through controlled burns or use of wood or rock structures to restore the natural pathways of rivers and streams. In many nature-based solutions, native plants do the heavy lifting. They control erosion, provide windbreaks, and

filter water, all while supporting wildlife populations and sustaining critical industries like recreation, ranching, and forestry.

To maintain the essential services that native plants provide, restoration efforts must prioritize the procurement and use of native seeds. In 2015, the [Plant Conservation Alliance](#) launched the “[National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration](#),”

emphasizing the importance of locally adapted native seeds to ensure use of “the right seed, in the right place, at the right time.” Despite substantial progress, the BLM continues to face persistent shortages of native seeds necessary for effective restoration. To tackle this challenge, the BLM is committed to building a more reliable and robust native seed supply chain. To do so, the BLM aims to:

- **Enhance collaboration with Tribes:** Work with Tribes to inform restoration practices.
- **Expand the National Seed Warehouse System:** Increase the capacity to procure, store, and process native seeds.
- **Establish the Seeds of Success seed bank:** Create an interagency facility to manage wildland seed collections and collaborate with the agricultural community and seed suppliers to scale up the production of native seeds to meet restoration needs.
- **Support the National Interagency Seed and Restoration Center:** The center, housed under the Department of the Interior, will serve as a scientific and logistical hub for national restoration and seed needs.
- **Invest in specialized staff:** Hire experts in botany, ecology, seed science, rangeland management, forestry, and hydrology to ensure effective implementation of nature-based solutions across the BLM.



Volunteers collect seeds at Welch Ranch in Wyoming



Old beaver pond in Wyoming

Focus Restoration Investments

The vastness of BLM-managed public lands, combined with significant changes they are undergoing and limited funding resources, presents challenges for effective restoration. To make the most of available resources, the BLM must prioritize restoration initiatives and commit to long-term planning.

Successful restoration often requires a series of coordinated treatments—such as soil stabilization, native seeding, herbicide

application, and fence repairs—spread over several growing seasons. Yet, BLM field offices frequently lack the sustained funding necessary to commit to long-term efforts. As a result, restoration project selection can become reactive, driven by immediate local needs or the availability of shovel-ready projects, rather than informed by strategic, long-term planning.

To change this approach, the BLM must commit to long-term restoration goals

in prioritized areas and align its limited funding across multiple programs.

Under this blueprint, the BLM will continue the work of identifying priority restoration landscapes in order to develop clear restoration goals and objectives.

Better Integrate Restoration Programs

Public lands managed by the BLM often face complex and interconnected challenges. In response, the BLM must often deploy a diverse range of treatments and management actions. The structure of the BLM's restoration enterprise, however, poses challenges to delivering such a cohesive, multifaceted approach.

For example, while Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation Programs focus on post-wildfire recovery, these investments can conclude without transitioning into long-term restoration efforts. Interruptions in

this process can significantly impede the ability of wildfire-affected areas to return to natural functioning systems.

To overcome similar challenges, the BLM is committed to aligning its various restoration programs under a shared vision aimed at achieving long-term goals. By integrating these diverse programs, land managers can more effectively sequence the right projects in the right places at the right times, leveraging different funding opportunities over the long term. Under this blueprint, the BLM aims to:

- **Build the necessary teams:** Promote continued use of field-based restoration coordinators and interdisciplinary teams to collaboratively identify, plan, fund, coordinate, and implement restoration projects.
- **Standardize direction and policies:** Establish consistent cross-program direction for restoration planning, implementation, performance standards, monitoring, and reporting to ensure that actions are complementary and effectively integrated.
- **Integrate data management systems:** Develop a unified data management system to house consistent information across all national-level restoration programs.
- **Crosstrain staff:** Provide training to enhance staff knowledge and skills, improving their ability to plan, coordinate, and implement restoration actions consistently, effectively, and at the scale necessary to meet the challenge.



Volunteers plant sagebrush



NEXT STEPS

The BLM is resolutely committed to addressing this urgent need with optimism and determination.

This blueprint arrives at a pivotal moment for our cherished public lands. By enhancing the health of BLM-managed public lands and their capacity to provide essential services, we continue to support the prosperity of the county and preserve the lifestyles and livelihoods that define our western heritage.

We face significant challenges. Wildfires, droughts, floods, heatwaves, and invasive species are collectively reshaping our public lands. Areas rich in history and human connection are under new pressures from increased demands for recreation, minerals, and energy. The call for robust restoration investment is

louder than ever to ensure the values and services of public lands are not irreversibly lost.

In response, the BLM is poised to strengthen existing partnerships and cultivate new ones, harness the power of native seeds, and ensure restoration investments are targeted and effective across all programs. With a focus on sustainability and inclusivity, the BLM will collaborate with partners to implement this blueprint through thoughtful policy, budget, and program decisions.

The success of this work hinges on collective action and shared vision. By coming together, we can foster healthy and resilient public lands for the benefit of the American people today and for generations to come.

SOURCES

- Allred, B.W., et al. 2021. Improving Landsat predictions of rangeland fractional cover with multitask learning and uncertainty. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* 12 (5): 841–849.
- American Forests and Bureau of Land Management. 2021. Camp Fire Reforestation Plan: A Climate-Informed Restoration and Regeneration Plan for the Bureau of Land Management in Butte County, Calif. https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2021-09/BLM_CampPlan.pdf.
- Bureau of Land Management. 2017. Our Heritage, Our Future: The BLM and America's Public Lands. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Office of Communications, Washington DC.
- Bureau of Land Management. 2023. The Bureau of Land Management's Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Division of Recreation and Visitor Services, Washington, DC.
- Bureau of Land Management. 2024a. BLM Fire: Fire Year 2024 Program Overview. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, National Interagency Fire Center, Boise, ID.
- Bureau of Land Management. 2024b. Public Land Statistics 2023. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, National Operations Center, Denver, CO.
- Bureau of Land Management. 2024c. National Terrestrial AIM Survey, unpublished data. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, National Operations Center, Denver, CO.
- Bureau of Land Management. 2024d. National Seed Warehouse System, unpublished data. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Boise, ID.
- Bureau of Land Management. 2024e. BLM, Foundation for America's Public Lands to address drought: Investing in America's funds to focus on Colorado River Basin. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Office of Communications, Washington DC.
- Bureau of Land Management. 2024f. Alaska Abandoned Mine Lands Program. Webpage. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. <https://www.blm.gov/programs/aml-environmental-cleanup/aml/state-information/alaska>.
- Bureau of Land Management. 2024g. The BLM: Valuing America's Public Lands 2023. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Washington, DC. <https://www.blm.gov/about/data/socioeconomic-impact-report>.
- Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Geological Survey. 2020. Idaho ESR Monitoring Report. J08B Soda – Boise District/Owyhee Field Office/Idaho. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Geological Survey, Boise District and Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center.
- Bureau of Reclamation. 2012. Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Washington DC.
- Crist, M.R. 2023. Rethinking the focus on forest fires in federal wildland fire management: Landscape patterns and trends of non-forest and forest burned areas. *Journal of Environmental Management* 327: 116718.
- Doherty, K., et al. 2022. A Sagebrush Conservation Design to Proactively Restore America's Sagebrush Biome. Open-File Report 2022–1081. U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, Reston, VA.
- Eisenberg, C. 2021. Seeds of Restoration Success: Fort Belknap Indian Community/BLM/SER Native Seed and Grassland Restoration Program. Society for Ecological Restoration, International Network for Seed-Based Restoration, Washington, DC.
- Gann, G.D., et al. 2019. International principles and standards for the practice of ecological restoration. Second edition. *Restoration Ecology* 27 (S1): S1–S46.
- Kleinhesselink, A.R., E.J. Kachergis, S.E. McCord, J. Shirley, N.R. Hupp, J. Walker, J.C. Carlson, S.L. Morford, M.O. Jones, J.T. Smith, B.W. Allred, and D.E. Naugle. 2023. Long-term trends in vegetation on Bureau of Land Management rangelands in the Western United States. *Rangeland Ecology & Management* 87: 1–12.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2023. An Assessment of Native Seed Needs and the Capacity for Their Supply: Final Report. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- National Interagency Coordination Center. 2023. Wildland Fire Summary and Statistics Annual Report 2023. National Interagency Fire Center, National Interagency Coordination Center, Boise, ID.
- Plant Conservation Alliance. 2015. National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration 2015–2020. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Washington, DC.
- Reyes-Velarde, A. 2019. California's Camp fire was the costliest global disaster last year, insurance report shows. *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 2019.
- Southwick Associates. 2018. Quantifying the Economic Contributions of Wildlife-Related Recreation on BLM Lands. Southwick Associates, Fernandina Beach, FL.
- Tryon, S. 2019. Long-Term Management Options for the Bureau of Land Management's Wild Horse and Burro Program. Testimony from the Deputy Assistant Director for Resources and Planning, Bureau of Land Management, to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining on July 16, 2019. <https://www.doi.gov/ocl/wild-horses-and-burros-0#:~:text=The%20BLM%20takes%20into%20account,HMAs%20are%20currently%20over%20AML>.
- U.S. Fire Administration. 2022. Wildland Urban Interface: A Look at Issues and Resolutions. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Fire Administration.
- U.S. Geological Survey. 2015. Drought in the Colorado River Basin: Insights using open data. Webpage. U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey. <https://labs.waterdata.usgs.gov/visualizations/OWDI-drought/en/index.html>.
- Wheaton J.M., S.N. Bennett, N. Bouwes, J.D. Maestas, and S.M. Shahverdian (eds). 2019. Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration of Riverscapes: Design Manual. Version 1.0. Utah State University Restoration Consortium, Logan, UT.
- White House Council on Environmental Quality, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. 2023. Nature-Based Solutions Resource Guide 2.0. Washington, DC.
- Yeend, W., P.H. Stauffer, and J.W. Hendley, II. 1998. Rivers of Gold—Placer Mining in Alaska. USGS Fact Sheet 058-98. U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, Washington DC.



Restoration work in the Worland Field Office in Wyoming

