



FUNDING THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 253 million acres – more land, and more wildlife and fish habitat, than any other federal agency. The agency is responsible for more than 3,000 species of fish and wildlife, more than 270 plants and animals listed under the Endangered Species Act or candidates for protection, and more than 800 rare plant species. The Wildlife and Fisheries Management and the Threatened and Endangered Species Management programs fund inventory and monitoring, habitat restoration, endangered species recovery, and other proactive conservation activities vital to maintaining healthy, functioning ecosystems and fish, wildlife, and plant populations.

BLM lands also play an important role for to those who seek outdoor recreation opportunities, and to the businesses that support those activities. Wildlife associated recreation is a significant factor in local economies, generating \$574 million from fishing, \$800 million from hunting, and \$2.8 billion from wildlife viewing on BLM lands annually.ⁱ

Unfortunately, these programs have been plagued by chronic inadequate funding and now are in danger of further damaging cuts in the coming years. Our difficult financial times *do* require tough decisions, but federal spending on all land, water, ocean, and wildlife programs already comprise *only* about 1 percent of the federal budget and programs that protect wildlife make up only a portion of this amount.

Congress must consider the impacts decisions being made in Washington D.C. will have on the wildlife and other natural resources upon which we all depend. Following are several examples of how cuts could impact BLM's ability to fulfill its mandate to manage wildlife habitat, affecting the future success of these and other critical efforts.

BLM and Endangered Species

Although BLM lands are home to many threatened and endangered species, currently, only half of the imperiled fish and wildlife species on BLM lands actually meet established population or habitat objectives. Additionally, BLM only has funding to implement about 10 percent of its obligations for recovery of listed plants and animals. Cuts of just 10 percent would reduce BLM's Threatened and Endangered Species Management Program's ability to restore or enhance 25,000 acres of habitat to conserve or recover ESA listed and sensitive wildlife species. Projects including vegetation treatment programs and construction of special habitat, water developments, wildlife-friendly fences, nesting platforms and erosion control structures would all be compromised. Species that could be affected include:



- Wolverine that depend on rugged terrain throughout the northern Rocky Mountains
- Highly endangered black-footed ferrets that have been reintroduced in the great plains
- Hawks, eagles and other raptors that depend on BLM lands throughout the west

BLM and Wildlife

BLM's Wildlife program is responsible for protecting wildlife across a vast area – the agency manages more wildlife and fish habitat than any other federal agency, including half of the remaining habitat for the imperiled sage grouse and almost 15 million acres of prairie grasslands. Currently the BLM is undertaking a landscape scale planning and policy process to put in place protections for the Greater sage-grouse. This majestic bird has been in decline for many decades, and a recent settlement has triggered the Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if it will be listed under the Endangered Species Act by 2015. In the meantime, BLM's existing efforts are vital to help preserve and protect the sage grouse. To preclude the need for ESA listing, BLM's ongoing planning process will impact ten western states and will attempt to establish strong conservation measures through as many as 98 land use plans in 68 planning areas important to sage grouse survival. About \$8-10 million per year is needed for three years for this work. An additional \$15 million per year is needed for habitat restoration and nearly \$25 million annually for habitat mapping, inventory and assessment.



Sage Grouse, C. Robert Smith/ Elk Meadow Images/National Geographic

Resources are also needed to investigate and address the effect of white-nose syndrome on bats on BLM lands. The fungus has decimated an estimated 5.7 – 6.7 million bats in the U.S. and Canada in the last several years and continues to spread. BLM is undertaking cave surveys to track the disease and research to try and find a cure. The catastrophic losses of bat populations that will occur if a way is not found to control the disease will have far reaching consequences – bats play essential roles in insect control, plant pollination, seed dissemination, and the maintenance of healthy cave ecosystems. For example, bats provide at least \$3.7 billion in pest management services to the agriculture industry each year.ⁱⁱ

BLM Resource Management Planning

Effective response to the land management challenges of the coming decades, including adapting to the effects of climate change and supporting the responsible development of energy resources, hinges upon timely and informed BLM Resource Management Plans. Currently there are 47 resource management plans under revision and 45 plans waiting in line to be revised, some of them decades old. Additional funding cuts would slow current revisions even further, creating additional backlogs and preventing the BLM from initiating new revisions each year. This slowdown will prevent BLM from achieving its goal to develop a full set of revised and modernized BLM plans across the country. According to the BLM, out of date plans limit the effectiveness of on the ground actions and raise the likelihood of costly litigation, both of which can prohibit or delay the delivery of important economic and ecological benefits and increase the cost to the taxpayer. Plans are the cornerstone of every on the ground action taken by BLM. This program already has been cut by nearly 25 percent since FY 2010 and cannot sustain any further reductions.

BLM's Challenge Cost Share Program

The BLM's Challenge Cost Share program allows it to partner with state and local governments, private individuals and companies, and nongovernmental organizations to restore habitat, monitor fish and wildlife, maintain archeological sites, and repair trails, along with other activities. The program, which requires a dollar for dollar match, has been reported by the agency to average a two-to-one match-and for some projects, a three to one match or more--providing tremendous leverage of federal funds to get important work done to support wildlife and other resource that might not otherwise occur.

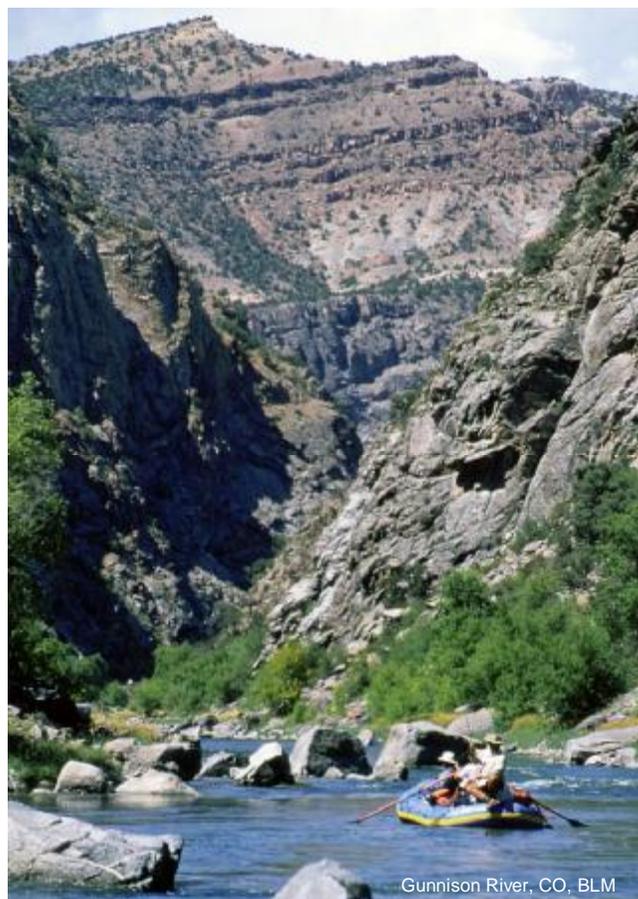
BLM and Plant Conservation

BLM lands are crucial to the conservation of more than 800 rare plant species and do this work through a small but effective Plant Conservation program. Providing native seeds and seedlings for restoration projects is vital to preventing the colonization of invasive plant species that degrade habitat and ecosystem functioning and ultimately cost more to control than preventive measures. Unfortunately, many restoration projects currently use non-native seeds due to the unavailability of native seeds and a failure on the part of the agency to require that natives be used. Plant Conservation is working to resolve this by gathering information from the field regarding seed use developing a strategy to support restoration using native seeds. Moreover, Plant Conservation plays a fundamental role in the agency's adaptation strategy as the ability to collect and store native seed stock in the face of the looming climate change threat is more important than ever.

BLM Success Stories

Recent success the BLM has had in restoring and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat could be a thing of the past if cuts go through. For example:

- The Gunnison River in southwestern Colorado contains one of the country's premiere fly-fishing destinations. However, several years ago, whirling disease significantly impacted the rainbow trout population in Gunnison Gorge, through which the river flows. In response, BLM wildlife biologists worked to introduce disease resistant rainbow trout and today, the future looks good for the species.
- The East Magdalena Landscape Restoration Project in central New Mexico is designed to restore and enhance desired and historic vegetative conditions, wildlife habitat, and watershed health. The joint project is a cooperative effort between the BLM Socorro Field Office and the Forest Service's Magdalena Ranger District, Cibola National Forest to treat the entire watershed. A variety of management techniques (prescribed fire, mechanical treatment, development of wildlife watering facilities, erosion control, livestock management, and access management/road closures) were used across this landscape to meet project objectives. The project also required the construction of over 100 earthen structures on the lower watershed to reduce erosion and provide supplemental water for wildlife during the summer months. Mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, Merriam's turkey, black bear and Mexican spotted owl habitats all benefitted by this work.



To continue these and the myriad of other management activities that protect wildlife taking place on BLM lands Congress must work to ensure any comprehensive spending bill protects vital funding for wildlife conservation. Even in these difficult financial times, agencies like the Bureau of Land Management cannot afford to take the brunt of the cuts. We cannot solve our financial problems by decimating funding for the wildlife and other natural resources upon which we all rely.

ⁱ From 2010 BLM Public Lands Statistics

ⁱⁱ Justin G. Boyles, Paul M. Cryan, Gary F. McCracken and Thomas H. Kunz, "Economic Importance of Bats in Agriculture," *Science* 332 (April 2011):41-42