

A New Era for the Bureau of Land Management?

How to Embrace
Institutional Change
and Conservation
Management



Agenda

1. Welcome (3 min.)
2. Moderator, Rebecca Leber (3 min.)
3. Panelist #1, Chandra Rosenthal, PEER Employee Survey Results (5 min.)
4. Panelist #2, Laurel Williams, BLM Trends in Planning (5 min.)
5. Moderator Questions (5 min.)
6. Panelist #3, Richard Spotts, Reform for Change and Progress (5 min.)
7. Panelist #4, MaryJo Rugwell, Recommendations from a Career Employee (5 min.)
8. Moderator Questions (5 min.)
9. Moderated Audience Q& A (15 min.)





PEER
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
RESPONSIBILITY





Rebecca Leber

Mother Jones Magazine



2020-2021 PEER BLM Employee Survey

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Result
1. BLM is headed in the right direction.		2		3	17	5/6 Disagree
2. Employee morale is strong.		2	4	4	12	
3. BLM's mission is sufficient to address the countries current conservation and climate change challenges.	2	3	4	4	12	
4. BLM management meaningfully integrates climate change into resource planning.			2	8	13	5/6 Disagree
5. BLM management meaningfully integrates conservation values into resource planning.	2	2	1	7	10	
6. The condition of BLM land and resources is improving.		2	2	4	15	3/4 Disagree
7. BLM prioritizes resource protection.		2	1	8	12	5/6 Disagree
8. BLM relies upon best available science in its decision making.		2		11	10	5/6 Disagree
9. Energy development has come to dominate BLM priorities.	8	7	2	3	1	
10. Employee morale in my section is good.	1	4	5	4	9	
11. BLM fosters a respectful workplace.	1	5	5	8	4	
12. I fear job retaliation for reporting concerns to be a lead management.	8	6	6	2	1	
13. BLM has the staffing and resources to accomplish its mission.			2	5	16	5/6 Disagree
14. BLM can take steps to strengthen its institutional capacity to implement conservation and climate change goals of the new administration.	5	11	4	1	1	



New Goals: Climate and Biodiversity



Themes that Emerged from PEER Employee Surveys and Interviews

- Poor Morale
- Employee Staffing Issues
- Political Influence and Corruption
- Lack of Transparency
- Inching Extremism



Survey Results

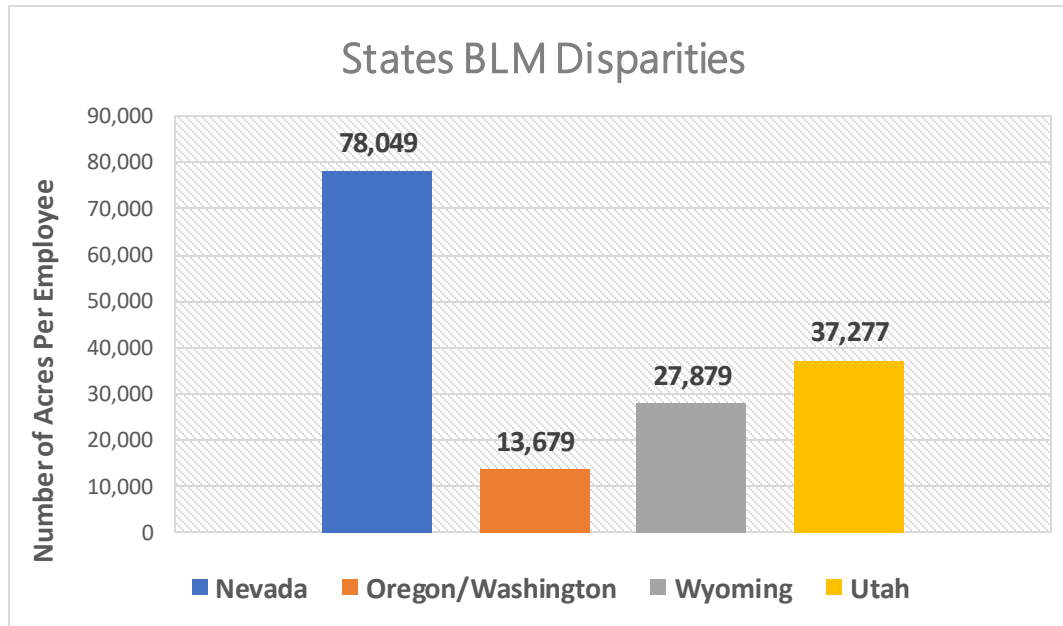
- More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of participants surveyed do not believe that BLM is heading in the right direction.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of participants surveyed do not believe that the condition of the lands and resources is improving.
- More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the participants surveyed do not believe that BLM has the staffing or resources to accomplish its mission.
- More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the participants do not think that BLM meaningfully integrates climate change into resource planning, prioritizes research protection and does not rely upon best available science in decision making.



Uneven Staffing of Federal Lands



Uneven Staff Levels Among States



Does “Multiple-Use” Mean Minimal Oversight?

BLM Utah
1 employee protects
37,277 acres

Arches National Park
1 employee protects
1,530 acres



Repair Governance Issues

- Transparency
- Science Matters
- Political Influence and Corruption
- Extremism



Credit: Caught Between Conscience and Career



Recommendations

- Rebuild Employee Trust and Morale
- Improve Staffing
- Embrace Stakeholder Partnerships
- Science Based Decision Making
- Build Better Management
- Engage the Public





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Trends in BLM Planning + Conservation Opportunities

The Bureau of Land Management resource management plan revisions released between May 2019 and early 2020 included draft and final plans for Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, and Oregon. These RMPs will guide the management of more than 20 million acres of Western lands for the next two decades.



Clockwise from upper left: Jim River AK, David Shaw; Pueblo Bonita, Chaco, NM, Tisha Broska; Echo Canyon & Table Mt, CO, EcoFlight; Bighorn, Southeastern OR, Devlin Holloway; Steamboat Mt, WY, Matt Cuzzocreo.

BLM's Draft & Final RMPs

Table 1
BLM's Draft and Final Resource Management Plans Mean Loss of Protection for Millions of Acres

Acres and river miles threatened under preferred plans, by area

	Bering Sea Western Interior (Draft)	Lewistown (Draft)	Missoula (Draft)	Four Rivers (Draft)	Southeastern Oregon (Draft)	Eastern Colorado (Draft)	Uncompahgre (Proposed)	Total
Planning area acreage	13,400,000	750,300	150,000	783,160	4,600,000	668,000	675,000	21,026,460
ACECs in prior plan (acreage)	1,884,376	22,900	1,225	64,300	n/a	69,500	30,000	2,072,301
ACECs proposed to be removed by BLM from prior plan (acreage)	1,884,376	22,900	585	18,720	n/a	23,200	n/a	1,926,581
ACECs determined by BLM to meet relevance and importance criteria (acreage)	4,248,610	32,008	1,225	112,060	n/a	101,400	215,840	4,711,143
ACECs preferred alternative (acreage)	0	0	640	45,470	n/a	46,300	51,320	143,730
ACECs proposed final plan (acreage)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	n/a	TBD	30,190	TBD
LWCs found by BLM to meet agency-established criteria (acreage)	13,382,250	202,681	2,523	8,000	1,206,780	190,753	42,150	15,035,137

	Bering Sea Western Interior (Draft)	Lewistown (Draft)	Missoula (Draft)	Four Rivers (Draft)	Southeastern Oregon (Draft)	Eastern Colorado (Draft)	Uncompahgre (Proposed)	Total
LWCs preferred alternative (acreage)	0	0	2,525*	0	0	1,300*	18,320	22,145
LWCs proposed final plan (acreage)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	18,320†	TBD
Ecological emphasis areas in preferred alternative (acreage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	177,700	177,700
Ecological emphasis areas in proposed final plan (acreage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0
Backcountry conservation areas preferred alternative	0	0	0	0	n/a	0	n/a	0
Wild and scenic river eligibility (miles)	650	89	27.6	91	n/a	112	154	1123.6
Wild and scenic rivers suitable preferred alternative (miles)	0	0	2.1	n/a	n/a	60	104.6	166.7
Wild and scenic rivers suitable proposed final plan (miles)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	104.6	104.6

* Plans for these areas prioritize multiple uses over protecting wilderness character.

† Lands managed to minimize impacts on wilderness character, while managing for other uses.

Sources: Bureau of Land Management, "Bering Sea-Western Interior Resource Management Plan: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern—Report on the Application of the Relevance and Importance Criteria and Special Management" (2018); Bureau of Land Management, "Lewistown Field Office, Resource Management Plan Revision and Environmental Impact Statement: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern—Report on the Application of the Relevance and Importance Criteria" (2015); Bureau of Land Management, "Preliminary Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Report, Missoula Resource Management Plan" (2018); Bureau of Land Management, "Four Rivers Field Office Areas of Critical Environmental

Trump Administration BLM Planning Trends

94%

Overall percentage of ACEC acreage from prior plan removed in agency-preferred alternative in pending plan

2.1%

Overall percentage of ACEC acreage meeting relevance and importance criteria that is included in preferred alternatives

.03%

Overall percentage of BLM-identified LWC acreage included in preferred alternatives

ACECs by Presidential Administration

President	RODs Issued	Total Acreage Protected as ACEC & RNA
Reagan	7	4,311,531
Bush Sr.	1	1,232,369
Clinton	11	3,590,435
Bush Jr.	22	10,044,693
Obama	35	6,220,867

Source for acreage numbers: [Bureau of Land Management Current List of ACEC](#)

Looking Ahead

The Biden administration should reassess ongoing resource management plans to ensure a better balance between conservation and development.

- Four plans were issued records of decision but never published in the federal register: Lewistown and Missoula, MT, Bering Sea-Western Interior, AK, and the National Petroleum Reserve, AK.
- Additional plans advanced during the past four years: Carlsbad, NM, Central Yukon, AK, Eastern Colorado, Farmington, NM, Lakeview, OR, Southeastern Oregon, and Rock Springs, WY.

Conservation Opportunities for the Biden Administration

- Look to 30 by 30 as a general frame
- Can't get there without BLM lands. BLM is the largest land manager, with 245 million surface acres.
- BLM lands can help achieve 30 by 30.

Revive FLMPA Section 202

- Section 202 enables BLM to establish new WSAs.
- WSA designations put deserving, intact and wild lands into the National Conservation Lands system, which contains the crown jewels of the BLM lands.
- The BLM’s “non-impairment” guidelines set strict, consistent management requirements designed to protect the wilderness character of WSAs.
- These guidelines set forth durable conservation, which can allow WSAs to count towards our nation’s 30 by 30 goals.

Develop Minimum Management for ACECs

- FLPMA language - “shall give priority to the designation and protection of areas of critical environmental concern”
- ACECs contain a wide array of management prescriptions, without consistency.
- Developing minimum management standards will ensure these lands are protected in a meaningful and durable way and will allow these special areas to count toward our nation’s 30 by 30 goals.

Summary of Opportunities

- Reassess ongoing resource management plans to ensure more balanced outcomes
- 30 by 30 as a general frame – can't get there without BLM lands
- Revive BLM's authority under section 202 of FLPMA to establish new WSAs
- Create minimum management standards for ACECs to ensure they can be part of our nation achieving 30 by 30

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Reform the BLM: An Agency Insider Looks at a History of Failure and Sees Long Delayed Opportunities for Change and Progress



Dwarf bear claw poppy, Utah BLM



Six First Steps to Reform BLM

1. Immediately remove all appointed and imbedded Trump appointees.
2. Do not "recycle" the previous Obama era BLM appointees who only focused on the high-profile "shiny objects" and failed to address BLM's basic biases and problems.
3. Modify performance evaluations to link job duties with positive on the ground resource outcomes, not bureaucratic "widgets." Land health should be the ultimate measure not how many often hollow administrative processes or tasks were performed.
4. There should be independent audits of managers performance, and those managers who ignore the law, best science, or release misleading or false information should be terminated.
5. Require mandatory "continuing education" for managers and resource specialists to ensure that they remain up-to-date on the latest laws, regulations, and policies as well as the latest science relating to the lands and resources that they manage.
6. The Inspector General "whistleblower" process should be overhauled. Employees need to be able to count on their complaints being considered promptly, thoroughly, confidentially, and fairly investigated. The findings and what came of them in terms of any remedial or enforcement actions should be publicly available. I know first-hand that this process is unreliable and broken.



Personal Introduction



Bobcat Draw Badlands WSA, BLM WY



Recommendations from a Career Bureau of Land Management Employee



Advice (Based on 35 Years of Experience)

1. Protect Apolitical Civil Service (Senior Executive Service)
2. Communicate With All Employees at All Levels
3. Trust but Verify/Hold Employees Accountable
4. Restore a Better National Office to D.C.
5. Honor Delegation of Authority
6. Amend the Federal Land Policy and Management Act
7. Nominate Knowledgeable Director Candidate



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