Winning the Challenges of the Future

A Road Map for Success in 2016
I am pleased to present the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) long-range plan to provide strong leadership for land management issues into the future. *Winning the Challenges of the Future* strategically positions the BLM to address the new challenges and opportunities we are likely to face in the coming years, including an extremely challenging budget outlook.

This document recognizes the dedication and hard work of employees at every level of the BLM and identifies the issues we face now and in the future. This plan is based on your comments and your ideas and incorporates input from BLM employees, other Federal agencies, universities, and organizations. It provides the framework the BLM will use to focus our priorities as we work to achieve our goals by 2016.

Based on a review of the recommendations in this report, the BLM Executive Leadership Team has decided to begin work immediately in the following areas: planning (page 8); data (both our AIMS and GIS strategies)(page 12); long-term liability (specifically cost recovery and restoration)(page 14); budget process (page 16); and several actions in the workforce management arena (page 18). You will receive periodic updates on our progress and be invited to engage in ongoing dialogues via the Leadership blog.

We have an exciting opportunity to chart our direction and decide what kind of organization we will be. Each of us has a role to play in our future. As we refocus our vision, I am convinced we can make the bold changes necessary to become a premier land management agency. How we win the challenges of the future is within our control. The opportunities are there. We have the potential. We are in charge of making the BLM an agency the employees and the American people know and trust to manage our national resources.
Our Mission

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.
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Executive Summary

The BLM’s multiple-use mission, established in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, provides for a variety of valuable public land uses such as recreation, livestock grazing, energy development, and timber harvesting, while protecting a wide array of natural, cultural, and historical resources. BLM lands contribute to the health and quality of life for all Americans. The BLM’s public land management provides billions of dollars in revenue and supports more than half a million jobs nationwide.

The BLM’s multiple-use mission is becoming increasingly complex as the population in the West continues to grow and urbanize. Demands on public land resources are increasing and becoming more diverse. In order to respond to those demands, we need to periodically reexamine our goals and provide strategies for meeting them.

Winning the Challenges of the Future celebrates the 40th anniversary of FLPMA and the 70th anniversary of the BLM by providing a road map for the programs and activities performed by the BLM at locations throughout the Nation. It identifies our goals for meeting future trends and challenges: Think Big, Do It Right the First Time, Be a Good Neighbor, and Work for America. These goals recognize the BLM must look beyond geopolitical boundaries to provide a variety of activities in cooperation with our neighbors, partners, and communities that ensure long-term sustainability of shared landscapes.

Winning the Challenges of the Future outlines our strategies for reaching our goals by 2016. These strategies provide actions to guide the BLM in planning; data, monitoring, and adaptive management; long-term liability; budget development and allocation; workforce management; and business practices.

Winning the Challenges of the Future identifies how the BLM of 2016 will look and operate. By 2016, the BLM will have a new, more responsive planning process. We will be making land management decisions at multiple scales based on good science and readily available, standardized, up-to-date data. By 2016, we have returned productivity and health to impaired lands and are preventing future liabilities. We have a flexible budget structure that allows us to put resources where they are most needed. By 2016, the BLM is recruiting and retaining a diverse, flexible workforce. Our business practices support and enhance our ability to achieve our mission.
The BLM of 2016 is an exciting, innovative, and supportive place to work. Its vibrancy comes from the American public whose passion about how public lands are managed will not always lead to consensus but will ensure active engagement on the many decisions before the BLM. It is the premier land management agency.

**INTRODUCTION**

Since its inception in 1946, the BLM has embraced the diversity of its multiple-use mission on lands that range from grasslands to forests and from arctic tundra to desert. These public lands provide spectacular landscapes; essential fish, wildlife, and plant habitat; national resources vital to the American way of life; and one-of-a-kind career opportunities. As the BLM balances this broad range of multiple uses, environmental changes, population growth, technological advances, and resource demands continually present new management challenges we must address.

In December 2009, the Director challenged all BLM employees to make the BLM the premier land management agency. Toward this end, he engaged a team to produce a long-range plan to guide the BLM’s budgets, programs, activities, policies, and initiatives. The plan would identify the long-term conditions, trends, and issues that will shape the BLM in the coming decades and assess the implications of these changes for carrying out the BLM’s multiple-use mission. The team was directed to highlight the good things already being done—learning from and adopting best practices bureau-wide.

The plan was developed over the past year and includes extensive input from BLM employees; conversations with other Federal agencies; and contributions from universities, think tanks, and organizations relevant to resource use, land management, and conservation issues. The plan identifies a set of strategies and actions for fulfilling our goals by the year 2016.

The vision, goals, and strategies depicted in this document provide focus for the BLM in winning the challenges of the future.
As a premier land management agency, the BLM leads broadly inclusive and successful efforts at scales ranging from individual communities to entire ecosystems to improve the health of our public lands and sustain the benefits they provide; and ensures activities on the public lands yield maximum public benefit with minimum impact.

**Think Big**
Manage across broad landscapes, unconstrained by artificial boundaries.

**Work for America**
Contribute to the health and wealth of America.

**Do it right the first time**
Ensure the long-term sustainability of the public’s land.

**Be a good neighbor**
Manage lands in concert with our communities and partners.

**Planning**
Adopt a proactive and nimble approach to planning that allows us to work collaboratively with partners at different scales to produce highly useful decisions that adapt to the rapidly changing environment and conditions.

**Data, Monitoring, and Adaptive Management**
Develop and maintain standardized, accurate, and reliable data and scientific information that are available and accessible at the appropriate scale to support land management decisions.

**Long-term liability**
Reduce our inherited liabilities and ensure today’s public land activities do not leave a harmful legacy.

**Workforce Management**
Employ and develop a workforce that reflects the public we serve, with the necessary skills to accomplish the work of the Bureau.

**Budget Development and Allocation**
Align our budget away from program stovepipes and improve the process so it is less burdensome.

**Business Practices**
Design business practices and applications that support the employee’s ability to achieve the BLM mission in a cost effective and efficient manner.

**Public Recognition**
Promote the BLM and an understanding of its mission to a diverse and changing public.
**Trends and Challenges**

As the BLM looks toward the future, we will strive to anticipate broad changes occurring in our communities and with the citizens we serve. Identifying the future trends and challenges these changes present will help us focus our resources and allow us to operate in a more proactive and flexible manner.

**Continued Western Community Growth and Change**

The population of the western United States continues to grow at a faster rate than the rest of the country. While population growth is highest in Western states, less than a quarter of the total U.S. population resides in a state with a physical BLM presence. These states are located far from the Nation’s capitol where funding and policy priorities for Federal agencies are made. These factor presents particular challenges for an agency whose resources and continued vitality depend on a national awareness for funding, policies, and regulations.

Growing populations and changing demographics in the West are increasing demands on public lands and resources. BLM lands help meet the Nation’s increasing need for water, energy, minerals, and timber, along with the need for open space and nearby hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities. Demographic changes are resulting in greater demands on public lands and differing expectations for public land management. The West’s population is becoming

- increasingly urban,
- increasingly older, and
- increasingly Hispanic.

An increasingly urban population can result in the loss of a direct connection to lands and resources. An increasingly older and retiring population means growing demand on public lands for recreation, more full-service facilities and amenities (including Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility), specialized interpretive programming, and motorized access to public lands. An increasingly Hispanic population requires more bilingual products or programs, or changes in program focus, to address the recreational preferences of diverse publics.

Meanwhile, resource-intensive sectors of the economy such as agriculture, mining, and timber operations continue to play major roles in many western communities,
As population increases, more people want to do more things on the same amount of land. We need to wisely balance these demands and listen.

**Accelerated Technological Changes**

The past two decades have seen a rapid acceleration in technologies such as the Internet and telecommunications. Accelerating development of digital technologies has changed the way the public receives information and communicates about land management issues. The increasing power, portability, and convenience of digital technologies have built public and employee expectations about the availability, quality, and accessibility of a wide range of information. Technological advances offer the BLM the opportunity to fulfill its mission in a faster and more efficient manner. Today’s workforce is more mobile and 21st century technology creates new opportunities for employees to take the office out onto the land and spend less time in the office.

**Long-term, Landscape-scale Environmental Changes**

Population growth, intensified economic activities, and increasing demands on the natural environment are affecting the health of the Nation’s land base. Winters are becoming shorter and wetter, and summers warmer and drier than in the relatively recent past. Evidence suggests the Nation may be entering the early years of a 30-year drought cycle. Meteorological changes will result in alterations to both native and invasive plant communities on BLM-managed lands, producing shifts in rangeland condition and fire frequency and creating a more dynamic set of challenges for restoration activities. Effectively addressing this increasingly variable situation will require the BLM to improve its ability to evaluate and respond to land health concerns on multiple scales and across multiple programmatic, organizational, land ownership, and political boundaries.
**Diversifying and Expanding Resources Portfolio**

Resource demands on the public lands are changing, not just in degree, but in kind. For example, while traditional extractive minerals and materials continue to play a vital role in meeting the Nation’s resource and energy needs, rapidly changing technologies are making alternative energy sources more viable and growth in this sector is focused on the public lands. Because the operational and resource requirements of these new technologies are fundamentally different than traditional energy resources, they pose a new set of challenges for the BLM. Transporting power from these new sources of electrical generation is creating the need for additional transmission corridors and facilities throughout the West. The controversies long associated with the permitting of traditional energy development and transmission projects will increase with the addition of new energy production technologies to the BLM’s management portfolio.

Changes on all these fronts have merged to expand the BLM’s definition of resources of public interest. Resources such as air, wind, and sun are of increasing value. The existence of open space itself has become an issue of increasing importance to growing communities.

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**Employee Comment**

The BLM manages the most diverse array of landscapes found in the U.S. From the high deserts of the Great Basin to the towering coastal redwood forests of the Kings Range, from beautiful wild and scenic rivers to the interior tundra and boreal forests of Alaska—the depth and breadth of BLM lands is astounding.
Our Mission

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

The BLM’s mission is derived from FLPMA, which instructs us to manage the public lands in accordance with the standards of multiple use and sustained yield, and to prevent the unnecessary or undue degradation of the lands. The multiple-use mission is both invigorating and challenging. It makes our work current and on the front edge of change as the Nation prioritizes meeting its economic and energy needs with its interest in preserving landscapes that are part of our history and essential to our future. The components of the BLM’s mission help define our character and make the work of the BLM’s employees uniquely complex and challenging.

Multiple use does not require the BLM to provide every possible use on every acre of public lands but it does allow us a range of management options. With intensive, single-use activities on one end; conservation stewardship of National Landscape Conservation System units at the other; and an array of uses such as grazing, timber, oil and gas leasing, and recreation in the middle, the BLM embraces the range in its entirety. Through the broader combination of uses, the BLM seeks to ensure the public lands resource values best meet the present and future needs of the American people.

In practice, the work of the BLM broadly consists of making on-the-ground-improvements to and managing other uses of the public lands. To accomplish these aims, employees of the BLM serve not just with integrity and professionalism, but with the creativity and courage needed to bring together interested (and sometimes opposing) parties, promote win-win solutions, strive for the fair allocation of benefits and burdens, and—always and above all—promote the public interest. BLM employees across the country roll up their sleeves, talk to the people, and serve the public interest every day.

Our Vision

As a premier land management agency, the BLM will

- lead broadly inclusive and successful efforts to improve the health of our public lands and sustain the benefits they provide at scales ranging from individual communities to entire ecosystems; and

Employee Comment

I like that people come to public meetings and open houses, and want to have a say in how we manage the lands they use and depend on for subsistence.
ensure activities on the public lands yield maximum public benefit with minimum impact.

**Our Goals**

As we work toward realizing our vision, we will be guided by four goals: Think Big, Do It Right the First Time, Be a Good Neighbor, and Work for America.

**Think Big**

Manage Across Broad Landscapes, Unconstrained by Artificial Boundaries

The BLM manages a key part of the American identity—the Nation’s public lands. Our records chronicle the story of the Nation’s growth and our iconic landscapes define a popular vision of the West. When people think of the wide, open spaces that define America, they are thinking of BLM lands.

The issues that affect those lands transcend administrative boundaries and artificial lines. The BLM will tackle problems and issues at their natural scales, looking beyond geopolitical boundaries and working across jurisdictions to ensure healthy public lands contribute to broader ecosystem health and provide their fullest social and economic value to the Nation.

**Do It Right The First Time**

Ensure the Long-term Sustainability of the Public’s Land

As a multiple-use agency, the BLM must continue to provide for a variety of activities and uses on public lands. When we allow activities and uses, they must be designed, permitted, and monitored with the goal of returning the land to a healthy condition once the use ends. Our checkerboard landscape and management of the subsurface mineral estate that is sometimes located under different surface owners has integrated managing and mitigating necessary impacts and, ultimately, good communication into everything we do. Lease requirements, conditioned authorizations, best management practices, and adequate bonding will be used to prevent creating future liabilities to the public.

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**Employee Comment**

We are not a multiple use agency, but a multiple mission agency. BLM is open to define itself, and redefine itself, as the political and physical environment demand. It also leaves us much more responsive to the public... since we are not trying to defend ourselves against them, but trying to learn from them.
**BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR**

**Manage Lands in Concert with Our Communities and Partners**

The BLM has developed an unmatched expertise in cooperatively managing public lands with our partners and the communities we serve. The BLM does not defer tough choices about America’s sometimes conflicting desires to provide for present lifestyle wants and needs while preserving the values for the next generation.

Cooperative management is crucial for balancing the increasing and often conflicting national, regional, and local demands on our public lands and resources. Our land management decisions contribute to the stability of the communities that depend on public lands and waters for their income, identity, and well-being. Involving and engaging our communities and partners improves the quality of our decisions as we manage the lands to provide clean water and healthy ecosystems; traditional and future uses; and unique, quality outdoor experiences for all Americans.

**WORK FOR AMERICA**

**Contribute to the Health and Wealth of America**

Activities managed by the BLM generate more money each year than the BLM’s annual budget. In 2010, the BLM’s management of public lands contributed more than $112 billion to the national economy and supported more than 500,000 American jobs. Authorized activities on public lands produce income and provide valuable commodities, services, and opportunities for the American people. The public should receive the greatest return from these activities.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACHIEVING OUR GOALS**

The challenges we face in reaching these goals are wide-ranging and substantial. They range in scope and scale from localized, community-specific issues to regional- and national-level issues beyond the authority of the BLM. BLM culture and organizational “norms” can impede the adaptability and flexibility necessary for effective management. As we strive to achieve our goals, we need to consider the following:

- Public consensus on designating high priority areas for resource use, development, or conservation may be difficult to achieve.
- Managing across broad landscapes requires the BLM to effectively engage in multiple large-scale, collaborative efforts and identify those efforts that will provide the greatest return on the investment.
The BLM will need to create systems that help us more readily integrate activities across program lines. Budget processes and reporting currently emphasize single-purpose programs.

Potential partners desire to move forward at a faster pace than the BLM’s planning system will allow. It will be important to maximize efficiencies in our planning and NEPA processes to keep pace with our partners.

Mitigation measures will need to be coordinated based on resource impacts, rather than land ownership.

The BLM needs to better coordinate outreach and information sharing with our partners to broaden public support and minimize litigation.

Because three-fourths of the population resides outside of BLM states, we need to find meaningful and relevant ways to communicate with the Nation as a whole.

The BLM faces additional internal challenges in developing the appropriate skill sets through workforce recruitment, retention, and training.

Strategies and Actions

The purpose of this effort is to identify opportunities to improve the BLM’s position overall as we seek to fulfill our multiple-use land management mission. It is intended to inform the BLM’s long-term approach to program planning, data management, land health restoration and maintenance, budgeting, information technology, and communications investments. It does not directly address all aspects of BLM’s mission-critical work, which is routinely carried out with great success by our employees.

For many strategies, future teams will need to refine the strategy and address the action items outlined in much greater detail. In some instances, existing teams such as the Budget Strategy Team are already in place. Other actions can be taken without the need for major strategies and action plans.

BLM leadership at all levels should continue empowering employees on-the-ground to use flexibility, creativity, and partner-developed processes to address the challenges they face. Innovative programs such as Restore New Mexico or Utah’s Partners for Conservation and Development already exist and are contributing to the BLM’s goals on local or state-wide scales. We need to harvest the potential value of these efforts and share them with the rest of the BLM. The creation and implementation
of a method for accomplishing this is common to all of these strategies. So, too, is a means of communicating to employees the progress we are making in turning these strategies into reality.

The BLM has a long-standing tradition of creative problem solving. The strategies and actions presented below are intended to build on that tradition and enable us to take maximum advantage of the land management opportunities presenting themselves in the first quarter of the 21st century.

**Planning**

Adopt a proactive and nimble approach to planning that allows us to work collaboratively with partners at different scales to produce highly useful decisions that readily address the rapidly changing environment and conditions.

Our planning and NEPA compliance processes, independent of the associated litigation, consume a large portion of our staff time and budget. As a core element of FLPMA, managing planning to ensure the BLM produces high-quality documents more effectively while taking advantage of emerging opportunities and technologies will always be a challenge for the BLM.

Given the range of the issues that must be addressed during plan development, and the essential public participation required to produce effective plans, planning documents can be outdated by the time they are completed. Amending a completed land-use plan can be nearly as difficult, with similar results. Today, some large-scale land-use planning efforts cost millions of dollars and take nearly half a decade to complete. Some wonder whether the BLM and the public are receiving a satisfactory return on that investment and a perception exists that the process has come to obstruct action as much as enable it. New information, data, and priorities generate requests for new planning efforts just as plans are being completed.

Finalizing the BLM’s conversion to ePlanning will provide greater consistency among our NEPA-related documents, provide us with much better administrative records, and improve our overall legal position. While automation will address some concerns, it is not designed to address the fundamental need for change in approach that our existing operating environment demands and our future operating environment requires. Given the much more dynamic social and economic setting in which the BLM is already operating, our approach to planning needs a radical reevaluation.
During the planning process, the BLM also needs to address land tenure issues created by the growing wildland-urban interface and the issues associated with managing split estate lands and isolated tracts of public land. Addressing these issues during planning will provide an open process and allow opportunity for public involvement. This would furnish a broad strategy for resolving land tenure issues that could prove effective in ensuring the long-term resiliency of the lands we manage.

**Actions**

+ Establish a fully chartered team to recommend a more durable, outcome-based planning process. The team should conduct a benchmark assessment of each state’s current process and a comprehensive national review of litigation-related planning issues. The revised process should include
  * alternative planning approaches to avoid future litigation,
  * adaptive management approaches to allow active incorporation of new information without triggering land-use plan amendments, and
  * multiple-scale decision frameworks and shared decisionmaking across administrative boundaries.

+ Charter a team to deal with the long-term issues of land tenure rationalization and split estate issues. It should be charged with determining methods to identify areas for retention or trade, supplying options for split estate management, streamlining existing processes, and creating incentives based on the buy-sell model contained in the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act.

**Looking Ahead**

By 2016, a new planning process is in place and employees are trained in its use. New planning guidebooks and manuals that present a more responsive planning process are being used. The new process encourages the development and use of outcome-based land health goals and allows us to incorporate new information without necessarily triggering an amendment process.

Work is actively underway with our partner agencies at the Federal, State, and local levels and with other interested parties to rationalize land tenure and ensure the ecological integrity of the public lands. Ownership of isolated tracts of land is appropriately distributed.

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**Employee Comment**

I was drawn to the complexity of our multiple-use mandate. It keeps our work cutting edge and ensures that we’re always planning and thinking strategically.
DATA, MONITORING, AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Develop and maintain standardized, accurate, and reliable data and scientific information that are available and accessible at the appropriate scale to support land management decisions. This data forms an essential foundation for incorporating adaptive management practices into our decisions and actions.

The interdisciplinary nature of multiple-use management on the public lands requires a broad array of scientific data to be successful. Traditionally, our efforts have focused on smaller-scale, localized efforts to address land health needs. Over time, the need to take coordinated long-term action across large swaths of the landscape while simultaneously addressing local concerns has become increasingly clear. The BLM must make a long-term commitment to data, monitoring, and adaptive management. Toward this goal, the BLM needs to assemble substantial amounts of data—from coarse scales covering entire ecosystems to fine scales at specific sites—to continue to effectively meet our responsibilities, particularly as we apply adaptive management on the public lands.

Data is a key asset managed by the BLM and its value depends on its accessibility. Our land management decisions at all scales increasingly involve a large number of variables that are most readily analyzed through Geographic Information System (GIS) and related approaches. We must ensure the continued migration of BLM data to appropriate, standardized digital formats to maximize its utility. As both a user and generator of data and as an agency that embraces collaborative, partner-based land management, the BLM also needs to ensure its data is accessible, up to date, and usable by others.

The BLM’s Geospatial Services Strategic Plan provides an exceptional example of a successful cross-function management initiative that uses the most current technologies to address many of these needs. It was developed with the assistance and dedication of the professional users and providers of data and technology within the BLM. We need to ensure the Plan is implemented and regularly and visibly updated to reflect accomplishments, respond to new priorities, and apply new technologies and analytical tools.

The BLM’s implementation of its Rapid Ecosystem Assessments—an action item derived from the BLM’s 1997 Blueprint for the Future—is also a step in the right direction. Assessments resulting from this initiative will require us to develop useful...
methods of translating this coarse data to make it relevant to managers working at scales appropriate to field offices. Data management is an important component of this effort and should facilitate making such assessments and associated data available to our Federal, State, and other partners that have expressed substantial interest in our data gathering and monitoring activities.

As identified in the BLM’s proposed landscape approach, monitoring is key to adaptive management. We need to create a structure and processes to collect, analyze, and share monitoring data, particularly as it relates to the mitigation projects we undertake or oversee. We also need to establish a clear process for incorporating monitoring results into key points of our authorization documents to ensure adaptive management occurs as needed.

While technological advances are reducing the costs of data gathering, the sheer magnitude of the BLM’s land base requires us to work closely and collaboratively with partners to target monitoring, share data, and manage data resources most effectively. Working collaboratively in data collection, management, and analysis should help all of us generate data more economically and ensure better data edge matching and accessibility.

**Actions**

- Finalize the Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring strategy, vetting it with field- and district-level managers and data gatherers to ensure the strategy accurately reflects ground-level practices and priorities.
- Continue implementing the Geospatial Services Strategic Plan, updating this plan as existing action items are accomplished, new issues arise, and technology advances.
- Create a structure and tools (or methods) to collect, analyze, and share monitoring data and integrate it with the results of mitigation projects.
- Increase coordinated data gathering, management, and delivery with Federal partners, academia, and interest groups and test the usefulness of different scales of data for public land management needs.
- Ensure ease of data sharing coordination through technical and institutional mechanisms, both internal and external to the BLM.

**Employee Comment**

We need a good and fully funded plan to implement geospatial technology. This includes GIS, GPS, remote sensing, computer hardware and software, our networks, interactive display, metadata, and communication. This agency needs to properly embrace a geospatial mindset that allows all employees to fully utilize geospatial awareness in our thinking, documents, communications, and community involvement.
**Looking Ahead**

By 2016, the BLM practices scientific land management and is routinely creating project authorizations that incorporate the results of monitoring and other data at appropriate decision points to allow for project modifications in response to changing conditions. The scientific information to support such modifications is drawn from a standardized, integrated database of land health information that is actively populated and updated with input derived from BLM and partner resources. The BLM maintains a state-of-the-art, publicly accessible GIS system that accurately records the current status and boundaries of all our lands and resources. It contains coarse- and fine-scale data as appropriate. This spatial data will be expanded over time to incorporate historical data. This data is readily available to and used by BLM partners and the public to assist in making land management decisions at the appropriate scale.

**Long-term Liability**

Reduce our inherited liabilities and ensure today’s public land activities do not leave a harmful legacy.

Past uses on our public lands have left detrimental legacies we must now address. Practices that were acceptable in their time have resulted in unintended liabilities. For example, excluding fire from the landscape has resulted in dense, overstocked forests. Abandoned mining lands are the product of 19th century law and attitudes.

The BLM needs to be strategic when addressing restoration needs—we cannot afford to engage in “random acts of restoration.” While we have measures in place going forward, these legacies are great and will continue to drain staff and monetary resources from other management priorities. Through the use of partnerships, the BLM will be better positioned to prioritize needs and leverage funds to expand the process of healing the public lands. A coordinated approach to larger-scale restoration and management efforts aimed at providing healthy ecosystem function will be needed to ensure our public lands continue to stand as a national asset. The Forest Service’s Aquatic Restoration Strategy, which directs that agency’s large-scale watershed restoration efforts, allows local managers substantial independence to address priority issues within their jurisdictions and may provide a useable template for this endeavor.
The BLM must design, permit, and monitor allowable uses to ensure the ecological function of the lands we manage remains resilient. Permitted uses cannot be allowed to permanently impair the productivity or environmental quality of public lands. Changing social and economic circumstances, such as those due to the ever-expanding wildland-urban interface, can result in altered risks to both the land and the public and also need to be considered.

At the same time, Americans clearly want to ensure that the costs of permitting and monitoring uses on the public’s land are adequately compensated by the income they produce. This includes using cost recovery that reflects the true cost of processing, inspecting, and enforcing a permit.

In order to ensure the public and the public lands are protected, the BLM will need to use appropriate levels of bonding. The BLM’s commitment to meeting this standard is demonstrated by the recent application of hard rock mining bonding, which allows for adjustments on 3-year review cycles, to the development of a solar energy bonding policy.

The oil and gas program inspection and enforcement provides another example of managing to minimize future liabilities. The principles behind this program, including cost recovery, should be extended to other programmatic areas that pose potential long-term liabilities to the health of the public lands. Other successful enforcement initiatives such as the Fire Trespass program may provide useful approaches to the challenges posed by nonpermitted activities such as unauthorized dumping on public lands.

In all of its enforcement efforts, the BLM needs to be sure the consequences of noncompliance serve as effective deterrents. The costs of noncompliance must outweigh the benefits of failing to comply with the regulations. In instances where penalties are not set by statute, the BLM needs to access its process timetables; update its fee schedule; and provide a means for regular, future adjustments to help ensure future generations do not bear the costs for the benefits public lands provide today.

**Actions**

- Establish a pilot inspection and enforcement program in a high, potential liability area where we do not have a formal compliance schedule.

**Employee Comment**

The BLM needs to show what America gets for its money. Both good and bad need to be shown. The opportunities lost, and those things saved, done, or given.
Examine bonding on a Bureau-wide level. Identify areas of high, potential liability and areas in need of consistent national guidance. Ensure bonding levels are appropriate, current, and, where authorized, adjusted over time.

Assess compliance regulations and penalties to determine if the associated fines and processes are adequate to ensure compliance. Where authority exists, establish a clear mechanism for periodic review and updates of the fine schedules.

Review procedures to ensure we are implementing full cost recovery, including compliance and other post-processing costs, in all programs where it is allowed.

Establish and maintain high quality road and trail systems by initiating a prioritized work plan for the BLM’s Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management Program.

Limit potential long-term liability associated with other facilities (e.g., buildings, dams, bridges) and reduce deferred maintenance by initiating a Bureau-wide program to identify and prioritize future infrastructure based on mission needs, maintain needed infrastructure to acceptable standards (design and energy efficiency), and reduce underused infrastructure to achieve fiscal and operational efficiencies.

Maintain an inventory of disturbed lands.

Investigate the applicability of innovative restoration programs and partnerships, such as Arizona’s Restoration Design Energy Project, and new tools, such as Restore New Mexico’s Candidate Conservation Agreements, for Bureau-wide use.

**Looking Ahead**

By 2016, the BLM’s pilot inspection and enforcement program is improving monitoring and compliance outside the oil and gas program. The BLM’s existing bonding program has been reviewed and the bonding levels updated. The BLM is implementing, to the maximum extent possible under existing law, periodic reviews and adjustments to respond to current realities. The BLM has fully reviewed its existing compliance, inspection, and enforcement regulations and acted to adjust those regulations, within existing authorities, to ensure they do not inadvertently reward noncompliance. The associated fee schedule is regularly adjusted to reflect current conditions.
More broadly, the BLM is annually reporting progress on the number of impaired acres where land health has been restored. The only remaining disturbed lands are those involved in permitted and ongoing activities. As legacy impacts are restored and post-permit reclamation work is completed, the BLM is using before and after documentation to establish itself as a vigilant and effective steward of the Nation’s public lands.

**Budget Development and Allocation**

Align our budget away from program stovepipes and make the process less burdensome.

The BLM’s existing budget process evolved during a period when it was generally assumed the recent past provided a fairly reliable preview of future conditions. This assumption is no longer considered valid and the programmatic implications of that shift in perspective are substantial. The BLM needs to find flexible, outcome-based processes to budget for what promises to be a period of dynamic change. The one constant principle motivating the BLM budget will, however, remain unchanged; land managers will still reasonably seek to put more resources directly on the ground and to do so faster.

The existing budget structure encourages resource managers to focus on activities within their own programmatic and administrative units. To be more effective in reasonably foreseeable, dynamic future environments, managers will have to develop the capacity to work across program boundaries as well as ownership boundaries and jurisdictions.

**Actions**

- Charge the Budget Strategy Team (BST) with developing a multiyear, out-year budget strategy based on the strategic framework proposed by this document.
- Initiate redesign of the internal budget allocation process under the BST leadership. This effort is essential to, and should accompany, development of the out-year budget strategy. The revised process would
- allow the BLM to allocate resources and workload more strategically to support areas of highest priority.
review and compress the number of program elements within the BLM’s budget, and
reduce the burden of the budget execution process at all levels of the organization.

Reexamine opportunities to work with Congress to simplify the budget structure, allowing the BLM to meet the challenges of managing on a broader landscape basis. Any consideration of adding new subactivities must be weighed against the larger goal of building greater flexibility and program coordination into our budget process.

Investigate and promote innovative ways to save money such as partnerships with universities and other agencies, greater use of student labor, and soliciting employee ideas.

**Looking Ahead**

By 2016, the BLM is well experienced in crafting funding requests and has developed and fully implemented successful requests that allow for more efficient program integration and result in less internal “stovepiping.” The BLM has the flexibility to move funds to areas of priority need, minimizing budget complexity and the use of subactivities as a result. As a consequence, district- and field-level managers have greater flexibility in staffing, funding, and addressing issues of the greatest importance on the lands they manage, while still being appropriately aligned with state, regional, and national priorities.

**Workforce Management**

Employ and develop a workforce that reflects the Nation we serve, with the necessary skills to accomplish the Bureau’s work.

Employees and managers consistently point to the impact of retirement trends on our ability to retain knowledge and maintain consistency in operations. Trend data for the next decade indicates retirements will increase in the near term, take a downward swing, and then return to higher levels. At the same time, the BLM will experience relatively higher labor costs in the near term, a subsequent reduction in labor costs as higher grade employees retire, and an upsurge in costs again in a decade. Workforce planning needs to be adaptive and mirror the BLM’s ever-changing mission emphases and priorities.
Generational differences among employees and the growing technological proficiency of the public will ultimately result in a variety of process and procedural changes in the way the BLM implements its multiple-use mandate. Creating a flexible workforce with the ability to adapt to work in a continually changing environment will require sustained leadership and training. Collaborative and partnership efforts, already the core of the BLM’s approach, are likely to grow in importance. These will require employees with enhanced negotiation and mediation skills that allow them to operate effectively across program and organizational boundaries. Information management and data sharing skill sets associated with increased collaboration and continued technological change must be kept current by and for our workforce.

The BLM needs to strengthen its efforts to ensure the diversity of its workforce better reflects the diversity of the Nation we serve. We should look at our best practices and identify where the BLM and other land management agencies have been effective in diversifying their workforces. While there are no quick and easy solutions to the challenges associated with attracting and keeping a diverse workforce, the BLM should, at a minimum, reeducate its supervisors and administrative staff on existing tools, programs, and authorities.

BLM employees have consistently identified the importance of quality leadership in making the BLM a premier land management agency. The BLM needs to continue investing in selecting, training, and grooming its leaders. However, we also need to recognize that the process for producing leaders is an adaptive one that requires periodic reviews for effectiveness and identifies where changes may need to occur.

**Actions**
- Commit to investing resources from reduced labor costs in tools and incentives for workforce retention and knowledge transfer. Best practices need to be identified and money set aside for approaches such as dual incumbency.
- Undertake a more concerted, consistently implemented, corporate approach to recruiting employees that reflect the Nation’s diversity.
- Create a flexible environment that includes telework opportunities and “hoteling” office space to recruit and retain 21st century personnel.
- Focus on developing competencies such as critical thinking, partnerships, communications, and information technology literacy that complement the scientific and technical skills of our employees.

**Employee Comment**

I enjoy knowing that we are making a difference in the way things work on our land. I have always appreciated the fact that BLM considers its employees as its most valuable resource.
- Develop strategies to maintain and share scarce skills and to effectively outsource scientific consultation in order to augment subject matter experts and their support to land management decisions.
- Develop processes to capture the institutional knowledge otherwise lost when employees retire.
- Establish “communities of practice” to promote professionalism across the BLM and relationships among subject-matter specialists operating in different localities.
- Review the BLM leadership program to ensure it is effectiveness. Adapt the program when necessary and provide a means for identifying when supervisors need updated training.
- Expand the opportunities for long-distance employee development by using technology such as the National Training Center’s web-based Knowledge Resource Center and the interagency Managing by Network webinar course.

**Looking Ahead**

By 2016, the BLM is successfully recruiting from a diverse range of well-trained potential employees and retaining those employees through well-crafted, consistently applied orientation efforts. Incoming employees are being fully trained in both BLM-specific technical skills and in the social/managerial skills needed to flourish in an agency dedicated to collaboration-driven land management. The BLM possesses high quality leaders with the skills necessary for adapting to changing organizational needs.

**Business Practices**

Design business practices and applications that support the employee’s ability to achieve the BLM mission in a cost effective and efficient manner.

BLM business practices, including grants and agreements, acquisitions, human resources, evaluation asset management, and information technology (IT), must support and enhance accomplishing mission critical objectives. Business practices must account for the total cost of doing business over the life cycle of the activity and facilitate the overall ease of business.

The administrative requirements for these support functions are clearly the most complex and burdensome of those dealt with by our employees. Technological
changes have motivated reductions in the administrative staff specifically trained and experienced in dealing with these processes, consequently shifting much of the burden to staff with little or no such expertise. This has been to the detriment of our mission. Automation is not always a sufficient replacement for experience or a guarantee of efficiency. The BLM is looking at options for realigning our support functions so they better align with the landscape approach increasingly used by our mission programs.

The BLM needs to address the overall cost of support functions, including the complexity of the function, the increased burden on nonadministrative employees, and the frequency with which these functions are duplicated across the BLM. Departmental and Administration initiatives are moving toward increased automation; proposed solutions need to work for the BLM rather than the BLM adapting to them. The process for reviewing such business functions before implementation does not appear to be fully successful and is unlikely to serve us well in the future.

Many BLM employees contend the BLM has too often allowed IT investment decisions to dictate how we achieve our mission. We have incurred needless expense by developing customized software in circumstances where off-the-shelf products would have sufficed. This has allowed a great divide that separates IT investment decisionmakers from end-users.

The BLM needs to take the same adaptive management approach it advocates for the public lands and apply it to management processes. Clear direction from end-users related to expectations and delivery of a product should be made up front. Systematic, ongoing review and follow-up with end-users of the BLM’s major processes must also be implemented. IT staff review of IT products does not constitute a sufficient level of testing to determine how well a program will work for BLM staff with widely varying computer abilities.

Many of our employees also have long-standing, unresolved issues with business practices derived directly from Government- (e.g., Grants.gov, GovTrip, USAJobs), Department- (e.g., FBMS), or Bureau- (e.g., FAMS) wide initiatives. While we lack management control of many of these programs, we cannot surrender our responsibility for addressing employee concerns. The BLM is far better situated to seek change than is an individual employee.
**Actions**

- Identify the top five employee concerns with administrative support processes that require attention, assign Executive Leadership Team members responsibility for follow-up, and report back to employees on what has been accomplished.
- Address the overall cost of support functions—this includes reexamining both the complexity and increased burden on nonadministrative employees and how often these functions are duplicated across the BLM.
- Work on a Bureau-wide, or larger, scale for the highest quantity and cost procurements (e.g., fuels treatment, GIS, IT, construction) to ensure the best return for contract dollars.
- Maintain the increased warrant levels established under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- Establish a formal process and set of principles through which end-users of IT products directly identify and shape the BLM’s IT priorities. The revised process should provide end-user input into such things as
  - precedence for fixing long-standing issues (e.g., bandwidth) over adopting new products,
  - the need for and desired features of IT products, and
  - periodic assessment of BLM’s major IT products followed by a concrete plan to correct identified issues.

**Looking Ahead**

By 2016, the BLM has taken a Government-wide leadership role in improving automated systems such as Grants.gov, GovTrip, and FBMS and made them better serve BLM missions and employee needs. The BLM has established a rigorous assessment protocol for its IT investments. Implementation of new programs requires beta testing with a range of employees and existing programs are systematically reviewed by user groups for needed improvements and updates.
Public Recognition

Promote the BLM and an understanding of its mission to a diverse and changing public.

The BLM manages the iconic landscapes that define the western United States. Despite this, the American public at large is not aware the BLM exists. A substantial and growing portion of the residents of the western states that form the core of the BLM’s trust responsibility have little or no direct contact with the BLM itself. The public’s ability to enjoy the lands depends on their awareness of the lands. Moreover, the health of the land depends on the BLM’s resources and the BLM’s resources depend on Congressional recognition.

To have an appropriate impact, BLM’s great work must be done visibly. A central element of achieving greater visibility will be the BLM’s success at articulating a sense of itself—its history and accomplishments—so our employees can effectively tell that story to others. To reap the greatest benefits from our ongoing efforts, we must communicate and celebrate our achievements and accomplishments using language and forums readily accessible to our wide-ranging, ever-changing constituencies.

The already substantial challenges posed by these communications issues are complicated by the rapid decline of the more traditional communications media. It is no longer possible to speak of a mass media. Rather than relying on broadcasting our message, the BLM must “narrowcast” to reach the necessary audiences, which we have done with some success through our Wild Horse and Burro Facebook page, for example. This is, nonetheless, a time- and labor-intensive process that has been complicated by access restrictions not under the BLM’s direct control.

Maintaining relevance under such conditions is difficult, but the BLM has a substantial number of assets—including our own employees—from which to draw. The lands we manage represent a significant portion of the national identity and provide economic and energy security benefits as well. Even if citizens never see the public lands, the BLM manages lands that should matter to them.

The BLM’s recreation program, where Americans are most likely to come into direct contact with the BLM, provides the central opportunities for sharing key agency messages. The wide-ranging cultural history of BLM’s western lands, with its Buffalo Soldiers and Chinese railroad builders, also provides an untapped opportunity to reach diverse audiences. In addition, the records of the General Land Office are part...
of the American fabric and provide an unprecedented look into the Nation’s expansion and settling of the West and are of continuing interest to citizens nationwide.

**Actions**

- Conduct a benchmark review of BLM communications programs, including best practices. The review should include sister land management agencies and non-land management agencies. It should encompass funding and staffing at all levels of the organization, strategies for the use of both traditional and new media in public engagement and education, and focused efforts to reach new and diverse audiences.

- Update the national communications strategy based on the benchmark review with a focus on the following audiences:
  - Residents of the core BLM states.
  - Residents of the Eastern states and Hawaii.
  - BLM employees.
  - Congress.

- Explore use of General Land Office records as a traveling museum piece.

- Promote stronger place-based attachments by giving names to discrete blocks of BLM lands identified through land tenure goals for long-term retention in public ownership.

**Looking Ahead**

By 2016, the BLM’s public communications and education efforts are guided by an overarching strategy that is regularly updated to address emerging issues. Key message points and supporting materials are accessible to and used by all employees in their interactions with the public. Employees have a greater understanding of the BLM’s history and the broad range of BLM activities, accomplishments, and policies. Field and district offices are appropriately staffed with individuals qualified to represent the BLM before the diverse segments of the public. All levels of the BLM have access to and make use of the appropriate media, in whatever form it may exist, for reaching these publics. The National Landscape Conservation System in particular is seen and understood by employees and constituents alike as an integral part of the BLM and as a vital representation of the BLM’s commitment to manage and conserve the lands.
under its jurisdiction across a range of options. Consequently, the American people have a better understanding of the BLM and its mission, and the ways multiple-use management of the public lands is evolving to ensure the viability of these lands to meet present and future needs.
BLM leadership established a team composed of six BLM employees to direct the 2016 Project. Team members came from different levels and perspectives within the BLM. The team included representatives from the Director’s Office, the Executive Leadership Team, the Field Committee, a District Manager, a Field Manager, and a communications specialist.

The team worked over several months to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current and future role of the BLM in land management, resource management, and conservation issues by doing the following:

- Conducting an “environmental scan” by reviewing current laws and regulations affecting the BLM and other land management agencies and examining academic and think tank literature that discussed public land management issues. The team also reviewed documents from the BLM and other agencies that detailed earlier long-range planning efforts.

- Collecting the views of BLM employees through a survey on present challenges faced by the BLM and how to best move BLM into the future of land management. A summary of responses to one of the open-ended questions on actions the BLM could take to become a “premiere land management agency” is included as Appendix 2. The team conducted focus groups of BLM employees to examine these issues in greater depth.

- Sponsoring a one-day meeting with representatives from universities, think tanks, and organizations relevant to resource use, land management, and conservation issues.


The information gathered from all of these sources enabled the team to develop a long-term vision and philosophy for the BLM and to prepare strategies and recommendations for forming multiyear, high-level action plans to implement the vision.
Appendix 2: Summary of Employee Input

Question 1: What do you like best about working for BLM?

Overwhelmingly, people appreciate the “flexibility” associated with working for the BLM. It was brought up in relation to an employee’s ability to manage work with personal life issues (e.g., single parents caring for children, providing care for aging parents, sick leave and annual leave use).

People like the BLM’s multiple-use mission, which is relatively unique to BLM (and a little to the Forest Service).

Question 2: What makes BLM different than other land management agencies?

The majority of statements regarding mission related to the diversity of the BLM’s multiple-use mission. Most respondents viewed this positively. A few respondents viewed the multiple-use mission negatively, as trying to be all things to all people and being unable to say no. Representative comments regarding mission include the following:

- 47% mentioned BLM’s multiple-use mission and considered this positive.
- A few viewed the mission as trying to be all things to all people.

Work Life was mentioned the most, and the vast majority of comments were positive.

- Employees feel valued and supported by management.
- Management is accessible.
- Employees have the flexibility to get the job done; they take risks and have maverick attitudes.
- Employees are committed to their jobs.
- The BLM offers career opportunities.

Negative comments concerning work life included the following:

- There are too many bureaucratic/administrative processes to get their job done.
- Decision making is too political.
- Managers lack supervisory skills.
The majority of the comments on **Partnerships** were positive and focused on the BLM’s strength at developing partnerships and its connection to community.

Negative comments focused on BLM’s lack of public identity, particularly compared to other land management agencies.

**Question 3: What is changing about the way you do your job? Do you see these changes as having a positive or negative effect?**

Nearly 60% of the responses identified negative changes to the **way employees do their jobs**. Major concerns centered on declining budgets, a sense of being overwhelmed with work, doing more than one job, centralizing support services, high employee turn-over, NEPA-related process burden, too many office- and process-related tasks keep people from the field, and technology-related issues. The technology-related issues are interesting in that there were positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, respondents identified GIS and GPS as excellent tools for the job. On the negative side, many respondents identified multiple reporting systems, inadequate computer systems, outdated computer applications, and technology not being well integrated into resource programs as major issues.

There was a clear identification of FBMS and GovTrip as major administrative burdens and obstacles for employees. Other issues were related to purchasing, training requirements, reporting requirements, and generally inefficient (nonspecific) information technology-related processes.

Increased litigation, “special interest” political influences on the BLM, and information technology security policies were identified as negative changes to the way employees do their jobs. Many respondents noted these issues caused delays in projects, were very time consuming and labor intensive, and caused much confusion and many changes in agency direction.

**Question 4: What do you see as the top internal challenges facing the BLM in accomplishing our mission during the next 10 years?**

Shrinking budgets were identified by 35% of the respondents as a major internal issue for the BLM during the next decade, often but not exclusively in the context of hiring. Nearly 30% of the respondents identified upcoming retirements for a large segment of the BLM’s staff. Another 23% mentioned issues related to IT/Data. There was a clear split with many people bemoaning the existing programs (FAMS
and GovTrip were the most frequently mentioned) while an almost equal number saw the need for additional, centrally coordinated data gathering, usually for land management rather than administrative purposes.

**Question 5: What do you see as the top external challenges facing BLM in accomplishing our mission during the next 10 years?**

The need for public support, education, and bureau identity was raised as an issue by 26% of the respondents. A shrinking budget was mentioned by 20%. Increased litigation, much of it specifically identified as NEPA-driven, was identified by another 20%. Energy issues were mentioned by 16%. Energy issues were not necessarily focused on renewable energy, though more than half did mention that topic. The basic concern was for the overall effect of increased demands on the landscape and on the BLM’s personnel posed by both “traditional” extractive minerals and nontraditional “renewable” resources.

**Question 6: What are steps the BLM needs to take to continue as a premier land management agency?**

Of the 651 responses to Question 6, the majority of employee responses fell into 12 categories.
## Appendix 3: Selected List of Previous Strategic Efforts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Project Twenty-Twelve: A Long Range Program for Our Public Lands</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Program for the Public Lands and Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Fish and Wildlife 2000—A Plan for the Future</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>Recreation 2000: A Strategic Plan</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>BLM: Reengineering for Quality, round 1</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>Blueprint for the Future</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2000-2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The BLM’s Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Geospatial Services Strategic Plan—FY2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Appendix 4: Project Team

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