

# Protecting Public Land Resources



# PROTECTING PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), caretaker of more than 300 million acres of public land, is charged by law to manage and protect these lands, and the vast resources—timber, minerals, livestock forage, historic artifacts, wild horses, and others—associated with them.

This protection can take many forms such as alerting visitors that certain activities are allowed and others are not. But there are situations where laws designed to protect public land resources are being deliberately broken. In such cases, explaining the laws is not likely to have much effect on the theft and destruction. The solution then is to enforce these laws with trained Federal law enforcement officers authorized to make arrests or take other appropriate action.

BLM has highly trained Special Agents and uniformed Rangers to enforce applicable Federal laws on the public lands. These officers receive training similar to that provided agents in better known Federal law enforcement agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation or Treasury Department.

Bureau officials work closely with law enforcement officers from Federal and State agencies and Sheriff's Departments to better coordinate law enforcement on the public lands within their jurisdiction.

## The Special Agents:

The Special Agents are responsible for enforcing Federal laws and regulations relating to the public lands and resources. This includes conducting criminal investigations and the arrest of violators.



## The Rangers:

The Ranger force is a law enforcement arm of BLM. High visibility of the Rangers from being uniformed and driving clearly marked patrol vehicles produces a deterrent effect on wrongdoers. Generally, the areas patrolled are vast, lack readily available water, and have extremes of temperature that make them places where an unwary visitor could easily get into serious trouble.

Preventing law violations and assisting stranded visitors and other users are the main focus of a Ranger's job. However, all Rangers are highly trained in law enforcement procedures and are authorized to arrest or otherwise cite violators when circumstances warrant.

These Rangers enforce laws, conduct search and rescue operations, provide information to visitors, seek to eliminate hazards, investigate accidents, and carry out a host of other duties.

### **Authorities for Enforcing Public Land Laws:**

A number of Federal statutes give BLM authority for enforcing laws and regulations on the public land. Among these are the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 which, among its many other provisions, called for establishment of a Ranger force and authorized designating Federal personnel to carry out law enforcement responsibilities; the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 directing the protection of these historically significant animals on the public lands; and the Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 making destruction or theft of cultural artifacts a misdemeanor or felony.

If you have questions concerning any of these or other laws affecting Federal lands, contact a BLM office listed on the back page.

### **Why the Laws are Broken:**

Financial gain is a major reason behind the deliberate breaking of laws since many public land resources have high value that makes them tempting targets of illegal exploitation. For example:

- A 16-foot sawlog may bring as much as \$500 at a sawmill;
- A clay pot taken in good condition from an Indian ruin can be worth up to \$15,000 to a collector of artifacts;
- Production from a single marijuana plant may be worth \$2,000 in the illegal drug market;
- Cactus plants removed from the public lands find a ready market for distribution throughout the United States.
- A wild horse can be sold to a pet food processor or a rendering plant for as much as \$450; and
- Unauthorized grazing of livestock damages forage for the lawful grazer and circumvents the payment of appropriate grazing fees.

### **Archaeological Resources:**

One of the most destructive and insensitive violations of Federal law involves stealing cultural artifacts—pottery, carvings, ornaments and even bones of Indians who once inhabited parts of the West.

Some thefts are by amateur “treasure hunters” who may not know the law or who do not realize that their actions may permanently erase vital cultural records. The most destructive of such violations, however, are by commercial, “black market” suppliers who sell stolen artifacts to private museums and collectors throughout the world.

Such individuals are the modern day counterparts of the graverobbers of old, being totally insensitive to the sacred nature of such items. BLM's Special Agents have investigated numerous cases of archaeological theft, resulting in many arrests and prosecutions.

### **Wild Horses and Burros:**

Wild horses and burros have no natural enemies on the public lands and their numbers can and do increase rapidly unless controlled. To achieve a necessary balance between horses and burros and their environment—the food and water they need to survive—excess animals are gathered and removed from the public lands. The captured animals are then offered for adoption to individuals or groups with facilities to care for them. The Federal government retains title to adopted animals for at least one year.

Treating either free-roaming or adopted wild horses and burros in an inhumane manner, selling them to slaughter houses or rodeos, or otherwise misusing these animals are Federal violations and, when reported to BLM, are investigated by Special Agents. Such investigations have played important roles in a number of prosecutions and convictions. Resultant sentences have ranged from repossession of adopted animals to a \$25,000 fine and 18 months imprisonment.



### **Destruction and Vandalism:**

Along with Federal law violations where financial gain is the intent, other violations seem to stem from motives that are much more difficult to classify or define.

For example, some people maliciously destroy public facilities or perhaps start fires that burn thousands of acres of forest or rangelands. Others dump garbage on public lands or willfully pollute streams and lakes.



### **Marijuana Growers:**

Cultivation of marijuana on public lands has become a major concern. Illegal growers of marijuana sometimes use intimidation, armed guards and booby traps to protect their crops. These growers endanger BLM employees as well as individuals who use and enjoy these public lands for hunting, fishing, family recreation, and camping or who carry out authorized uses such as livestock grazing, mining or other commercial operations.

BLM is working closely with other concerned agencies to combat these illegal actions. Cultivating marijuana or other plants on Federal land to produce controlled substances violates Federal law and is investigated and prosecuted.

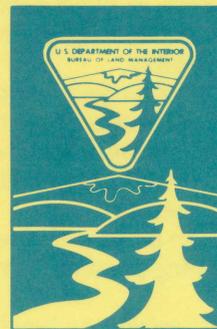
### **How YOU Can Help:**

Rangers and Special Agents have a tremendous responsibility for protecting our public lands—they need your help! A telephone call from a concerned citizen has frequently stopped resource abusers and helped prevent repeat offenses. What you see and report may help us to solve a case of law violation. Remember, the public lands not only belong to *all* of us, they also belong to *each* of us and you gain when such incidents are reported.

these lands are unique and irreplaceable. Unless cared for, they will not be available for the use and enjoyment of future generations of Americans. A strong sense of public stewardship would contribute much towards protecting these lands and their resources.

You can help the BLM through timely reporting of incidents where public land resources or improvements are being damaged or stolen. If you have reason to believe that a violation has taken place, please contact us. Your call will be confidential. You can take pride in knowing that you took part in caring for our Nation's natural resources.

**Take Pride In America . . .**



***This Land is YOUR Land***

## Field Offices (Staffed by Special Agents)

**ANCHORAGE, AK 99513**

701 C Street  
(907) 376-3264

**EUGENE, OR 97440**

1255 Pearl Street  
(503) 687-6661

**RENO, NV 89520**

Federal Office Building  
300 Booth Street  
(702) 784-5683

**SACRAMENTO, CA 95825**

Federal Office Building  
Room E-2841  
2800 Cottage Way  
(916) 978-4759

**ALEXANDRIA, VA 22304**

350 South Pickett Street  
(703) 274-0177

**PORTLAND, OR 97208**

825 N.E. Multnomah Street  
(503) 231-6875

**REDDING, CA 96001**

355 Hemsted Drive  
(916) 246-5325

**PHOENIX, AZ 85011**

3707 North 7th Street  
(602) 241-5554

**SALT LAKE CITY, UT  
84111-2303**

324 South State Street  
(801) 524-3013

**BOISE, ID 83706**

3380 Americana Terrace  
(208) 334-1570

**LAS VEGAS, NV 89126**

4765 Vegas Drive  
(702) 388-6453

**CHEYENNE, WY 82001**

2515 Warren Avenue  
(307) 772-2559

**BILLINGS, MT 59103**

222 North 32nd Street  
(406) 657-6201

**FOLSOM, CA 95630**

63 Natoma Street  
(916) 985-4474

**DENVER, CO 80205**

2020 Arapahoe Street  
(303) 294-7670

**SANTA FE, NM 87501**

Federal Office Building  
South Federal Place  
(505) 988-6478

**JACKSON, MS 39213**

P.O. Box 11248  
300 Woodroe Wilson  
(601) 960-4405

## Field Offices (Staffed by Rangers)

**California Desert District**

1695 Spruce Street  
Riverside, CA 92507  
(714) 351-6427

**San Juan Resource Area**

480 South First West  
Monticello, UT 84535  
(801) 587-2201

**Indio Resource Area**

P.O. Box 1591  
Blythe, CA 92226  
(619) 922-4519

**EL Centro Resource Area**

333 South Waterman Avenue  
El Centro, CA 92243  
(619) 352-5842

**Medford District**

3040 Biddle Road  
Medford, OR 97504  
(503) 776-4173

**Las Cruces District**

1800 Marquess  
P.O. Box 1420  
Las Cruces, MN  
88004-1420  
(505) 525-1171

**Ridgecrest Resource Area**

1415-A North Norma Street  
Ridgecrest, CA 93555  
(619) 375-7125

**Ukiah District**

555 Leslie Street  
P.O. Box 940  
Ukiah, CA 95482  
(707) 462-3873

**Yuma District**

3150 Winsor Avenue  
P.O. Box 5680  
Yuma, AZ 85364  
(602) 726-6300

**Barstow Resource Area**

831 Barstow Road  
Barstow, CA 92311  
(619) 256-3591

**Folsom Resource Area**

63 Natoma Street  
Folsom, CA 95630  
(916) 978-4177

**Albuquerque District**

P.O. Box 6770  
Albuquerque, NM  
87197-6770  
(505) 766-8281

**Needles Resource Area**

901 Third Street  
Needles, CA 92363  
(619) 326-3896

**Indio Resource Area**

P.O. Box 1237  
Palm Desert, CA 92261  
(619) 346-5101

**Boise District**

3948 Development Avenue  
Boise, ID 83705  
(208) 334-1582