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PUBLIC LANDS DAY DRAWS CROWD

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GLENDIVE –Volunteers from Glendive and Miles City met to make improvements on public land, Saturday, May 22, as part of National Public Lands Day---a national effort designed to promote volunteerism and service.

Digging post holes, erecting informational kiosks, collecting litter and installing erosion controls were the order of the day as 20 volunteers assisted staff from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Miles City Field Office in the yearly event, held this year at the Glendive Short Pine Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Area. The volunteers represented a spectrum of interests, from concerned citizens to Boy Scouts and motorcycle enthusiasts.

The OHV area consists of 2,240 acres of federal land which is located about six miles southwest of Glendive on the old Marsh Road and provides a variety of off-road driving opportunities. Recreational shooting, invertebrate fossil collecting, hiking and camping are a few of the diverse activities enjoyed by visitors to the Short Pine area. The location sees considerable visitor use, most in the form of off-road vehicles.

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According to BLM Supervisory Land Use Specialist Fred Wambolt, the volunteers provided considerable improvements on the site, which previously had little more than a gravel parking lot and a loading ramp.

“These volunteers contributed over 100 hours of their time to represent about \$1000.00 dollars of labor,” said Wambolt. “It’s been great to partner with these folks, especially as this activity helps promote awareness of citizen stewardship and BLM volunteer opportunities.”

Glendive resident Marty Ulrich was one of the volunteers rolling up his sleeves as a part of the work party. Ulrich, a member of the Ranch Riders, a chapter of the Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association, put some sweat behind his group’s efforts to promote responsible OHV use. The Ranch Riders are one of the groups that frequent the area, at least once a week if the weather is dry.

According to Ulrich, the area sees plenty of use—especially since designated BLM OHV areas are few in eastern Montana. The nearest one is the Shepherd Ah Nei area, located near Billings. Taking care of such a unique and increasingly popular spot is not only a priority to the BLM, but to users such as Ulrich and his group.

“Anything that we can do to improve the place, is always for the better,” said Ulrich.

Generally held in September each year, NPLD events bring together thousands of individuals and organizational volunteers to refurbish and restore the country’s public places. NPLD is a partner in the Take Pride in American Initiative--- promoting awareness about citizen stewardship and increasing volunteer opportunities for the public.

NPLD has grown dramatically since it was first started in 1994. The first event was sponsored by three federal agencies and attracted 700 volunteers to three sites.

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Last year, nearly 80,000 volunteers pitched in nation-wide to build trails and bridges, restore wetlands, remove invasive plants as well as other numerous projects. Volunteers worked at 550 sites in all 50 states. It is estimated that volunteers and their community partners contributed \$10 million in improvements to their federal, state and local public lands.

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