2004 The Quarterly STEWARD

Montana/Dakotas Bureau of Land Management Fall 2004

Wilderness Act Turns 40

Susan James & Marilyn Krause, Western Montana Zone

Forty years ago the Wilderness Act (September 3, 1964) was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Congress stated that the act would "secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness." Four federal agencies were given authority to manage the designated areas – the Forest Service manages most of the acreage along with BLM, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service.

Montana has more than 3.4 million acres of designated wilderness. The BLM manages the Bear Trap Canyon, one of four units of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, which the President signed into law on October 31, 1983. BLM-Montana also manages numerous "Wilderness Study Areas" whose future designation rests with Congress.

The 6,000-acre Bear Trap Canyon has the distinction of being the first BLM-administered land to enter into the National Wilderness Preservation System and BLM-Montana's only designated wilderness area. The Bear Trap's steep, narrow canyon is cut by the Madison River that flows from its headwaters in Yellowstone National Park. In addition to the outstanding scenery, the river's blue ribbon fishery and class IV whitewater make it popular with recreationists.

Along with popularity come management's biggest challenges – noxious weeds and increased visitor use. The Bear Trap sees between 8,000 and 12,000 visitors annually (two to three times that of 1983). Nice weekends may attract 250 people daily. Most use is concentrated along the first three miles of the National Recreation Trail and adjacent river reach. Leafy spurge and Russian knapweed have spread throughout the canyon with a loss of wildlife habitat, soil erosion and increased stream sedimentation.

In 2001, the BLM, with the support of local environmental organizations, the Madison County Weed Board, and the Forest Service, began an extensive effort to control noxious weeds within the Bear Trap. Our goal is to prevent the introduction and spread of noxious weeds through education, detection, inventory and treatment. Additionally, we are evaluating the wilderness plan and "Limits of Acceptable Change" management direction for the Bear Trap to understand the current existing condition of the wilderness. The evaluation will be used to prioritize and implement management actions that will continue to protect the wilderness resource.

When the Bear Trap celebrates future milestone anniversaries, the goal is that the area will look much the same as when it was designated in 1983. With proper management and cooperation from wilderness users, that goal should be reality.

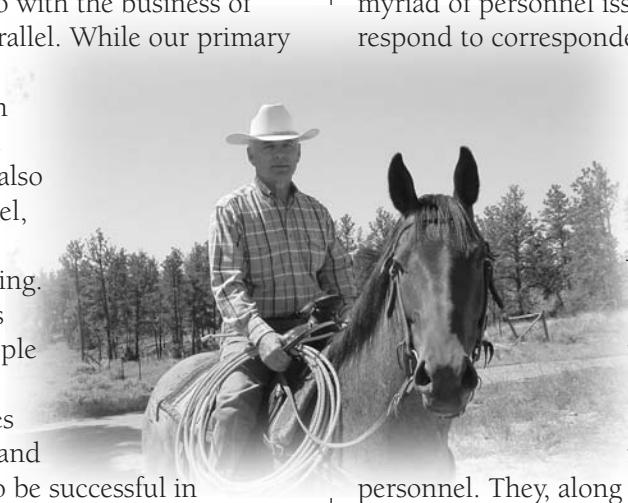
Bear Trap Canyon was the BLM's first designated wilderness area. BLM photo.

In Support of the Infantry

In the Army, it's said that if you aren't in the infantry, then your job is to support the infantry.

The infantry is the heart of the Army. They're the ground-pounding, in-the-trenches fighters who either win or lose battles. I recall a statistic that shows just how important it is to support the infantry: It takes eleven soldiers in support positions to serve all the needs of just one fighting man.

What does all of this have to do with the business of BLM? You probably see the parallel. While our primary mission doesn't focus on the battlefield, we do have our own infantry – the men and women who work in the field, and we also have our own support personnel, those who stay behind and primarily work in an office setting. I would suggest that the Army's ratio of infantry to support people might very well be close to our own. And like the Army, it takes both those who go to the field and those who stay behind for us to be successful in managing natural resources for the nation's benefit.



In the past several months, I've concentrated much of my time on visiting the field, where I've observed, firsthand, great examples of on-the-ground resource management in Montana and the Dakotas. I've seen restoration of a critical fishery; witnessed a private/public cooperative effort to maintain a watershed and maintain open spaces; and observed how a unique cultural and historical resource has been preserved. I've seen a forest get a new start after a devastating wildfire, and viewed the progress we've made on reducing fuels in a wildland-urban setting. I've observed important progress being made on developing our important natural gas reserves, and hiked along a well-maintained portion of a nationally designated scenic trail. I've been to the Pryor Mountains and watched how our wild horse herd is managed with care and passion for the resource.

Without reservation, I can say that the experience of watching our field employees in action has been refreshing and revitalizing. BLM is, first and foremost, a public land management agency with a multiple-use mission. It's exciting to see how well our "infantry" responds to its stewardship.

The infantry is, of course, one part of the equation. They're supported by good people throughout the Montana/Dakotas organization who spend long hours administering the budget, procuring needed supplies and equipment, managing our vehicles, and handling a myriad of personnel issues. These are the people who respond to correspondence, greet the public in our buildings, prepare a multitude of plans, and take care of, with hardly ever missing a beat, the rest of the work that comes our way through Congress, the judiciary, the Department, and other agencies and offices. I've had the chance to witness the work of many of these people, too. They are as committed to the agency and the resources we manage as our field-going personnel. They, along with those who do most of their work in the field, ensure a balanced and sustainable stewardship of the public trust.

A tip of the hat to the folks in the field, and another to those who support the work they do. It's truly a team effort. As with any great team, every member is an integral part of our success, as we fulfill our agency mission, set by Congress and the American people.

I hope that, whether you're part of the BLM "infantry," or one who supports it, that you understand how much your work and attitude is appreciated. The success of one part of the team is critical to the success of the other.

After watching many of you on the job over these last few months, the conclusion for me is simple: It's a team that I'm proud to be part of. Thanks for all that you do.

Martin C. Ott
State Director

Lewis and Clark Signature Event

Heart of America: A Journey Forth

Dick Fichtler, Missoula Field Office

As our country celebrated our freedom this past Independence Day, we also remembered an event that occurred exactly 200 years ago. On July 4 and 5 we commemorated the first Fourth of July celebrated by the Lewis and Clark Expedition as they began their arduous three-year journey. The Heart of America: A Journey Forth was the sixth of the 15 national Signature Events commemorating the Corps of Discovery.

This two-day event provided visitors with an eclectic blend of historical reenactments, commercial vendors, agency exhibits and classic Fourth of July activities. Held at three separate venues (Kansas City, MO; Leavenworth, KS; and Atchison, KS), visitors and participants alike were left to pick which event was of the most interest. An adventuresome few even chose to take in all three.

The BLM's Eastern States Office organized and staffed this event as well as the previous five Signature Events along the Eastern portion of the trail. Building and refining as they moved through each event, the Eastern States Office concentrated on its primary missions (land records, sub-surface mineral management and cadastral survey) in building its outstanding exhibits and interpretive programs. The Eastern State's fine cast of characters included Terry Lewis, Bill Davenport, Jim Daggenhart, Lars Johnson and Bernice Johnson.

At the risk of understating the success of the BLM's efforts, I can say that our interpretive programs were a huge success! While each of our BLM employees was amazing to watch, much of the credit is due to our living history performer, Rob Nurre. Rob is a private contractor working for the BLM who portrays the "Surly Surveyor," an 1800s General Land Office (GLO) surveyor following the Lewis & Clark Expedition. Rob goes to great effort to adapt his performances to the local area through extensive research -- going so far as to identify the actual GLO surveyor responsible for surveying the site where he performs. He interacts continually with his audience and continues to be the best crowd drawer at each of the events, packing the 100-seat BLM tent every hour on the hour. What stamina!! Funny and informative, his interpretation receives rave reviews from the audience and event organizers. His presentations linked our many missions and provided the nucleus for our interpretive stations.

Satellite interpretive stations focused on the themes of modern surveying techniques, mineral development on public lands, and a mock-up of an old GLO office where the public could step back in time and become early homesteaders receiving patents for their new farms.

As your Lewis and Clark Coordinator, I was asked to assist in their interpretation. Dressed in period clothing, I assumed the role of a GLO employee working at a land office issuing patents to settlers following on the heels of the Expedition. The folks from the Eastern States Office were also fond of pointing out my origins to the thousands of visitors passing through our exhibits. Folks from our part of the world are a curiosity to many of those back east and with 25 percent of all the L&C Trail miles just in Montana, I talked myself dry answering questions about Montana and the Dakotas.

The first of five Signature Events in our own three-state area was in Chamberlain, SD, on August 27-28. The next one will be in Bismarck,

BLM contractor Rob Nurre gives a living history presentation. Photo by Bill Davenport, Eastern States BLM

ND, the last 10 days of October. In 2005 we will co-host the largest of all the Signature Events – the 34-day Explore! The Big Sky event in Fort Benton and Great Falls. We will also host events at Pompeys Pillar in July 2006 and New Town, ND, in September 2006.

Do these events interest you? Would you like to pitch in? Give me a call and let's talk. In the mean time, we at the BLM will continue to walk in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark as we "proceed on" with our service to the people of this great nation.

Dick Fichtler answers questions during the Lewis and Clark Signature Event in Kansas City. Photo by Bill Davenport, Eastern States BLM

They proceeded on . . .

Fall 1804

September 7
Moving into the Great Plains, the expedition begins seeing animals unknown in the East: coyotes, antelope, mule deer, and others. On this particular day, all the men are employed drowning a prairie dog out of its hole for shipment back to Jefferson. In all, the captains would describe in their journals 178 plants and 122 animals that previously had not been recorded for science.

September 25
Near what is now Pierre, South Dakota, the Teton Sioux (the Lakota) demand one of the boats as a toll for moving further upriver. A fight nearly ensues, but is defused by the diplomacy of a chief named Black Buffalo. For three more anxious days, the expedition stays with the tribe.

October 24
North of what is now Bismarck, North Dakota, the Corps of Discovery reaches the earth-lodge villages of the Mandans and Hidatsas. Some 4,500 people live there – more than live in St. Louis or even Washington, D.C., at the time. The captains decide to build Fort Mandan across the river from the main village.

November 4
The captains hire Toussaint Charbonneau, a French Canadian fur trader living among the Hidatsas, as an interpreter. His young Shoshone wife, Sacagawea, had been captured by the Hidatsas several years earlier and then sold to Charbonneau (along with another Shoshone girl). Having been told that the Shoshones live at the headwaters of the Missouri and have many horses, the captains believe the two will be helpful when the expedition reaches the mountains.

(source: www.PBS.org)

OPERATION: TREES FOR FISH

Story and photos by Mark E. Jacobsen, Miles City Field Office

MILES CITY – The grapple skidder slowly chugged up the dirt road—its scarred pincher-like jaws clutched a bristly prize that swung side to side with each bump in the trail. Negotiating its way like a monstrous, single-clawed crab, the operator swung the skidder's mottled mast and dropped a 2000-pound root-wad onto a flatbed trailer with a dusty crunch. Mission complete: Another one for the fish.

Forest fires are often considered a detriment to fish habitat, but in the case of the 2003 Swain Coulee burn, it is producing a bonus. Root-wads, the leftover byproducts of salvage logging, are being collected to enhance fish habitat in eastern Montana's BLM reservoirs.

Later this winter, the wads will be trucked to several fish-bearing locations administered by the Miles City Field Office. Winter ice will facilitate positioning of the wads, which will later sink into place with the spring thaw and provide new habitat for the reservoir's aquatic residents.

STAGED AND READY---BLM Fishery Biologist Joe Platz unhitches a root wad staged and waiting for transport to area BLM reservoirs for fish habitat while BLM Forester Ray Smith (left) and Seasonal Forestry Technician Jon David (right), assist.

The concept is not new. Agencies around the U.S. have employed a variety of methods to provide a little extra underwater structure for fish stocks. Everything from Christmas trees, concrete blocks, junk cars — and in coastal areas, truck tires and old ships, have been sunk

ROOT WAD READY---A grapple-skidder drops a root wad onto a trailer as part of a BLM fisheries program designed to enhance fish stocks in eastern Montana BLM reservoirs.

to create artificial reefs designed to encourage fish production. By sinking root wads, the BLM hopes to give variety to some otherwise barren, local underwater landscapes.

The number of wads per reservoir will depend on water body size. Some will be scattered in deeper water for larger fish, others will be placed at shallow depths for fry-friendly habitat. The nooks and crannies of the

ROOT WAD TRANSPORT---A buncher-feller grips a root wad and makes its way to the pick-up zone. Root wads from the Swain Coulee timber salvage operations are being used for fish habitat in BLM reservoirs.

twisted, tangled tree roots will give aquatic organisms a chance to flourish, thereby producing more fish food and fish. Everything: from Daphnia to Plains Minnows to Northern Pike.

BLM Fishery Biologist Joe Platz is heading the project and hopes root wads will translate into more fish.

"Many of these spots are not producing fish as well as they have in the past," said Platz. "This is one of many strategies we can employ to increase production in BLM reservoirs."

Platz hopes that in spite of other factors — such as the ongoing drought, fluctuating reservoir water levels and leaking dams, the root wads will be an asset to reduce predation. A featureless, bare bottom, plus shallow water — equals easy pickings for predators. Add a root wad or two and you provide the equivalent of aquatic apartment buildings. Crawl-space included.

BLM Forester Ray Smith facilitated the project and has been a steady presence on the Swain operation from the beginning. Smith explained that the root wads are a by-product of the temporary roads built for timber extraction operations. Tree stumps and their root wads are left on the hillsides and other erosion prone areas, both to reduce top soil run-off and to decompose back into the forest floor.

However, since the stumps in the temporary roadways are both an impediment to equipment and a hazard, they are removed and put to use. The result is a weighty clump of wood and soil that is an effective way to stop erosion in reclaimed skid trails and head cuts, or in this case — grow more fish.

Timber salvage operations are wrapping up in the Swain Coulee area. Smith explained that this was the largest timber sale to date for the Miles City Field Office. Approximately 600 acres of both the burned zone and sections of surrounding live growth have been treated.

The objective of the harvest was to reduce the hazard fuel levels of woody debris and recover the economic value of the timber, said Smith. By doing so, the threat of future fires with high fire severity levels will be reduced in the immediate area.

Wildfire is nothing new to eastern Montana residents. However, perhaps a brighter future has presented itself from the ashes of uncertain circumstance.

"A goal of ours is to provide and improve fishing opportunities for the public," said BLM's Joe Platz. "This is one way we can do this."

Improvements Underway at Shepherd Ah-Nei

Nancy Bjelland, Billings Field Office

As part of National Public Lands Day, the Greater Yellowstone Chapter of the Montana Back Country Horsemen (GYBCH) is replacing and repairing the buck and pole fence at the Shepherd Ah-Nei Horse Use Area.

Besides the fence work, the project includes developing a picnic area and building a new vehicle gate for emergency and administrative purposes. Public access will be limited to a walk-through gate wide enough for livestock, but too narrow for off-road vehicles. Future plans include a parking and turnaround area along the north side of the entrance road.

Work began July 25 with the removal of the old fence. On August 8, the group constructed the fence and gate. Finishing touches and a barbecue are planned for September 18, National Public Lands Day. As a bonus, the group will also set up a back country horseman camp that day to demonstrate Leave No Trace principles.

The Shepherd Ah-Nei area has become increasingly popular for training and conditioning horses for back country use and simple pleasure riding. This project is just one of many in the Billings FO where the Back Country Horsemen have played a key role. Hats off to the GYBCH for improving our public land resources!

LEFT: Daren Brown cleans up an old water catchment.

RIGHT: Kermit Fladland and Mike Witt chain up to remove a t-post. Mike Brooks is driving the truck.

Photos by Nancy Bjelland

Gettin' Down and Dirty Along the Madison

Susan James, Dillon Field Office

This spring 200 feet of stream bank were restored and two hand-carry boat launches were installed at Warm Springs Recreation Area. The Dillon Field Office in Ennis and the Montana Conservation Corps did the work with technical direction from Jo Christensen, fish biologist from the Missoula Field Office. The banks were damaged by repeated use by fishermen, floaters, and fluctuating water flows.

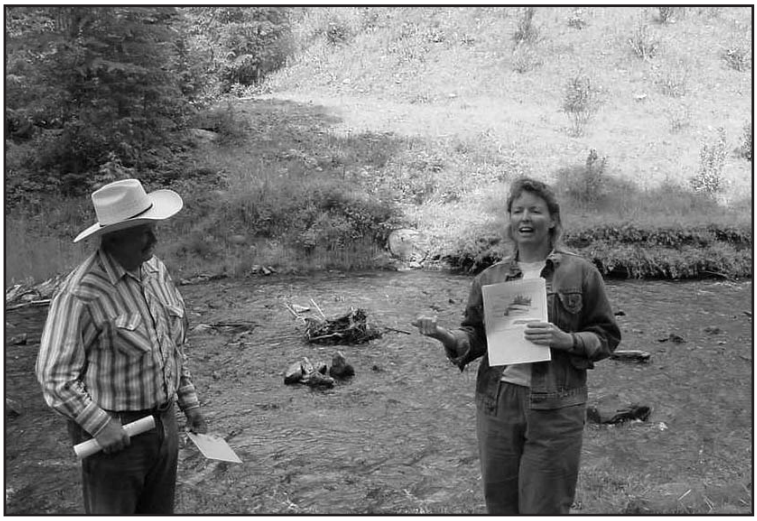
Months of planning and preparation went into the project. In March, volunteers from the Federation of Fly Fishers and BLM staff collected more than 4,000 dormant willow cuttings, which were kept in a cold storage unit until work began in April prior to anticipated spring run-off and high flows.

The original toe of the channel was re-established using biodegradable coir logs (made from interwoven coconut fibers) to provide temporary physical protection for new vegetation. Then a "brush layering" re-vegetation technique (layers of dormant willows and soil wrapped in biodegradable fabric) was used to re-establish a thick layer of vegetation. A backhoe and excavator were used to re-contour the bank and remove and replace stream bank soils.

In addition, two hand-carry launch sites were constructed to provide river access during the "tube hatch" (inner tube floaters) on the lower Madison during the warm summer months. The hand-carry launch sites are intended to reduce congestion on the boat ramp and minimize conflicts between recreational floaters and drift boaters. "Geoweb," a cellular plastic material, was filled with crushed rock to provide a surface that drains well and can withstand repeated use.

After just a few months the willows are growing and grass is sprouting throughout the site. We plan to replace the temporary fence with a two rail log fence around the perimeter of the site to restrict access to hardened sites. This fall we hope to plant some additional shrubs and add some final touches.

These three photos show the Montana Conservation Corps at various stages of the project. Photos by Susan James.



RAC FIELD TRIP

Ted Coffman, Madison County Commissioner and Western Montana RAC member, listens as Jo Christensen from the Missoula Field Office explains the stream bank stabilization technique used along Belmont Creek. A tributary of the Blackfoot River, Belmont Creek is important spawning habitat for the endangered bull trout. *(Photo by Marilyn Krause)*

Our Recreation Attractions . . . Check 'em out!!

Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River and Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument

Location

Fort Benton, Montana, marks the western extent of both the Wild and Scenic River and the Monument. From Fort Benton, both features wind their way 149 miles east to the Fred Robinson Bridge, where U.S. Highway 191 crosses the Upper Missouri River. The James Kipp Recreation Area is also found on the eastern border.

Description

The 149-mile section of the Missouri River that flows through the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument is the only major portion of the river that has been preserved in a natural and free-flowing state. The remote nature of this segment of the Upper Missouri River has buffered the area from most human influence and maintained the same vistas that awed the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805 and 1806.

The river offers remarkable opportunities for both floaters and those who use motorized watercraft. Canoers and kayakers at all levels of experience find a river trip to be a comfortable, enjoyable experience. Along the way, habitats change from rolling pastures and grasslands to soaring white cliffs and rugged badlands.

Directions

The most frequently used put-in/take-out points are:

- Fort Benton;
- Wood Bottom, about 11 miles northeast of Fort Benton, near the town of Loma on US Highway 87;
- Coal Banks Landing, about 12 miles southwest of Big Sandy. (From Big Sandy, drive about 7 miles southwest on U.S. Highway 87, and turn south onto a clearly marked graveled road. Continue for 8 miles, following the signs to Coal Banks Landing.);
- Judith Landing, about 44 miles southeast of Big Sandy on County Road 236; and
- Kipp Recreation Area, where U.S. Highway 191 crosses the Missouri River.

Visitor Activities
Canoeing, boating, scenic drives, hunting, fishing, hiking, picnicking, wildlife viewing, and birdwatching.

Special Features
The monument boasts diverse wildlife and bird populations; the river corridor is a designated Watchable Wildlife area. The monument also contains the Missouri Breaks National Back Country Byway, six wilderness study areas, and an area of critical environmental concern. Glaciers, volcanic activity, and erosion have folded, faulted, uplifted, and sculpted the landscape into the majestic form it takes today. The river, which is along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the Nez Perce National Historic Trail, looks much the same as it did 200 years ago.

The Monument is home to one of the premier bighorn sheep herds in the continental United States. It also provides essential winter range for sage grouse as well as habitat for prairie dogs, antelope, and whitetail and mule deer. Cliff faces provide perching and nesting habitat for many raptors, including sparrow hawks, ferruginous hawks, peregrine falcons, prairie falcons, and golden eagles. Two pairs of bald eagles nest along the river, and many others visit during the late fall and early winter. Shoreline areas provide habitat for great blue herons, pelicans, and a wide variety of other waterfowl. The river and its tributaries host 48 fish species, including goldeye, drum, sauger, walleye, northern pike, channel catfish, paddlefish, and small mouth buffalo. The river also supports the blue sucker, shovel nose sturgeon, sicklefin, sturgeon chub, and the endangered pallid sturgeon. The heads of the coulees and breaks also contain archaeological and historical sites, from tepee rings and remnants of historic trails to abandoned homesteads and lookout sites used by explorers Lewis and Clark.

Permits, Fees Limitations
For safety reasons, all floaters are asked to register at their put-in site.

There are seasonal restrictions on the use of motorized watercraft in the wild and scenic sections of the river between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Between Labor Day and freeze up, both motorized craft and floaters can use the river.

Accessibility
None.

Camping and Lodging
Camping is permitted on BLM land along the river, with a 14-day limit. There is a per-night campsite fee at Kipp Recreation Area. Vault toilets are available at some sites; see Upper Missouri Wild and Scenic River, maps 1, 2, 3 & 4, available from local BLM offices, for exact locations.

Food and Supplies

Supplies can be purchased in Fort Benton, Big Sandy, Loma, Winifred (60 miles south of Big Sandy on County Road 236), Havre (35 miles north of Big Sandy on U.S. Highway 87), and Lewistown (65 miles south of the Robinson Bridge on U.S. Highway 191). There is a potable water supply at Coal Banks Landing, but availability is never guaranteed. Visitors should obtain drinking water before reaching their launch point.

First Aid

The nearest hospitals are in Fort Benton, Havre, and Malta (about 70 miles northeast of Kipp Recreation Area on U.S. Highway 191).

Additional Information

The visitor center is located along the Main Street in Fort Benton, directly across from the river put-in site. The center offers books, maps, videos, and other displays about the river and its historical significance. Weather forecasts, safety information and detailed brochures about the river are also available here. It is open from May 1 through September 15 each year. Please contact staff there or at the BLM - Lewistown Field Office for more information in planning a float trip.

Contact Information

BLM - Lewistown Field Office
P.O. Box 1160
Airport Road
Lewistown, MT 59457-1160
Tel: (406) 538-7461
Fax: (406) 538-1904

BLM - Fort Benton Visitor Center
1718 Front Street
P.O. Box 1389
Fort Benton, MT 59442
Tel: (406) 622-5185

www.mt.blm.gov/ldo/um/

Missouri Breaks Complex: Nature's Prescription for Recovery

Don Smurthwaite, MSO
Photos by Mark E. Jacobsen

JORDAN, MONTANA – Just as a July nightfall arrived last year in the Missouri Breaks country of north-central Montana, a dry lightning storm moved through the area, igniting a string of wildfires that became known as the Missouri Breaks Complex.

Seven days and more than 130,000 acres later, the fires were contained, but not before leaving behind a swath of scorched ponderosa pine and blackened rangeland.

"The temperature at a couple of the remote weather stations on the fire was 107 degrees, and we had relative humidity in the five to nine percent range, which is almost unheard of in that country," recalls Phil Gill, then the fire management officer (FMO) for the Miles City, Montana, field office. "The wind was blowing and we were in a drought. Those fires ripped."

The fires grew from 13,000 acres one day to 62,500 the next, and 105,000 acres on the third. The Daily Situation Report, published by the National Interagency Fire Center, noted the complex featured "torching, crowning and spotting," a dangerous mix of fire behavior characteristics. Structure protection was set up the morning after the fires broke out and evacuations of nearby ranches were ordered.

"The fires got really active. It was more than any of us expected," says Gill, now the state FMO.

A year after the fires, though, Nature is showing another kind of flair for the unexpected.

While burned pine trees still stand as a stark reminder of the powerful fire complex, ground vegetation has come roaring back.

"It looks pretty thick in here," says Mark Jacobsen, public affairs specialist for Miles City, hopping out of a pick-up truck and wading through calf-high western wheat, chokecherry and other vegetation. "The plants are adapted to this kind of environment. They're flourishing."

While much of Montana is suffering through its sixth year of drought, and dryness in most of the state is categorized as severe to exceptional, a few areas received abundant moisture at just the right time. One of them, fortunately, was the site of the Missouri Breaks Complex.

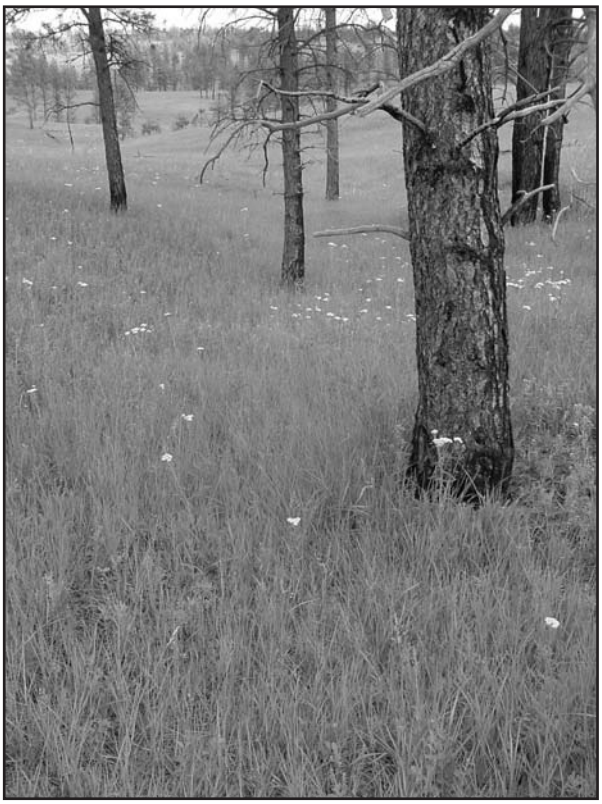
BRUSETT, July 21, 2003—BLAZING UNDERSTORY—Fire works its way through a stand of Ponderosa Pine on the site of the Missouri Breaks Complex wildfire in 2003, west of Brusett and alongside a county road. A cement marker is almost obscured by the far right fencepost.

BRUSETT, July 22, 2004—REGENERATION—The same stand of timber—almost one year to the day. Regenerated grasses give contrast to fire blackened tree trunks. The fence post in the center has been replaced. The same cement marker is evident on the far right.

The first winter snows were heavy and wet, acting as insulation against the sub-zero temperatures common to the area. Springtime brought a gradual melt that allowed the water to soak into the ground and not cascade downslope, says Jeff Gustad, a rangeland management specialist for 13 years in the Miles City field office. The first part of spring was dry, but steady moisture fell in May and June.

"We're getting ideal conditions for good recovery," he says. "Even in some areas where the fire burned hot, the grass is coming up."

GARFIELD COUNTY, July 21, 2003—SMOKY SUNSET—The smoke plume from the Missouri Breaks Complex fires whirls heavenward at sunset, as wildfires rage in Garfield County.



GARFIELD COUNTY, June 25, 2004—GREEN MEADOWS—Grass and forbs carpet the once-burned range.

Erosion, often a serious problem in burned areas, hasn't been a factor in the Missouri Breaks Complex. Gustad says that even in the steepest areas of the burn, "We're not seeing any gullies."

Typically, grazing is suspended for two years where rangeland wildfires burn, and that was the case for the Missouri Breaks complex. But the lush recovery of vegetation has BLM personnel and lease holders talking about turning out livestock in limited numbers for light grazing before the two years are up.

"The permittees have been helpful. Most have been very willing to work with us," says Gustad of the 20 or so grazing lessees in the area.

BLM took some steps to help the land recover, but for the most part, "It's pretty much coming back on its own," Gustad says.

In some respects, the Missouri Breaks Complex fulfilled the role that nature intended for fire in the area. It cleared the area of debris and burned in a mosaic pattern, which sets the stage for a greater variety of vegetation and improved wildlife habitat. It's not an exaggeration to say that the Missouri Breaks Complex accomplished some good.

"The fires were as successful as most prescribed burns in the area," Gustad says. "Some of the permittees, in fact, said the fire was good, it was needed. It was just too big."

State Director Marty Ott visited the site of the Missouri Breaks fires in early summer.

"The complex of fires caused damage to both private and public land, and we aren't minimizing that," he said. "But some positives came out of it. It left behind a nice mosaic burn pattern and we got the weather we needed to help with recovery. Overall, the land may be healthier in the long term because of the fires."

The size and intensity of the fires in the complex made a lasting impression on the people who witnessed the flames. They'd rather see fire do its work in a more controlled way.

"One rancher who'd lived her whole life in the area said she'd never seen a firestorm until then," says Gill. "And she also said that she never wanted to see another."

The Experience of a Lifetime

(Christina Petrandis and Jane Nibler)

The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, located in northern Wyoming and southern Montana, is home to 160 of the nation's wild horses. Managed by the BLM out of the Billings Field Office, the range offers unique opportunities through the student temporary employment program (STEP). This program allows students from all over the country and from diverse backgrounds to apply for seasonal positions. However, due to budget cuts, this program has had no internal funding and has been supported by generous members of the public for the last two years.

This year's STEP funding came from Barbara Reibman or Penn Valley, Penn.; Dr. Jay Kirkpatrick, ZooMontana, Billings; and Dr. Francis Singer, Biological Resources Division - USGS, Fort Collins, Colo. Their donations supported two interns, Christina Petrandis and Jane Nibler.

Jane Nibler and Melissa Esser prepare to apply a fertility treatment to a selected Pryor Mountain mare. Photo by Ann Boucher

Petrandis and Nibler, while involved in many aspects of monitoring the Pryor herd, focus most intensively on mare behavior. The Pryor herd has 16 mares that have been treated with a contraceptive, each of which is monitored monthly. The vaccine PZP works with an antigen/antibody response just like any human tetanus shot. The mare receives an initial primer dose which boosts her immune system to create antibodies to the PZP antigen. Roughly a month later she receives a second dose which inhibits her ability to conceive for one year only. The endocrine system is not influenced; essentially the mare cycles normally and is bred normally by stallions, but the receptor sites on the ovum are blocked by antibodies to the PZP. The Pryor mares are contracepted as yearlings, 2-year-olds and every year from 14 years of age and older.

Petrandis, an equine science student at Colorado State University, began her first season in the Pryors on June 1, 2004. The opportunity to utilize her equine studies in the field has been a tremendous experience, one of hands-on learning and application—an experience that simply could not be gained from textbooks. Always fascinated by wild horses and the field of equine reproduction, Petrandis is elated to have had the chance to intertwine these two interests, and nowhere other than the beautiful Pryor Mountains. As for future plans, Petrandis has applied for the Irish National Stud Thoroughbred Breeding Course in Dublin, Ireland, where she hopes to be in the spring of 2005. Upon her return to the states, she plans to apply for graduate school to receive a Masters in equine reproduction.

Nibler, a 2004 biology graduate from Whitman College in Washington State, is spending her second season in the Pryors. Largely influenced by her time in the Pryors, Nibler had decided to apply to veterinary school and will pursue a career in equine or wildlife veterinary. Her experience in the Pryors gave her invaluable insight and experience with wildlife and horses in a wild environment. Jane will return for a third season in 2005.

Christina Petrandis and Jane Nibler would like to extend many thanks to the outside contributors and the BLM for providing the financial support for the experience of a lifetime.

Retired BLMer Receives Honorary Diploma

Craig Flentie, Lewistown Field Office

May 30 was graduation day for the Fergus High School Class of 2004 in Lewistown, Montana. It was a day of Pomp and Circumstance; a celebration of accomplishment; and a step toward tomorrow's dreams.

It would also be a day long remembered by all those in attendance because of three older gentlemen who would make a brief, but memorable appearance. One of those gentlemen was Mr. Phil Perry, a retired BLMer.

The Fergus High School gymnasium has a capacity of around 3,000 people and the place was packed on this graduation afternoon. Those attending included 108 graduating seniors, their friends and family members, school board members, school administrators and instructors, high school band members, several choirs, a large cast of well-wishers and the three older men.

Phil and his two peers, all wearing royal blue graduation robes, were seated discretely just south of where the high school seniors would sit and were visiting quietly among themselves as the graduation activities unfolded around them. All three men were about the same age. They were a distinguished looking trio and the lines in their faces conveyed the wisdom of a lifetime of learning. One couldn't help but wonder where their lives had taken them.

The 108 high school seniors marched into the gym and took their seats in neatly arranged rows across the west end of the basketball court as the school band played Pomp and Circumstance. They were an eager group of young people and one couldn't help but wonder where their lives would take them.

The graduation program began at 2 p.m. and followed a largely familiar script (a brief welcome, the National Anthem, the senior address, entertainment from several choirs, the Salutatorian address and the Valedictorian address). Those who read ahead in the program saw that the next item was the Veterans Honorary Diploma Recognition, which would feature Phil Perry and his two peers Lloyd Heintz and Joseph Jost, all of central Montana.

However, no one could have predicted the wave of emotion that was about to sweep over the gymnasium.

As School Board Vice-Chair Mary Schelle introduced the three veterans, she explained that these men had "left their families, classmates and home towns during their senior year of high school (in Phil's case this was the Malta High Class of '43) to serve in the military during World War II. Rather than participating in ball games, proms and class room debates, these men chose to serve their county during the world's most horrific military struggle of the day. Some of their experiences were grand, some were not. After their military service, these men were busy building peace-time lives of their own and none of them was able to go back to finish high school.

"And today they were being presented with honorary Fergus High School diplomas."

Before Ms. Schelle could quite finish her eloquent introduction everyone in the gymnasium stood and filled the room with a long-thunderous applause. It was more than just a polite applause. For the next few moments, the 3,000 or so people in the Fergus High gymnasium represented a true cross-section of America in extending a heart-felt thank you to these men for their service to their country.

The emotion of the moment ran deeper than anyone expected as the

Phil's Military History

Phil left Malta, Montana, in March 1943 (his senior year) to volunteer for military service. During the next 32 months, Phil worked his way across most of Europe working in the Quarter Masters unit, supplying our troops. For the last 11 months of his service, Phil was stationed in Vienna, Austria; one heck of a trip for a kid from Malta.

In 1946, Phil was discharged at the rank of Staff Sergeant and found his way back to Malta.

Phil's BLM History

In 1963, Phil answered a help wanted ad in the Malta paper. It was for a range job with the BLM. Thanks in part to a good recommendation from Wayne Zinne, Phil landed that job and he eventually became the BLM's Fire Control Officer in Malta.

Then in 1976, BLM began reorganizing and Phil moved to Lewistown as the Fire Control Officer.

Phil retired from the BLM in April 1988.

When asked about the highlight of his BLM career, Phil will tell you it was working with all those great kids on the fire crews.

applause and visible appreciation from the crowd seemed to build. Perhaps it's because the world seems a less certain place than it did a short time ago and our country has a renewed appreciation for those who served America yesterday and are serving America today around the world. Perhaps it was nearly a perfect way for a gymnasium full of mostly strangers to come together and feel good about the world and those around them. Perhaps it just feels good to say thank you.

Whatever the reason, it seemed a truly rare moment; a time when nearly 3,000 people in the same room shared the same feeling about the same topic. And one of the three men at the center of this outpouring was Phil Perry.

Those who know Phil will always remember his personal traits (a quick smile, the bounce in his step and his flare for just a little showmanship). He's still got 'em all!

After receiving his honorary diploma, Phil walked to the exit side of the award platform, turned to face the audience, smiled and raised both hands as a means of waving thank you. The crowd was still on its feet and the applause began again.

Today, if you stop any of those who attended the May graduation at Fergus High and ask what they remember most vividly about the day, most will answer "the three veterans who received honorary diplomas."

The day made quite an impression on Phil Perry as well. In several conversations since then, Phil has stated that receiving his honorary Fergus High School diploma was "one of the greatest things to happen in his life. I can't tell you how much it means to me." He also received an Honorary High School Diploma and a personal letter of thanks from Linda McCulloch, Montana's Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In her letter to Phil, McCulloch wrote that she was "honored to recognize Phil's learning in the classroom of life. This diploma acknowledges a lifetime of learning and achievement that has enriched the State of Montana and our country." Nicely said!

Phil is 81 now. He and his wife Carol are regulars on the golf course and Phil stays busy as an active member of several coffee clubs around Lewistown.

Linton Mine Reclamation will Restore Cramer Creek

Marilyn Krause, Western Montana Zone

Sixty years after active mining took place in the Cramer Creek area about 30 miles southeast of Missoula, engineers and geologists are working to restore the drainage. Miners in the Cramer Creek drainage tried to capitalize on the post World War II need for industrial metals such as lead, zinc, and silver.

Three years ago BLM started to tackle what is now known as the Linton Mine, but it is a daunting task. The county road sits on mine tailings 40 feet deep! The goal is to eliminate the risk to human health from the lead dust and to restore Cramer Creek. To do that, tailings need to be removed from the floodplain and stored some place where they can't wash away or blow around.

As of August, Smith Contracting had removed about half of the estimated 135,000 cubic yards of tailings. The mine wastes were used to fill in the original upper and lower mine caverns and also hauled six miles further to a newly constructed repository. Once the material is removed, the contractor will begin reconstruction of approximately 1,600 feet of Cramer Creek.

"It seemed logical to use the caverns and fill them in with the mine tailings since that is where the material came from to start with," commented Missoula geologist, Mindy Mason.

The remaining tailings are hauled to a repository lined with "geocomposite drainage fabric." When hauling is complete, the stockpiled topsoil will be mixed with compost and spread over the repository and replanted with native plants.

Western Montana has hundreds of abandoned mine sites. "You work on the ones with environmental problems first," stated BLM geologist, Dave Williams, "and you chip away at the others as best you can."

Contractors install the geocomposite drainage fabric in preparation for backfilling with mine wastes. Photo by Marty Bennett of Pioneer Technical Services.

The upper and lower caverns from the Linton Mine were filled in with mine wastes which also eliminated the safety hazards associated with the caverns. Photo by Marty Bennett of Pioneer Technical Services.

Preserving History

Ann Boucher, MSO

The aging Will James Cabin in the Four Dances Natural Area can withstand harsh weather for a few more years, thanks to the efforts of volunteers and staff from the Billings Field Office.

Earlier this summer, volunteers and staff replaced four base logs and re-roofed the cabin. In August, a crew from the Montana Conservation Corps helped seal up the cracks in the walls and clean up the area.

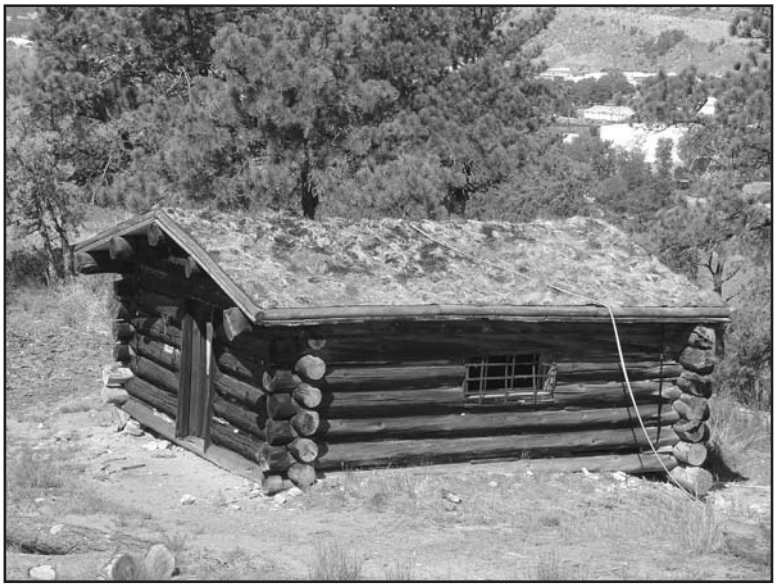
The BLM has few historical details about the cabin, but it is believed to have been owned by the Snook family of Billings and that noted Western author and artist Will James stayed in it when he was visiting Billings from his ranch at Pryor Creek. A former owner of the cabin thinks it was built in the 1920s.

Volunteers Greg Aldrich and Wayne Goutermont, cabin restoration specialists, led the stabilization efforts. To replace the cabin's sod roof, crews first replaced the wood roof and then laid down a waterproof lining. A layer of upside-down sod provided the soil to hold the native sod collected from the Horsethief area near Roundup. The Billings BLM fire crew rigged up a pump and hoses to pipe in water from an irrigation ditch, and a neighboring landowner volunteered to take over the watering duties until the native sod is established.

To close the gaps between the logs, the MCC nailed pieces of split wood into the larger spaces (chinking), then smeared a mortar mix over the top (daubing).

Although not as cozy as your own home, the new roof and repaired walls are enough to block out the elements and preserve the cabin for many more years.

BLM seasonal employee Lindsay Miller nails down the lining in preparation for the sod roof. The Metra is visible in the background. Photo by Ann Boucher



A watering system will keep the sod damp until it's well established. Photo by Jay Parks.

An MCC crew member closes the gaps between the logs with a mortar mix. Photo by Greg Albright

Public Lands Day Draws Crowd

Story and photos by Mark E. Jacobsen, Miles City Field Office

Volunteers from Glendive and Miles City made improvements on public land 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 Miles City Field Office at the Glendive Short Pine Off-Highway Vehicle 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 about six miles southwest of Glendive 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.

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 $1,000 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. 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.

DIGGING IN—Miles City Boy Scouts Jacob Yates, James Cranford, Chris Snyder and Morgan Jacobsen excavate a trench before installing an erosion control waddle.

THIS IS HOW ITS DONE—Joe Yates, Fred Wambolt and Harvey Wolff level the framework for a new sign.

EASY DOES IT—Volunteers steady an informational kiosk prior to leveling.

TSA is A-OK with BLM

From "Good Evening…GLASGOW"

Reprinted with permission

An idea hatched by Deb Young and Dan Jimison of the Glasgow Field Station gave high school students some practical, profitable experience while stretching the BLM budget.

Glasgow High School's Technology Student Association (TSA) finished up a project for Bureau of Land Management this spring, and according to BLM's John Fahlgren, "They did great work for us."

TSA built the BLM 100 gate latches which will be used on gates within the fences on BLM land throughout Valley County. "Our recreating public will be able to get through these gates much easier, now," Fahlgren explained.

This is the first project TSA completed for BLM, and according to TSA advisor Jim Stone, was a rewarding experience for the kids.

Building the latches, which involved cutting, bending and welding metal, was quickly turned into mass production after they built their jigs. "We had a regular assembly line," Jim mentioned of approximately 22 students on average showing up each Thursday evening at 7 p.m. to go to work.

"This project definitely sparked new interest in our club," Stone mentioned of the after-school program, "and the seniors really stepped up and showed good leadership to their underclassmen. It was neat having them all working together – it really was a great team effort."

And it was a team effort that TSA got paid for. With about $2.50 worth of materials in each gate latch, the BLM was happy to pay $12 apiece, about $2.50 less than purchasing from a name-brand company. The money raised will be used for travel expenses to the State TSA Convention coming up quickly.

"It was a win-win situation," the GHS welding and woodworking instructor added. "They (BLM) got their gate latches and we made money to go to State."

Fahlgren hopes to utilize TSA's fine craftsmanship on future BLM projects as the needs arise. And we're certain TSA will be up for the challenge.

John Fahlgren, left, stopped by the Glasgow High School to pick up gate latches for BLM. TSA members present are, back row, advisor Jim Stone, Ashley Ozark, Travis Volk, Vance Anderson, Clayton Flood and Thomas Whitman. In the front row are Josh Dunn, Kent Hubbard, Jake Newton, Leo Pattison, Nate Frost, Ross Kastet and Tom Smith.

Malta Welcomes New Field Manager

Craig Flentie, Lewistown Field Office

Mark Albers brings a fresh perspective to his new responsibilities as the BLM's Malta Field Manager.

His previous work experiences with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation gave him a good understanding of how federal agencies approach their daily challenges. Mark's most recent work responsibilities were in the private sector with American Rivers Inc. In that position, he represented the public's interest in public resource management and formed definite opinions about how federal agencies resolve resource issues, work with individuals and organizations and respond to public expectations.

This combination of work experience and a farm and ranch background makes him uniquely qualified to step into a field manager's job for the BLM.

Mark was installed as the Malta Field Manager on June 29. Montana State Director Marty Ott conducted the installation and welcomed Mark to the BLM. Mr. Ott highlighted Mark's broad-based leadership skills and his unique perspective for taking a fresh look at BLM's role and responsibilities in the region.

Mark spoke to the employees and community members present at his installation about his eagerness to become a part of the community and his interest in continuing the BLM's contributions to the area. He also pledged that even though some public resource decisions will be difficult, the public will have every opportunity to be involved with why and how BLM comes to those decisions and how the agency will accomplish its workloads.

Following Mark's installation, the staff at the Malta Field Office hosted an open house as a means of helping the community meet the new field manager. The open house was well attended, provided several tables of refreshments and featured a generous portion of Malta hospitality.

Mark's wife, Lori, and sons Lane, 12, and Dalton, 10, have joined him in Malta and are settling well into their new community.

Mark Albers shakes hands with State Director Marty Ott after being sworn in as the new Malta Field Manager. Photo by Craig Flentie

Jacobs Named Director of Interpretive Center in Fort Benton

Mary Apple, MSO

Connie Jacobs is the director of the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Interpretive Center that will be be built in Fort Benton.

Jacobs managed Ulm Pishkun State Park for the last five years, and before that she worked for the USDA Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy of Montana. According to Gary Slagel, monument manager, "Connie brings a wealth of interpretive and management experience to this position, and she has a strong background in natural and cultural history. We're glad to have her in Fort Benton."

The 377,000-acre national monument, established in 2001, is located in northcentral Montana. The establishing proclamation states, "The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument contains a spectacular array of biological, geological, and historic objects of interest." The centerpiece of the monument is the 149-mile Upper Missouri Wild and Scenic River which begins at Fort Benton and continues into the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge. The interpretive center will help visitors to the area appreciate and understand the cultural and natural history of the river and its surroundings.

The BLM, City of Fort Benton, and River and Plains Society are partners in the approximately 5,400-square-foot center project. Site preparation is currently underway, and groundbreaking is planned for spring 2005. Jacobs says the center should open during the summer of 2006. Meanwhile, she's busy both overseeing the BLM's current visitor center and working with the partners to make sure the center project stays on track. "We're gearing up for a busy couple of years at our contact station during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. Then we're hoping those visitors come back to see the completed interpretive center," said Jacobs.

Jacobs can be reached in Fort Benton at 406-622-3392.

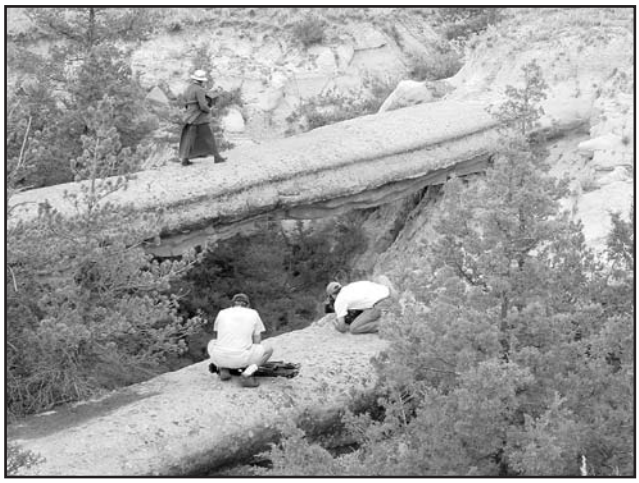
PBS Films on BLM Land

Mark E. Jacobsen, Miles City Field Office

TERRY – A Public Broadcasting System (PBS) film crew recently completed filming a documentary on the life of Lady Evelyn Cameron, a historical personality in eastern Montana who captured views of homestead life and the landscape through photography.

The documentary focuses on Cameron's life during her residence in the Terry area, roughly from 1894 till her death in 1928. The University of Montana film crew shot footage on several locations in the Terry vicinity associated with Lady Cameron and her husband, most notably a section of BLM land which holds some unique sandstone bridges which span ravines in the badlands.

The natural bridges and their unique features caught the interest of Cameron and her ornithologist husband. Today, the remote area remains relatively undisturbed and looks much as it did when Cameron viewed the badlands and transferred their images onto glass plate negatives.



CAPTURING LADY CAMERON—PBS videographers film a scene detailing Lady Evelyn Cameron's exploration and photography of the natural sandstone bridges of the Terry Badlands. Photo by Brian Lynnes

Attention BLM Retirees

The BLM Retirees Association meets on the first Tuesday of odd-numbered months at the Old Country Buffet in Billings. If you would like to receive email or postcard notifications of these meetings, please call Shirley Heffner at 259-1202, Cynthia Embretson at 252-1367, or send your address to Cynthia at ceatsage@wtp.net.

The Public Lands Foundation offers new retirees a free one-year membership. Please contact Bill Noble, PLF Montana Representative, at 406-656-0267 to join.

Please also help us keep our *Quarterly Steward* mailing list current by contacting Ann Boucher of the External Affairs staff at 406-896-5011 or aboucher@mt.blm.gov with address changes.

Retired from MT/Dakotas BLM since June 1, 2004:

Elizabeth Williams 30 years
Realty Specialist, Butte Field Office

Robert Brockie 30 years
Land Surveyor, Montana State Office

John Conlan 22 years
Engineering Equipment Operator, Butte Field Office

David Mari 33 years
Field Manager, Lewistown Field Office

The Quarterly Steward is published every three months by the Bureau of Land Management and distributed in Montana and the Dakotas. It is produced by the External Affairs Staff, Montana State Office.

Don Smurthwaite, Director
Ann Boucher, Editor
Kathy Ives, Graphic Design

Montana State Office
5001 Southgate Drive
P.O. Box 36800
Billings, Montana 59107-6800
Phone (406) 896-5011

http://www.mt.blm.gov/

FIRST CLASS
POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PERMIT NO. G-76

BLM/MT/GI-04/012