

BLM'S 2011 "MAKING A DIFFERENCE" NATIONAL VOLUNTEER AWARD WINNERS

VOLUNTEER WINNERS

JIM AND NANCY NOETHE, SAFFORD FIELD OFFICE, AZ: Long-term volunteers Jim and Nancy Noethe contribute seven months each year as site hosts for Fourmile Canyon Campground and the Klondyke Ranger Station, the eastern gateway to the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness. The Noethes provide the only BLM presence for visitors who come to this remote, rugged area from across the nation and from many foreign countries. Jim and Nancy have also helped to improve site access, enhance visitor experience, and disseminate conservation and stewardship information. For example, they have installed interpretive panels, fire rings, and bear-proof trash cans at Fourmile Canyon Campground. They also reconstructed a wheelchair access ramp at the ranger station, painted the building, trimmed trees, cleaned restrooms, and removed trash along trails and roads. In addition, Jim and Nancy played an integral role in the field office's route inventory and evaluation process, collecting data on hundreds of miles of roads in the Dos Cabezas and Fort Thomas areas. Their extensive knowledge of road locations, conditions, accessibility, and history has been invaluable both to the recreating public and to the BLM during preparation of the Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan.

DUANE WILSON, CHALLIS FIELD OFFICE, ID: For recreational users of the popular Cottonwood Campground, a large day-use area along the Salmon River, volunteer camp host Duane Wilson is the first point of contact with the BLM, always offering a friendly face and a positive representation of the agency. Duane also performs day-to-day maintenance activities, including restroom cleaning, mowing, litter pickup, and removal of invasive weeds. He is so thorough, in fact, that BLM staff are rarely faced with additional maintenance chores. Over the past ten years, Duane's current BLM supervisor has received 54 written communications complimenting the campground, 28 of them written specifically in praise of Duane and his work. As one fan put it, "Duane treats the place as if it were his own personal garden." On a daily basis, this generous site host exemplifies genuine volunteer spirit and serves as a bright spot for site visitors and BLM staff alike.

JESSE AND JO ANN PERRY, CARLSBAD FIELD OFFICE, NM: At the Hackberry Lake Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Area, motor-recreationists can enjoy more than 100 miles of desert trails through public lands that also host active energy developments and ranching allotments. Jesse and Jo Ann Perry have assisted the BLM field office's lone outdoor recreation planner with tasks including weekly trail monitoring, installation of signs promoting safe recreation and respect for neighbors, and regular patrols to check for unburied pipelines and other industry-associated hazards. Each year, the Perrys plan and host the Desert 100 Motorcycle and All-Terrain Vehicle Race at the OHV Area, and in 2010 they participated in the field office's National Public Lands Day project, for which they also recruited additional volunteers from the community. Thanks to Jesse and Jo Ann's efforts to encourage mutual understanding and respect, strained relationships between Carlsbad-area ranchers and OHV enthusiasts are essentially a thing of the past.

NOEL POE, GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT, UT: In 2010, Noel Poe became president of the Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners, the official partner organization of the National Monument. Among other goals, the Partners organization seeks to increase public awareness of the Monument; promote science, education, and conservation; provide resources to support scientific, interpretive, and educational programs; and recruit volunteers. Noel's 38+ years of experience with the National Park Service have already helped to raise the organization to a level of effectiveness and professionalism that would not have been possible without his direction. Noel oversaw the hiring of a competent executive director, scrutinized the organization's accounts, and ensured that proper procedures were being followed. Noel led the development of personnel policies as well as an operating manual for the organization. He has met with local and national leaders to promote both Partners and research opportunities on the Monument. Noel has obtained funding in excess of \$100,000 for organizational capacity building and worked with Partners staff to secure over \$350,000 for the removal of invasive vegetation within the Escalante River Watershed. Under Noel's leadership, Partners is currently managing funds for more than 60 projects on the Monument.

VOLUNTEER WINNERS: LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

ROBERT E. LEE, LAKE HAVASU FIELD OFFICE, AZ: Veteran volunteer Robert E. Lee has spent 19 years assisting the BLM in various capacities, stepping up to do whatever was needed, whenever it was needed. Robert has provided critical support at the field office's Partners Point facility, a staging area associated with the Lake Havasu Fisheries Partnership, a seven-member coalition dedicated to bolstering fish populations and fishing opportunities on Lake Havasu. The facility likely could not have remained open for public functions were it not for Robert's long-term help in managing it. His other accomplishments are impressive as well: Robert helps to monitor the field office's Community Service Worker Program through the Local Courts and Probation Department; educates schoolchildren, youth group members, people with special needs, and the general public; and conducts facility tours. Robert also assembled a youth team to build a desert tortoise enclosure at Partners Point, and takes every opportunity to recruit more volunteers to help the BLM.

DEE AND BETTY ZELLER, PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE, CA: For 15 years, Dee and Betty Zeller have been the on-site hosts and caretakers of the BLM's Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, a member site in the interagency Hands on the Land education network. To the visiting public and the local community, the Zellers have been the "face" of the BLM at Big Morongo, where they provide round-the-clock services from their home base in a travel trailer on the grounds. Dee and Betty work under the supervision of the Preserve Manager, but have been delegated most of the day-to-day duties for operation of visitor facilities, which they divide according to their individual areas of expertise. Dee works as the resident host and Preserve naturalist, leading bird-watching interpretive hikes and providing training and mentoring for site docents. He is also the primary facility caretaker and provides direction for volunteers engaged in site maintenance projects. Betty works as the Preserve administrator, overseeing daily operations and managing more than 50 volunteers and docents. She also serves as a liaison to the local community, including the town of Morongo Valley, serving on local boards and participating in organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce. Thanks to the dedication of

the Zellers, Big Morongo Canyon Preserve has become a nationally recognized destination site, particularly for birders, other wildlife watchers, and educators.

CHARLES (CHUCK) M. REDMAN, LAS CRUCES DISTRICT OFFICE, NM: After a distinguished career in engineering, Chuck Redman signed on with the Las Cruces District Office as one of the original volunteers at the Dripping Springs Natural Area. The area welcomes 22,000 visitors each year, who come to enjoy the splendid desert scenery and recreational opportunities of the Organ Mountains. Over the course of his 18 years as a BLM volunteer, Chuck has performed a wide range of jobs at the Natural Area. Early on, he assisted with construction and carpentry jobs and worked in the visitor center and bookstore. Along the way, he became drawn to interpretation and environmental education, eager to share his detailed knowledge of the area's natural and cultural history with the general public and schoolchildren alike. One of Chuck's particular specialties, the geology of the Organ Mountains, reflects his personal experience: he has trekked through virtually every corner of the mountains. Chuck has also led hikes and participated in the Las Cruces District's "Outdoor Classrooms," offering weekly geology presentations. He is proud to be the longest-serving and most experienced volunteer in the Las Cruces District.

JOHNSON STEARNS, ROSWELL FIELD OFFICE, NM: Thirteen years ago, Johnson Stearns signed on to volunteer at the BLM's Valley of Fires Recreation site, which features one of the youngest lava flows in the nation and is only four miles from Johnson's hometown of Carrizozo. As a visitor center greeter, he not only offers a warm welcome, but is also always willing to share his vast knowledge of the natural, cultural, and historic resources of this unique region. Johnson is equally comfortable discussing Billy the Kid's legendary local exploits as he is answering questions about the nearby White Sands Missile Range. He was also a main contributor to the development of ten interpretive stations along the Malpais Nature Trail, a fully accessible route onto the lava flow that exposes hikers to an impressive variety of Chihuahuan Desert species. Johnson is an approachable and engaging teacher who has enhanced community relationships, helped countless visitors to relate to the resources before them, and promoted understanding of the BLM's mission and management of the public lands.

WINNING BLM EMPLOYEE

BILL PAPICH, FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE, NM: Public Relations Specialist Bill Papich has provided outstanding leadership to the BLM-Farmington volunteer program for more than ten years. He has helped to expand both the volunteer program and the variety of volunteer projects conducted, many of which have now become annual events. Bill has coordinated events ranging from recreation area clean-ups to popular lecture tours highlighting public lands resources and stewardship and conservation practices. His active involvement in and commitment to volunteerism have resulted in the removal of over 2,000 tons of trash from Farmington-area public lands and improvements that are conservatively valued at \$250,000. In 2009, Bill expanded his coordination of volunteer activities to include local school groups. The resulting youth volunteer program, known as Youth Education Projects (YEP), engages volunteer school groups to participate in the development of educational interpretive panels for recreation areas. YEP has since expanded to accommodate additional schools that wish to participate in public education projects. Bill also coordinates other service projects and manages several large

volunteer events each year, including National Public Lands Day, Earth Day, and National Fossil Day. Without his dedication and commitment to community involvement, many people would miss out on unique educational opportunities and the chance to “make a difference” on their public lands.