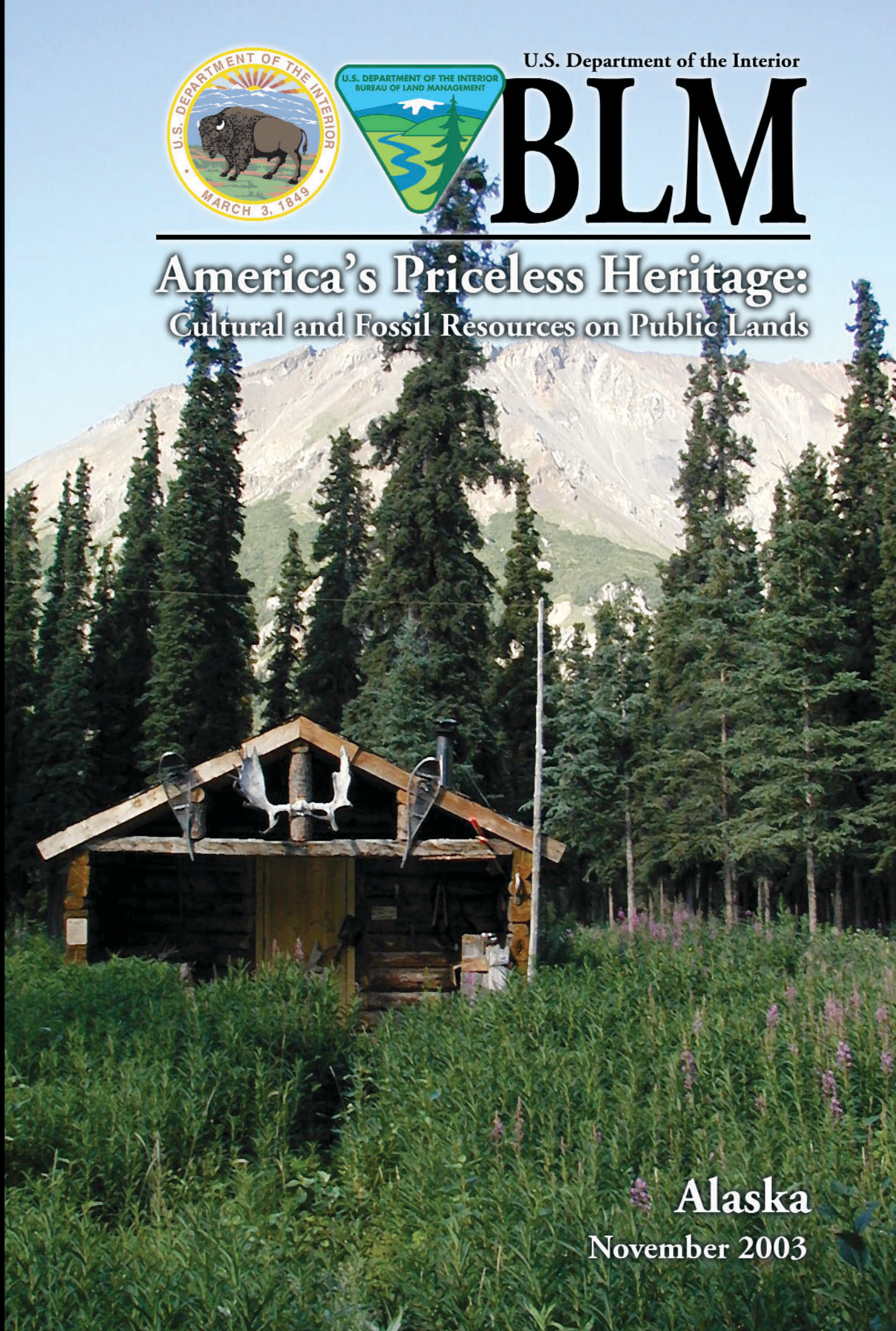
Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Department of the Interior

BLM

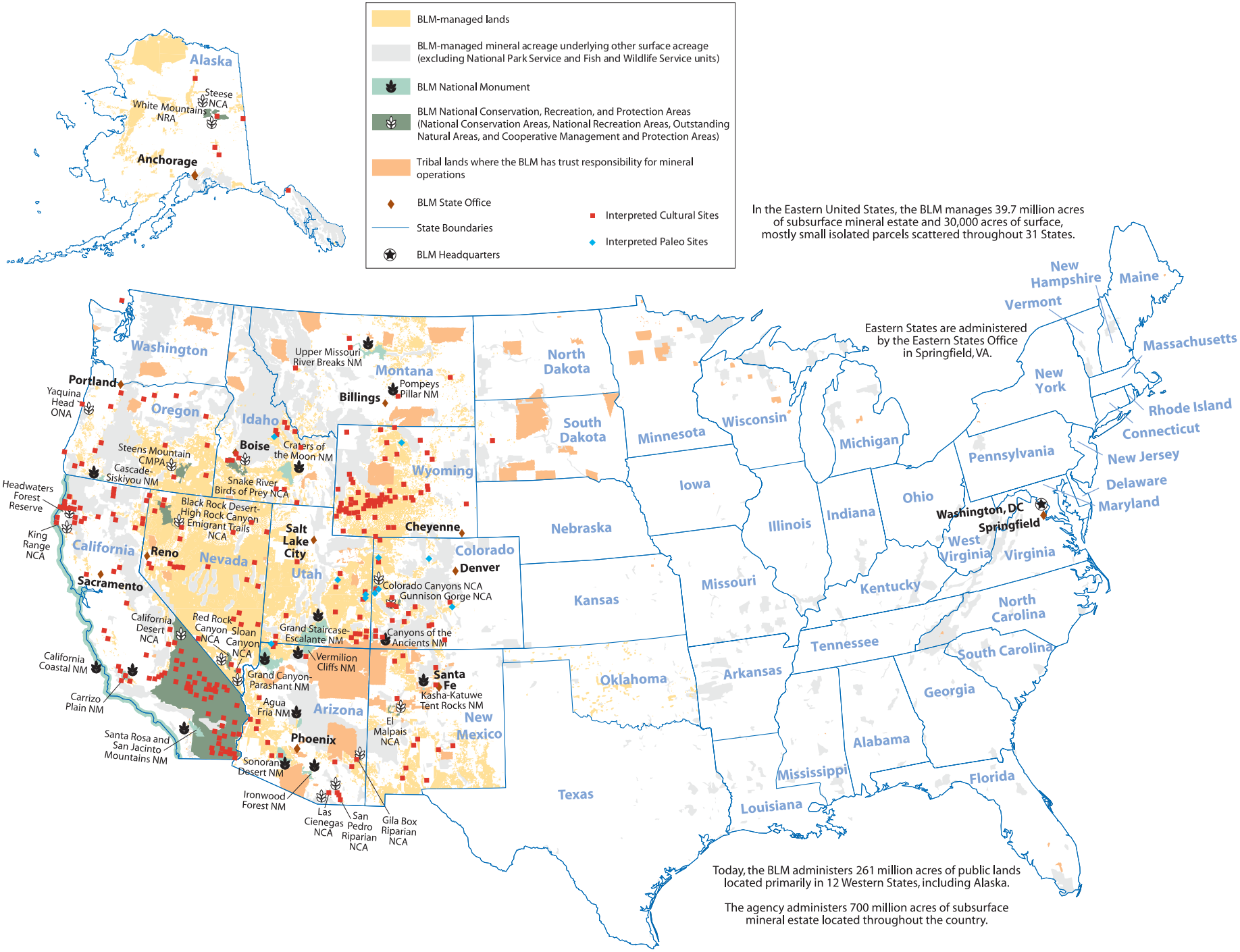
America's Priceless Heritage:

Cultural and Fossil Resources on Public Lands



Alaska

November 2003


BLM-managed lands
BLM-managed mineral acreage underlying other surface acreage (excluding National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service units)
BLM National Monument
BLM National Conservation, Recreation, and Protection Areas (National Conservation Areas, National Recreation Areas, Outstanding Natural Areas, and Cooperative Management and Protection Areas)
Tribal lands where the BLM has trust responsibility for mineral operations
BLM State Office
State Boundaries
BLM Headquarters
Interpreted Cultural Sites
Interpreted Paleo Sites
In the Eastern United States, the BLM manages 39.7 million acres of subsurface mineral estate and 30,000 acres of surface, mostly small isolated parcels scattered throughout 31 States.
Eastern States are administered by the Eastern States Office in Springfield, VA.
Today, the BLM administers 261 million acres of public lands located primarily in 12 Western States, including Alaska.
The agency administers 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate located throughout the country.
Alaska
Steese NCA
White Mountains NRA
Anchorage
Washington
Portland
Yaquina Head ONA
Oregon
Steens Mountain CMPA
Cascade-Siskiyou NM
Headwaters Forest Reserve
King Range NCA
California
Sacramento
Reno
Nevada
Idaho
Boise
Craters of the Moon NM
Snake River Birds of Prey NCA
Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails NCA
Salt Lake City
Utah
Montana
Billings
Upper Missouri River Breaks NM
Pompeys Pillar NM
Wyoming
Cheyenne
Colorado
Denver
Colorado Canyons NCA
Gunnison Gorge NCA
Canyons of the Ancients NM
California Desert NCA
Red Rock Canyon NCA
Sloan Canyon NCA
Grand Staircase-Escalante NM
Vermilion Cliffs NM
Grand Canyon-Parashant NM
Agua Fria NM
Arizona
Phoenix
Sonoran Desert NM
Ironwood Forest NM
Las Cienegas NCA
San Pedro Riparian NCA
Gila Box Riparian NCA
Santa Fe
Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks NM
El Malpais NCA
New Mexico
California Coastal NM
Carrizo Plain NM
Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains NM
North Dakota
South Dakota
Nebraska
Kansas
Oklahoma
Texas
Minnesota
Iowa
Missouri
Arkansas
Louisiana
Wisconsin
Illinois
Michigan
Indiana
Ohio
Kentucky
Tennessee
Mississippi
Alabama
Georgia
Florida
South Carolina
North Carolina
Virginia
West Virginia
Pennsylvania
New York
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Massachusetts
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Connecticut
New Jersey
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Washington, DC
Springfield

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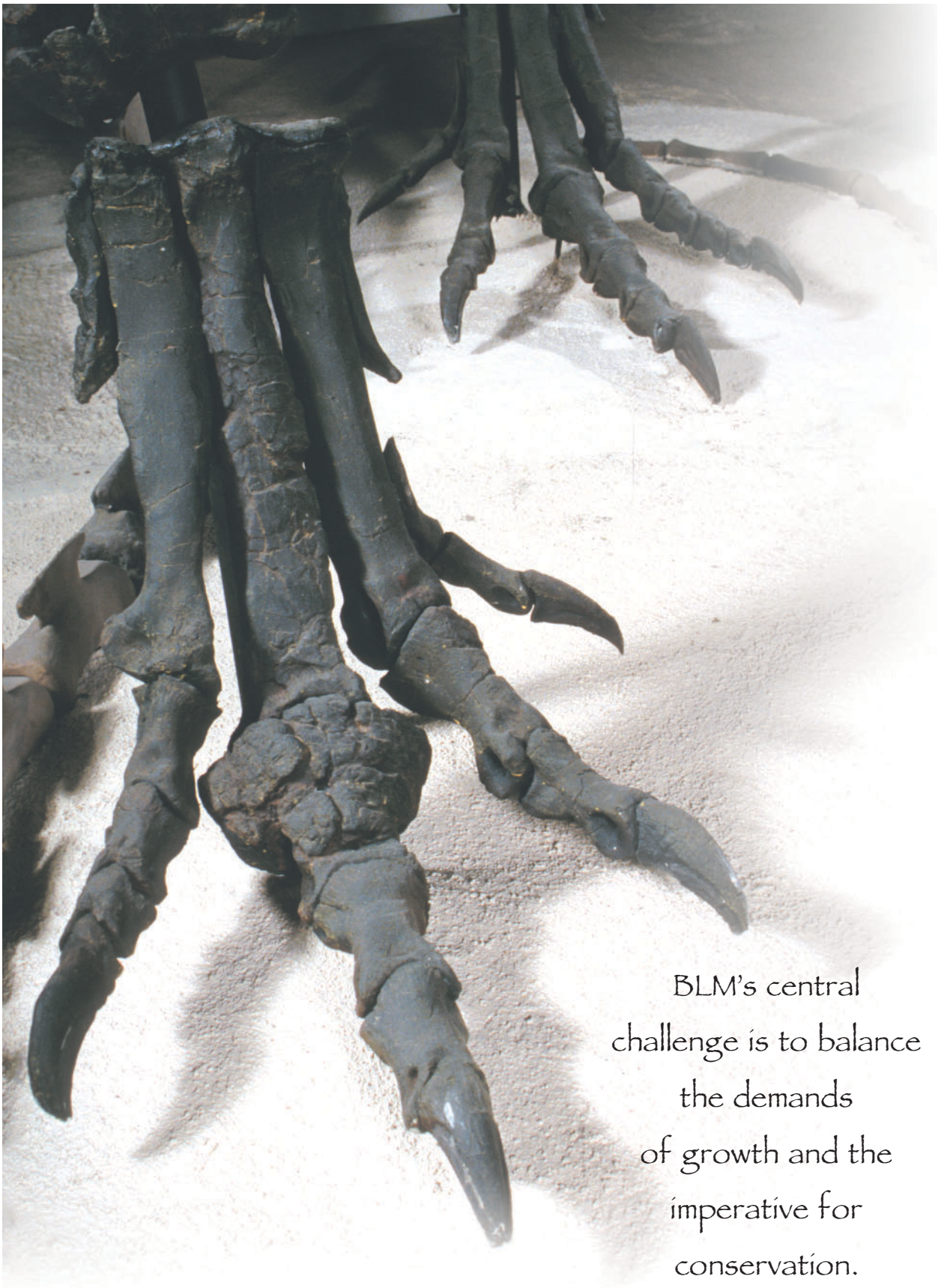


BLM's central challenge is to balance the demands of growth and the imperative for conservation.

Preface:
An Invitation to the Reader

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for managing 261 million acres of public land—about one-eighth of the United States. Most of these lands are in the Western United States, including Alaska, and they include extensive grasslands, forests, high mountains, arctic tundra, and deserts. BLM also manages about 700 million acres of subsurface mineral resources, as well as numerous other resources, such as timber, forage, wild horse and burro populations, fish and wildlife habitat, wilderness areas, and archaeological, historical, and paleontological sites.

BLM administers the public lands within the framework of numerous laws, the most comprehensive of which is the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). FLPMA directs BLM to follow the principle of "multiple use," which means managing the public lands and their various resource values "so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people." This multiple use mission requires BLM to address quality of life issues, including providing clean air and water; providing recreational opportunities; protecting wildlife; and safeguarding cultural and fossil resources; as well as providing for a sound economy through the production of energy, food, and fiber and by sustaining local communities and their heritage.

Given the scope of its multiple use mission, BLM affects more Americans on a daily basis than any other land management agency. The Bureau constantly faces the challenge of ensuring a balance of land uses among perspectives that are occasionally, if not often, competing. BLM recognizes that people who live near the public lands have the most direct connection and knowledge of them, as well as a commitment to their stewardship. At the same time, the Bureau maintains a national focus because these lands belong to all Americans, whose appreciation of them continues to increase.

BLM's central challenge is to *balance the demands of growth and the imperative for conservation*. America is entering into a new era of conservation to achieve a healthier environment and a more secure economy—what Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton

calls the "new environmentalism." Secretary Norton sums this new environmentalism up in a visionary approach she calls the "four Cs"—using communication, cooperation, and consultation, all in the service of conservation. At the heart of the four Cs is the Secretary's belief that for conservation to be successful, BLM must involve the people who live on, work on, and love the land.

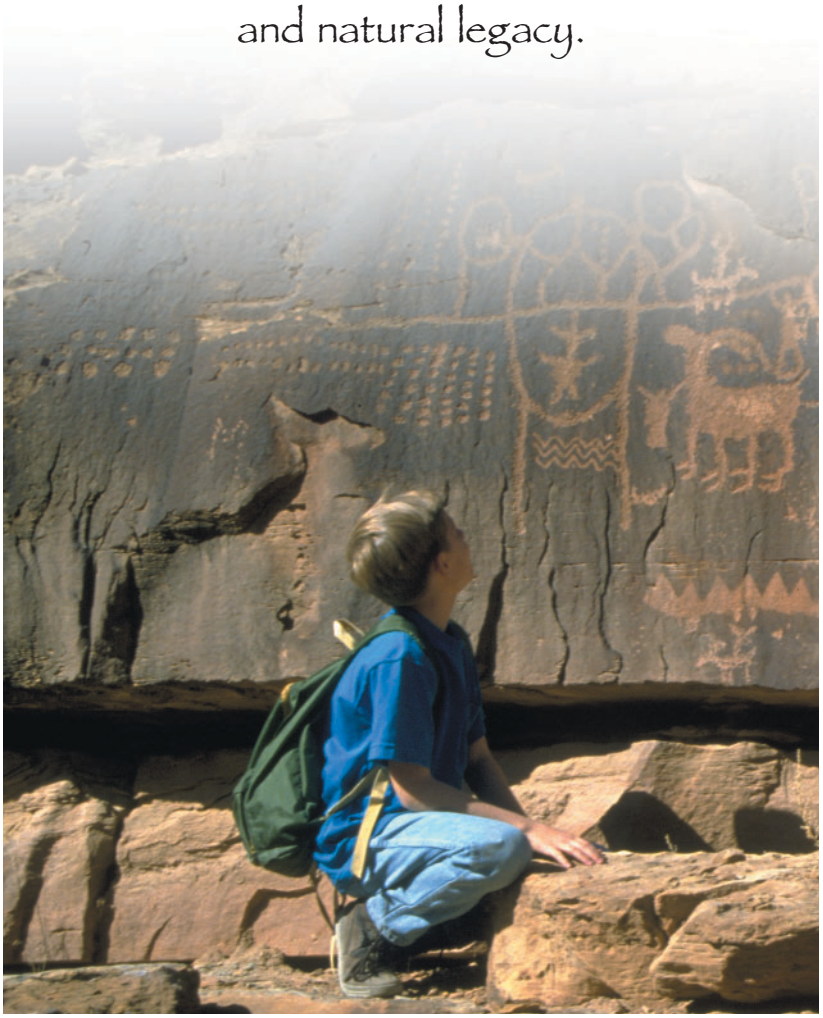
The Bureau's ability to partner with public land users; local residents; nonprofit groups; universities; "friends of" organizations; and State, local, and tribal governments fosters a wide and diverse support network. This network is essential not only because the agency has limited staff and budget resources, but because there is a wide variety of stakeholders who are concerned about public land management. The Bureau has been working cooperatively with partners and volunteers for decades and that work has yielded outstanding results towards attaining common goals and values.

Secretary Norton's approach to conservation is especially relevant to the management of cultural and fossil resources on public lands. These resources are a constant source of fascination for visitors. People look to these resources for recreational opportunities…for fulfilling their curiosity about the recent and remote past…for contemplating their origins…for preserving and continuing their cultures…for finding peace and quiet. The Secretary's approach to managing these resources was furthered on March 3, 2003, when President Bush signed a new Executive Order, which directs Federal agencies to advance the protection, enhancement, and contemporary use of historic properties, particularly by seeking public–private partnerships to promote the use of such properties as a stimulus to local economic development. The Executive Order is an important component in a new White House initiative called *Preserve America*, which was announced on March 3, 2003 by First Lady Laura Bush. The *Preserve America* program will serve as a focal point for the support of the preservation, use, and enjoyment of America's historic places.

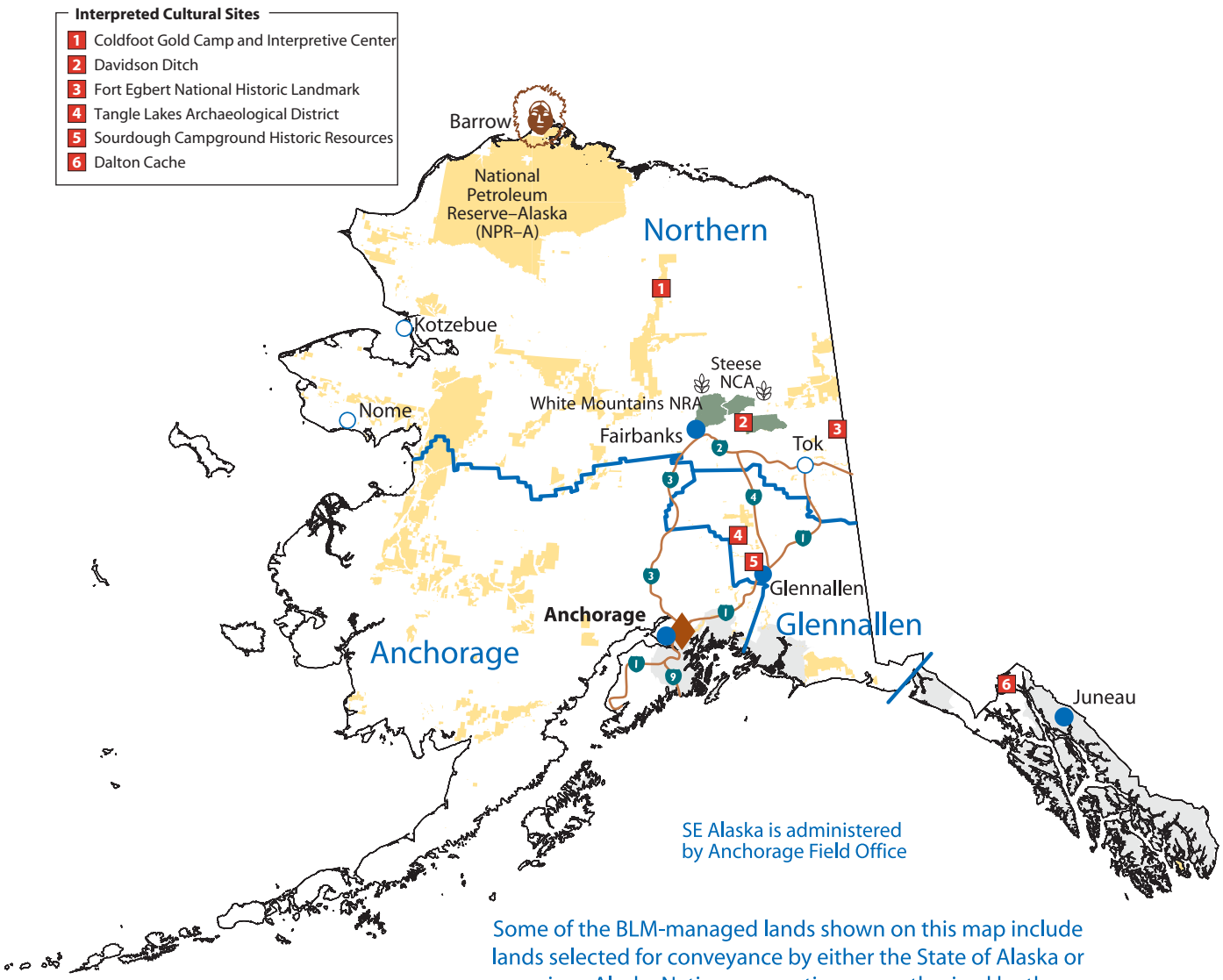
The Bureau is proud of its mission and understands why it is crucial to the Nation's future. The Bureau's vision is to live up to this ambitious mission and thereby meet the needs of the lands and our people. In order to achieve this goal, the Bureau must seek new ways of managing that include innovative partnerships and, especially, a community-based focus that

involves citizen stakeholders and governmental partners who care about the public lands and the cultural and fossil resources found on them. This document is an invitation to you—the public BLM serves—to continue your ongoing dialogue with us about the health and future of the Nation's cultural and natural legacy. Tell us what is important to you, what you care most about, what you want saved, and how BLM can work collaboratively to preserve our priceless legacy.

This document is an invitation to you...to continue your ongoing dialogue with us about the health and future of the Nation's cultural and natural legacy.

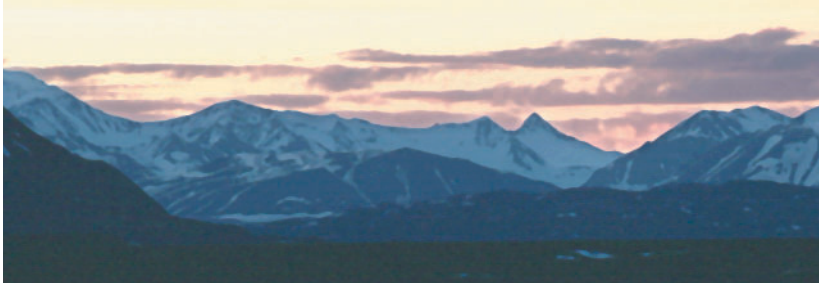


ALASKA



Some of the BLM-managed lands shown on this map include lands selected for conveyance by either the State of Alaska or various Alaska Native corporations, as authorized by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and other legislation.

- BLM-managed lands
- BLM-managed mineral acreage underlying other surface acreage (excluding National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service units)
- BLM National Conservation, Recreation and Protection Areas (National Conservation Areas, National Recreation Areas, Outstanding Natural Areas, and Cooperative Management and Protection Areas)
- BLM State Office
- BLM Field Offices
- BLM Field Stations
- BLM Field Office Boundaries
- Major Highways
- Iñupiat Heritage Center



ALASKA

Statistical Overview

Acres of public land	86 million acres
Acres inventoried for cultural properties (FY 2002)	4,200 acres
Acres inventoried for cultural resources (to date)	95,757 acres
Cultural properties recorded (FY 2002)	38 properties
Cultural properties recorded (to date)	2,878 properties
Cultural Resource Use Permits in effect (FY 2002)	5 permits
National Register of Historic Places listings (to date)	20 listings
National Register of Historic Places contributing properties	520 properties
Section 106 class III undertakings (FY 2002)	39 undertakings
Section 106 data recovery, projects (FY 2002)	9 projects
Section 106 data recovery, properties (FY 2002)	10 properties
Interpreted places	6 places

Cultural Resources

1. Program Summary

In Alaska, BLM manages a diversity of important prehistoric and historic archaeological sites in an enormous area that is more than twice the size of Texas, but that has fewer roads than any other State. These characteristics, along with short summer seasons, make both finding and managing many of these resources logistically difficult and expensive. Consequently, relatively little survey work has been done on lands managed by

In Alaska, BLM manages a diversity of important prehistoric and historic sites in an enormous area that is more than twice the size of Texas...

Champion Creek cabin.

The Mesa Paleo-Indian site.

Discoveries in Alaska have revolutionized our understanding of the past not only in Alaska, but also in the rest of the New World.

the BLM. Known sites contain some of the oldest evidence of human habitation in the New World, which date back at least 13,000 years, as well as more recent traces, which date to the mid-20th century. These diverse properties include Paleo-Indian sites, early coastal Eskimo and interior Athabascan sites, historic gold camps, the Iditarod National Historic Trail, and World War II and Cold War military sites.

More than 95,000 acres of Alaska public land have been inventoried for cultural resources and over 2,800 properties have been recorded. Much of this work has been done in response to resource development activities, such as oil and gas or mineral extraction projects. Archaeological work related to expanding recreational opportunities has also resulted in the discovery of many sites.

Twenty individual properties and districts are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Of these, Fort Egbert, a National Historic Landmark, has been selected for funding under the Save America's Treasures program. Six cultural properties have been interpreted and developed for public visitation and a seventh property, a replica Russian blockhouse and historic cemetery in Sitka, is under development. These interpreted properties include the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District, which is among the largest National Register properties in the Nation. Here over 500 archaeological sites, which span 10,000 years and surround a once-elevated, Ice Age glacial lake system, are a testimony of the unique uses of this region.

Discoveries in Alaska have revolutionized our understanding of the past not only in Alaska, but also in the rest of the New World. At BLM's Mesa site, the first well-documented Paleo-Indian site in Alaska, archaeologists have conducted research to understand its meaning, including its surprising similarity to certain Paleo-Indian sites in the contiguous United States. With Alaska being an ancient portal for populations entering North America, interest in Early Man studies continues, as does research on a variety of other issues, including subsistence studies involving Arctic and Subarctic marine resources.

2. State Cultural History

Alaska is a gateway for human entry into the New World from Asia, with known archaeological sites dating back at least 13,000 years. By about 8000 B.C., as our modern climate was emerging at the end of the Ice Age, there may have been two or more

different cultural groups of early "Paleo-Arctic" people living in Alaska (Paleo-Indians and Nenana/Denali Complex peoples). By about 7000–8000 B.C., the ancestors of today's Aleut people were present on the Aleutians. They were followed sometime later by their relatives, the Eskimo, in coastal areas of the mainland.

The earlier Alaskans were primarily nomadic hunters and gatherers, with many using distinctive tools made from microblades. By about 5000 B.C., the pervasive use of these tools gave way to more regional styles and generally larger stone tools. These tool changes may reflect people's adaptations to new environments as the grasslands in large parts of Alaska became boreal forests.

While some Eskimo today say they have occupied the Arctic for 10,000 years, archaeology generally links the origin of the Eskimo in Alaska to the appearance of the Arctic Small Tool tradition in western Alaska around 2000–3000 B.C. The Arctic Small Tool tradition quickly spread northeastward across the Arctic region of Canada to Greenland. The Eskimo people had well-developed technology for harvesting sea mammals and apparently occupied an otherwise unutilized environmental niche.

After about 2000 B.C., the archaeological record becomes even more complicated as innovations in housing types, tools, artistic styles, and burial patterns developed throughout the State. Regional variations become relatively distinct and lead to the artifacts and cultural patterns characteristic of Alaska Native groups at the time of first contact with Europeans.

This first contact occurred with Russia's "discovery" of Alaska in 1741. Prior to the sale of Alaska (Russian America) to the United States in 1867, Russian exploration and outposts were mostly confined to the coastal areas and lower reaches of the major rivers. This pattern mostly continued until the gold discoveries of the late 19th century, including the gold rushes to the Juneau area in 1880, the Fortymile country in 1886, and the Klondike in 1897–98.

Other gold, and later copper, discoveries brought not only miners to the future State, but also military and business people and their families. Early 20th century development of coal resources in south-central Alaska led to a government-financed railroad from Seward to Fairbanks and, with that, Anchorage was born. Other government needs in the 1930s–1950s, including various World War II military installations and Cold

...exploration and outposts were mostly confined to the coastal areas and lower reaches of the major rivers.

Dome Creek cabin.

War facilities placed strategically throughout many parts of the State, also brought major changes. Presently, the population of Alaska is nearing 700,000, with oil and mineral development, fishing, tourism, government employment, and various service industries being the State's major industries and employers.

As of January 2003, there were 229 recognized Alaska Native tribes. While Anchorage has the largest Native populations in a single locality, most Alaska Natives live in small villages in areas not connected by roads.

3. Cultural Resources At Risk

Literally hundreds of historic structures, including historic sites related to mining, trapping, reindeer herding, and other activities, are located on BLM-managed lands in Alaska. These sites, except in unusual circumstances, are constantly being lost to natural processes and some unauthorized collecting.

Numerous prehistoric sites also suffer from natural deterioration and erosion. An example is the late prehistoric site of Kuluvachak (CAN-00025) on the Buckland River. This site was discovered in 1978 because erosion of the riverbank exposed artifacts and charcoal-stained soil. Surface indications suggest that no more than one structure remains from what was a 19th century settlement of some size and importance. Although the site appears to have been stable over the last 20 years, another incident of bank erosion will probably be sufficient to completely eliminate what remains of the site.

The remoteness of many BLM sites seems to protect them from vandalism, but damage to an increasing number of sites has been found in areas accessible only by boat or air. Regularly monitoring such areas, let alone catching vandals in action, is very difficult and expensive.

4. Major Accomplishments

- Completed fieldwork and a report for the multiyear Mesa Site Project (Paleo-Indian site above Arctic Circle).
- Coordinated multiagency management of the Iditarod National Historic Trail.
- Coordinated Save America's Treasures 1999 grant for restoration of Fort Egbert and restoration of the Dalton Cache (1895 pre-Klondike gold rush outpost).

Numerous prehistoric sites also suffer from natural deterioration and erosion.

Gulkana River cabin.

- Continued a multiyear project with the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, for research on early gold camps of northern Alaska.

- Helped coordinate Project Archaeology in Alaska with the State Historic Preservation Office and completed research and installation of interpretive panels on early 20th century Sourdough Campground.

- Completed a 2-year inventory project in the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District locating and documenting sites and unauthorized trails.

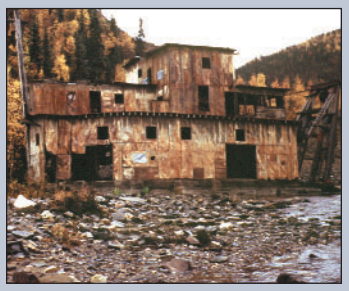
- Completed inventory of BLM archaeological collections at the University of Alaska Museum.

- Provided archaeological information to various groups upon request, including at schools and outdoor week events in Anchorage and Fairbanks.

5. Ethnic, Tribal, and Other Groups to Whom BLM Cultural Resources Are Important

Alaska is unique in that it is home to three different Native American groups: Eskimo, Aleuts, and Indians. In 1969, under special Alaska-only Native claims land settlement legislation, 44 million acres were designated to become jointly owned by Alaska Natives as shareholders in 226 village and 12 regional corporations instead of being awarded as individual allotments or reservation lands. BLM's prehistoric cultural resources have potential importance to the majority of these Natives and Native corporations.

Alaska's cultural resources are also important to many local Alaskans, especially to those for whom they provide some economic advantage, such as lodge operators. The historic resources in the Iditarod-Flat area help provide local miners with a sense of their historic identity as miners continuing a tradition begun with the early 20th century gold strike in the area. Gold rush resources, like the ghost town of Coldfoot, are of educational and scientific benefit to the students and staff of the University of Alaska, who use them for a field school. The Mesa site has been of scientific interest to many scholars worldwide, as well as a source of pride to Alaskans. Interpretive displays for early 20th century historic remains in the Sourdough Campground also serve to further educate tourists and local



Jack Wade dredge.

Gold rush resources...are of educational and scientific benefit to the students and staff of the University of Alaska, who use them for a field school.

visitors about the fascinating past of that area, including early 20th century Native settlement patterns.

6. Existing Partnerships

- Doyon, Ltd.; State of Alaska; Trailblazers; and various Federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service for management of the Iditarod National Historic Trail.
- General Services Administration for restoration and interpretation work at the Dalton Cache.
- Alaska Museum of Natural History for paleontology work.
- Alaska Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Air Force, Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, Anchorage Historic Properties, Chugach State Park Advisory Board, Anchorage Assembly, Alaska Railroad, Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau, Friends of Chugach State Park, and the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office for the Nike Site Summit Task Force, State of Alaska.
- Sitka Tribe, Orthodox Church at Sitka, and City of Sitka for management of the Sitka Russian blockhouse replica and adjacent Russian cemetery.
- Ahtna, Inc. (for cooperative work on Alphabet Hills Burn); Iñupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, Alaska; Simon Paneak Memorial Museum in Anaktuvuk Pass; Ilisagvik College in Barrow, Alaska; Iñupiat History, Language, and Culture Commission in Barrow, Alaska; Eagle Historic Society and Museum in Eagle, Alaska.

7. Economic Benefits

Alaska has only a handful of accessible and interpreted cultural properties capable of generating money for local economies. Fort Egbert National Historic Landmark, located at the remote gold rush town of Eagle, Alaska, draws about 3,000 visitors annually; these visitors spend an estimated $100,000 for various goods and services. Another area that draws visitors for its scenic and recreational values, including its archaeological resources, is the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District; these visitors probably add $50,000 to the local economy.

John Babel Rock cabin.

Fort Egbert National Historic Landmark... draws about 3,000 visitors annually...

Paleontological Resources

1. Program Summary

Alaska issues one or two Paleontological Resource Use Permits annually. Many factors conspire to limit the amount of paleontological fieldwork done in Alaska, including the duration of winter, difficulty in traveling, long distances involved, expensive logistics, and inhospitable conditions, even during the summer, in some areas.

There are no specific formal designations for paleontological resources, but there is a special study area, the Bering Glacier. It is 80 miles from the nearest habitation and is the largest glacier in Alaska. It is melting back and has recently exposed an ancient buried forest of Sitka spruce sitting on 4,000-year-old peat. Uncrushed bivalves have been exposed and are dated at 3,000–7,000 years old. Plant ecologists are finding living plants that are otherwise unknown in the region, thus extending their known distribution. Many fossils from earlier time periods, including those of dinosaurs and other vertebrates, occur in various locations in the State.

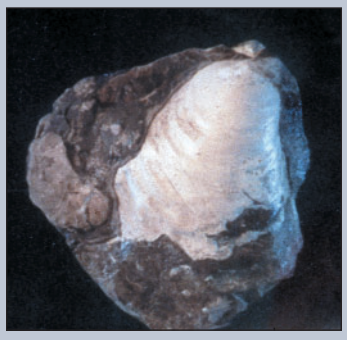
2. State Paleontological History

Alaska, unlike most of North America, is believed to be made up of huge blocks of continental rock, called terranes, that moved across the oceanic plates from various origins. The State's fractured history thus includes not only chapters on the native flora and fauna, but also information on drifting continents, changing climates, and plants and animals that lived hundreds or thousands of miles from the localities where they are found today. Some of the terranes probably drifted northwest from central and northern California; others may have come from eastern Asia.

Given the peculiar geologic history of Alaska, its paleontological history is not easily summarized. There is evidence that most of the terranes are dominated by marine rocks, with their faunas consisting of trilobites, ammonites, and graptolites. Even scattered occurrences of Cretaceous dinosaurs and other vertebrates in south-central Alaska are in marine rocks, although they were deposited close to shore.

Along the Colville River in northern Alaska, more than 6,000 dinosaur bones and teeth from 12 different species have been collected and curated in the University of Alaska Museum. Many

Many fossils from earlier time periods, including those of dinosaurs and other vertebrates, occur in various locations in the State.



An ancient clam or inoceramid related to oysters. Some were 18 inches long.

represent juvenile animals and are critical to our understanding of dinosaur development, biogeography, and theories of dinosaur extinction. Associated fish, mammal, and plant fossils help to round out our understanding of the community as a whole.

Marine mollusks of Cretaceous and Paleocene age are being used to document changes in the position of the Arctic Ocean shoreline and its connection to the Western Interior Seaway that extended all the way to the Gulf of Mexico.

Remains of Pleistocene mammals such as bison, horses, camels, mammoths, and carnivores, including an American lion (*Felis atrox*), have been found in river gravels and lake sediments. Such Pleistocene remains are found sporadically on BLM mining claims in northern and central Alaska.

3. Paleontological Resources At Risk

Alaskan fossil resources are protected to some extent by their remote locations and the State's harsh environment, both of which can make access difficult. Most fossils are accessible only along major rivers and highways. However, such fossils as Pleistocene vertebrates commonly occur in river gravels and may be at risk from unauthorized collecting. Because good exposures of fossils occur along some navigable rivers, these resources are especially vulnerable to increased use. This is particularly true of paleontological resources in the lower Colville and Ikpikpuk Rivers, which are increasingly used for transport or recreation. Escalating prices offered by private collectors, combined with the relative abundance of fossils in Alaska, will place even more paleontological resources at risk from unauthorized collection in the future.

Alaskan fossil resources are protected to some extent by their remote locations and the State's harsh environment, both of which can make access difficult.

Dinosaur dig in progress at the Colville River.

4. Major Accomplishments

- Discovered (1984 through 2002) 12 types of late Cretaceous dinosaurs on the North Slope, in the Colville and Awuna River drainages, and published a pamphlet for the public.
- Discovered mid-Cretaceous fish fauna and the first Mesozoic mammal in Alaska in the Colville River drainage.
- Discovered the first fossil turtle from Alaska.
- Discovered major dinosaur trackways (footprints) in Lower Cretaceous exposures on the North Slope.

- Discovered and recovered approximately 120,000-year-old mammoth tusk remains in mining operations in the Valdez Creek drainage of Alaska.
- Developed various paleontological displays in the Federal Building in downtown Anchorage. Dinosaur fossils from BLM lands in northern Alaska are also enjoyed by tourists in Fairbanks.
- Assisted local newspapers and TV and radio stations in producing features on fossils in Alaska.
- Worked with the Alaska Museum of Natural History in Eagle River, Alaska, during 1999–2000 to study exposed Cretaceous terrane in western Alaska, collecting fossil pollen, which tells us about that region's past climate and about its past configurations of land and water.
- Staged a major display on North Slope dinosaurs in April 2000 at the Outdoor Alaska Sportsman Show in Anchorage, a major spring event in Alaska's largest city.
- Developed paleontological teaching kits for loan to schools.
- Wrote over 90 short articles on paleontological subjects that were published in the "Alaska Naturalist" column in the Anchorage Daily News.
- Provided, since the mid-1980s, special presentations at schools and other places, upon request, concerning Alaska's dinosaurs.

5. Existing Partnerships

- Alaska Museum of Natural History.
- University of Alaska Museum for curation and for facilitating the study of a variety of ancient plant and animal remains throughout Alaska, including world-class dinosaur fossil remains on the North Slope.
- University of Alaska Geophysical Institute to analyze Pleistocene bones in a study of population size and distribution.
- University of Alaska for paleontological work at Bering Glacier and other projects.

6. Economic Benefits

There is no definitive information on economic benefits; however, the University of Alaska Museum and the North Slope dinosaur exhibit at the recent Sportsman Show drew thousands of visitors.

Closeup of a hadrosaur leg bone.

Hadrosaur foot reconstruction.

Dinosaur fossils from BLM lands in northern Alaska are also enjoyed by tourists in Fairbanks.

Cover photo: The Rohn cabin, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, is near the confluence of the South Fork Kuskokwim and Tatina Rivers in south-central Alaska. Originally built in 1939, it was rebuilt in 1998 in a way that retains its historic character. It is maintained by the BLM as a shelter cabin and is used as a checkpoint on the annual Iditarod sled dog race.

For more information about BLM's Cultural Heritage Program, please contact:
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The Bureau of Land Management Today

Our Vision

To enhance the quality of life for all citizens through the balanced stewardship of America's public lands and resources.

Our Mission

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

Our Values

To serve with honesty, integrity, accountability, respect, courage, and commitment to make a difference.

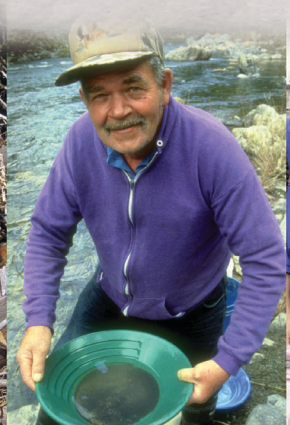
Our Priorities

To improve the health and productivity of the land to support the BLM multiple-use mission.

To cultivate community-based conservation, citizen-centered stewardship, and partnership through consultation, cooperation, and communication.

To respect, value, and support our employees, giving them resources and opportunities to succeed.

To pursue excellence in business practices, improve accountability to our stakeholders, and deliver better service to our customers.



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