

NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY

“Explore America’s Backyard” was the theme for National Public Lands Day (NPLD) on September 28, 2002. This ninth annual celebration of the nation’s premier workday on behalf of our public lands involved a record-breaking 77 BLM sites. From Alaska to Florida, volunteers of all ages rolled up their sleeves and set to work on a variety of projects designed to improve the overall health of one of our most precious resources. The nationwide event was coordinated by the non-profit, Washington, DC-based National Environmental Education & Training Foundation (NEETF), with participation by nine federal agencies, as well as private partner groups and local and national sponsors, including the Public Lands Foundation, Leave No Trace, and Toyota USA.

In 2002, special emphasis was given to urban areas, and a major event was held in Anacostia Park in Washington, DC. More than 450 volunteers cleared brush, planted trees, and spruced up four separate sites along the Anacostia River. Sponsored by BLM, the National Park Service, and USDA Forest Service, the event served to highlight the theme that even though many acres of public lands are in remote areas, urban residents also have public lands right in their own backyards.

At sites both convenient and remote, BLM volunteers came out by the thousands to celebrate and care for their favorite parcel of public land. At Campbell Tract in Anchorage, Alaska, volunteers worked on many projects, including refurbishing trails and constructing a handicapped-accessible walkway. Near Cañon City, Colorado, more than 100 volunteers pitched in to help rehabilitate land that had burned in the Hayman Fire. Two visitor centers in Utah’s Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument were spruced up by volunteers, who then welcomed community members to an open house. In Oregon, the historic Rogue River Ranch held its first NPLD event. Most volunteers had to travel many miles in order to participate in fence building and restoration projects. Many sites in Oregon and other states also featured educational programs as part of their NPLD festivities.

Educating Americans about their public lands was the major theme of “American Frontiers: A Public Lands Journey,” a two-month-long trek on public lands that culminated on NPLD. Traveling from sites on the Canadian and Mexican borders, two teams of adventurers traversed some 1,600 miles each on public lands as they journeyed toward their rendezvous in Utah. A special ceremony was held in Salt Lake City on NPLD to celebrate the trek.



On National Public Lands Day 2002, 4-H Club volunteers for the Safford (AZ) Field Office gathered 15 large sacks of litter at the Black Hills Rockhound Area.