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F O R I M M E D I A T E R E L E A S E

LOCAL BLM UNIT MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO HARNEY COUNTY

U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employees contribute to the local community and the agency has a positive economic effect on Harney County, reports Acting Burns District Manager Sandy Berain. She said she was pleasantly surprised when a recent summary showed many ways in which the BLM employees and their family members contribute to the fabric of Harney County communities above and beyond their official responsibilities for public land resource management. She also noted the agency has positive economic impact on communities in the County.

Berain said BLM employees and their families add significantly to local community life through volunteer involvement in local government, civic organizations, schools, churches, sports programs, and other areas, thus contributing to the general health of the community. A partial listing of the activities and organizations in which BLM employees and/or their family members volunteer as citizens of Harney County includes the following: City Council member, planning department member, fire departments, watershed councils, Chamber of Commerce member and activities, assisting in school sports and academic programs, Harney County Distance Education program; assisting with community youth programs like little league, soccer, swim team, 4-H, pony club; church programs, Burns Butte Sportsmans Club, Harney County Fair, and assisting with Burns Paiute Tribal activities.

The BLM joins other local Federal and State and County government agencies and private organizations to sponsor and conduct popular community events such as Free Fishing Day, John Scharff Migratory Bird Festival, annual Hunter Information Booth, the Adopt A-Highway program, and others.

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“A cursory review of Fiscal Year 2003 expenditures, services, salaries, and other contributions to the economic and social well-being of Harney County show the BLM Burns District continues to be an important partner in the local community,” says Berain. A summary of local BLM contract awards, Purchase Orders, Emergency Equipment Use Invoices, and Credit Card Purchases shows more than \$618 thousand in expenditures in Harney County between October 1, 2002 and September 30, 2003. Permanent, seasonal, and emergency-hire employee salaries totaled over \$6.2 million with direct and indirect spin-off to the economy of Harney County. Total employment by BLM in Harney County included 125 permanent employees, 62 seasonal/temporary employees, and 82 emergency hires (during wildfire operations).

The BLM purchases a large variety of goods and services directly from local businesses including petroleum products, office supplies, hardware, fencing materials, printing, advertising, veterinarian services, meals, meeting room rentals, and others. In addition to the direct purchases, the local BLM office awarded 16 contracts to Harney County businesses for services, supplies, and construction projects. Examples of local contract awards for 2003 include fencing construction, hay purchases, sign construction, janitorial services, thinning and piling of slash, and juniper cutting.

Berain is quick to point out that the people and businesses in Harney County have provided much to the BLM in return for their efforts. Employees are willing and able to participate in so many ways because they are welcomed and appreciated. Many employees have made career choices to live here because of the lifestyle, school system, opportunity to extend their education, health services, friendly people, and of course the land itself. A number of BLM retirees live here and continue to contribute to the community.

For more information on the Burns District or on this article, call (541) 573-4400 weekdays between 7:45 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. or log on to www.or.blm.gov/Burns.

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