

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



# ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Administered by DOI, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance

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# Introduction

## About the Awards

The Environmental Achievement Awards recognize Department employees, teams, and DOI partners (contractors or external organizations) who have attained exceptional environmental achievements. The Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance Administers these annual Department-level Honor awards that include up to eight areas of achievement. In accordance with the Department Manual (DM), 370 DM 451.3, the Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget (AS-PMB), approves these awards.

## Evaluation of Nominations

The Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) convenes a panel to select and recommend recipients for EAAs using established evaluation criteria. The OEPC forwards recommendations to the Department's Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO)/Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget. The CSO finalizes the selection of recipients and signs a memorandum announcing EAA recipients.

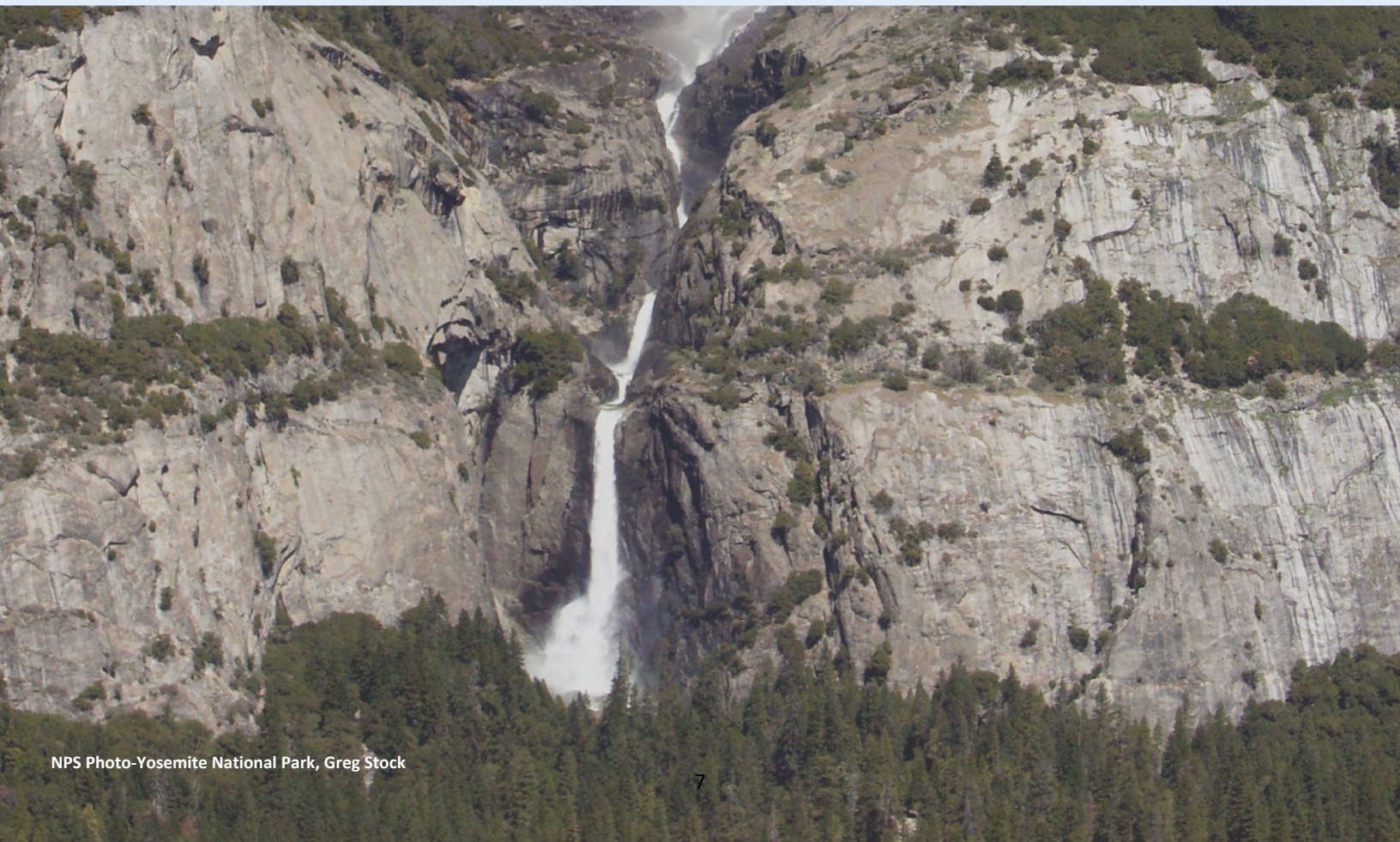
## Recognition of Recipients

Awardees receive a plaque and a letter of recognition. Honorable mentions (if any) receive a letter of recognition. Recipients and honorable mentions become a part of a network of environmental professionals who help spread best management practices across the Department. Award recipients in the following categories are recognized at DOI's Honors Award Convocation: Climate Champion, Greening the Fleet, Environmental Justice, and Cultural Resources Protection.





# Category Descriptions



# Category Descriptions

## **Cultural Resources Protection**

Recognizes efforts to promote and protect cultural resources to include archaeological sites, historic buildings and sites, cultural and historic landscapes, and tribal trusts.

## **Environmental Justice**

This category recognizes the exceptional efforts of individuals or partners who advance the goals and objectives of the Department’s Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, including leadership, guidance, and training that advances environmental justice knowledge and understanding; meaningful engagement of low-income, minority, or tribal communities in decision-making processes; evaluation of actions and how they may impact low-income, minority, or tribal communities; and work that aids and empowers communities to help build environmentally and economically sound communities.

## **Environmental Remediation and Restoration**

This category recognizes efforts in remediation or restoration of Department lands and resources. Examples include green remediation initiatives, use of new and emerging technologies, partnerships with other agencies or organizations, reduction of carbon footprint through new techniques, project management or initiatives in areas such as bureau operations, land management practices, technology enhancement/transfer, environmental education/training, policy making, program infrastructure development, and research related to improving efficiency and use of best management practices in the restoration of Department lands and resources.



## **Environmental Conservation Stewardship**

This category recognizes exceptional efforts to prevent or eliminate pollution from federal operations and buildings, including practices that increase efficiency in the use of materials, energy, water, or other resources. The award also recognizes building operation efficiencies, waste diversion and reduction, innovation, procurement of goods and services, and other pollution prevention and resource conservation efforts. In addition to reducing pollution, efforts should also show an increase in efficiencies and/or cost savings.

## **Climate Champion**

This category recognizes an individual or team who are champions for change, development, implementation, or training/education (public or employees) and institutionalization of a sustainability practice to reduce the overall greenhouse gas footprint in support of the climate change goals.

## **Greening the Fleet**

This category recognizes outstanding achievement in improving transportation fleet operations that work toward the goals of achieving a clean or zero-emission vehicle fleet and/or decreasing petroleum fuel consumption and reducing greenhouse gas pollution. Efforts to green all fleets will be considered, ex. fleets with vendors through the procurement process, public charging stations, etc.

## Category Descriptions continued

### **Sustainable Innovation**

This category recognizes exceptional leadership and work to develop and implement an innovation to promote the sustainability priorities as reflected in Federal executive orders. Leadership within and between Bureaus/Offices and other Federal agencies is a plus. Efforts may include using or introducing a new technology or service to achieve the goals of the Department. Areas of effort can be in any category of sustainability, for example, sustainable purchasing, that increases the purchase of environmentally preferable products and services and procurements to address supply chain emissions.

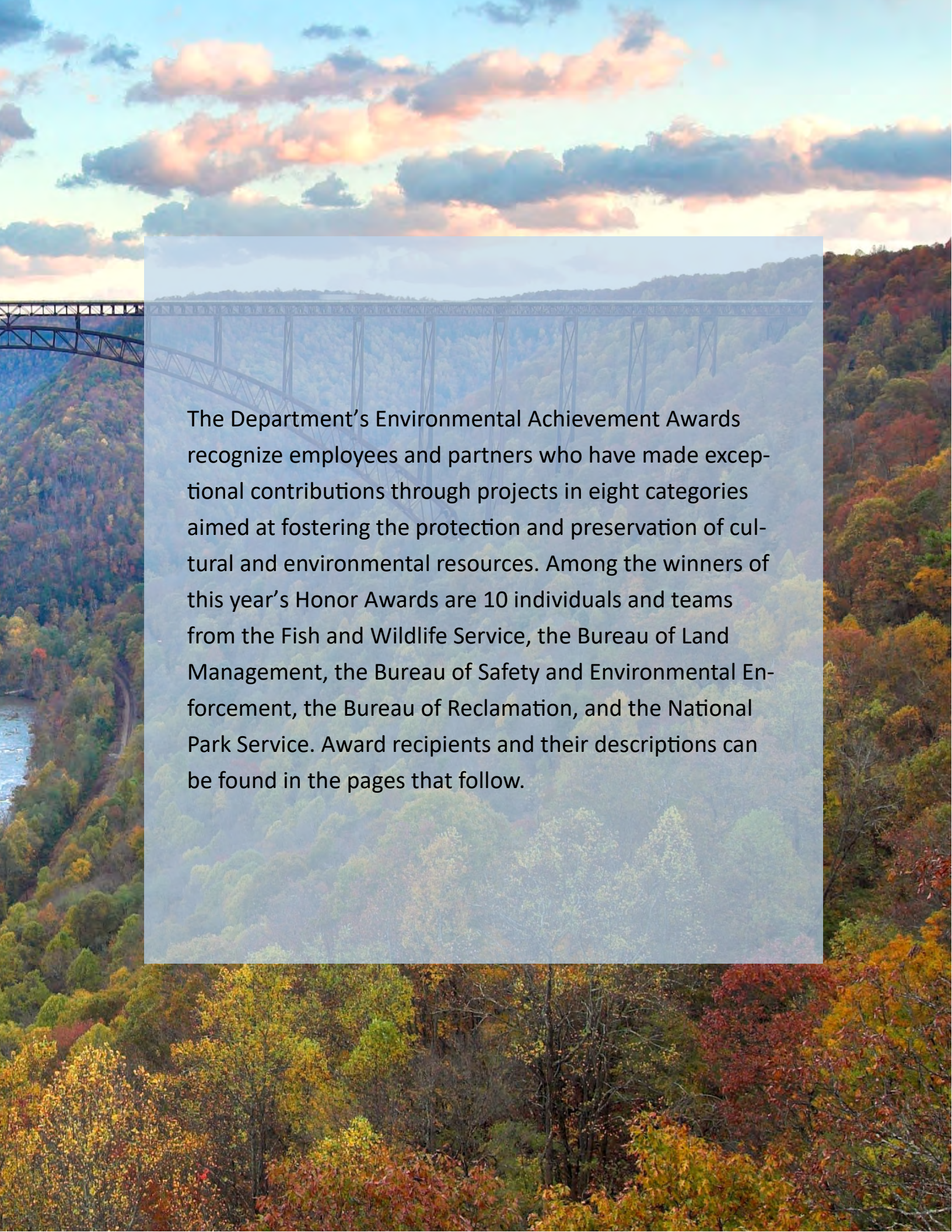
### **Ralph Regula Conservation and Stewardship Champion**

Recognizes those that champion America's special places to ensure the legacy of these natural and cultural resource treasures endure through collaborative stewardship and resource conservation efforts. Demonstrates exemplary external engagement with state or local governments, regional communities and/or educational institutions to raise awareness on sustainability and/or climate change. Efforts should engage stakeholders to promote environmental stewardship.





# 2023 Environmental Achievement Award Winners



The Department's Environmental Achievement Awards recognize employees and partners who have made exceptional contributions through projects in eight categories aimed at fostering the protection and preservation of cultural and environmental resources. Among the winners of this year's Honor Awards are 10 individuals and teams from the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the National Park Service. Award recipients and their descriptions can be found in the pages that follow.





# Cultural Resources Protection



# Cultural Resources Protection



Desert Tortoise, FWS photo

## **Eldon Brown, FWS, Individual, Pacific West Region**

Eldon Brown had a tremendous year (Oct. 2021-Sept. 2022) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 8 (FWS). During a year when other regions experienced a downward trend in Tribal participation for Tribal Wildlife Grants (TWG), Region 8 continued to gain interest in the program. Eldon Brown acted upon this momentum to secure 7 tribal wildlife grants out of 11 proposals, resulting in nearly 1.4 million outreach dollars for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding. Eldon has gone above and beyond to support “Cultural Resources Protection.” His efforts span across all FWS programs – in particular, the Ecological Services Program, Refuges, the Migratory Birds Program, and the Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program, all of which have benefited from his expertise and assistance. Additionally, his work as the Native American Liaison for this region supports 130 federally recognized tribes; the largest number of any region in the lower 48 states. Despite the workload and all the challenges, Eldon has taken extraordinary measures to support the Service and tribes with his proactive and strategic efforts.



# Cultural Resources Protection

## Restoration of Historic Mining Structures in the South Pass and Lewiston Mining Districts, BLM, Partnership, South Pass Area, Lander Field Office, Wyoming

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) partnered with HistoriCorps, a non-profit volunteer based historic preservation group, to stabilize and restore two historic mining buildings in the South Pass Mining District. The partnership restored the Lemley Mill a depression era mining mill outside of Atlantic City and an historic cabin (aka The Saloon) in the Miner's Delight townsite. The Lemley Mill still possesses the inner workings of a mill and is unique in the area. The lower portions of several walls were rotten and failing. The southern wall was completely detached from the rest of the structure and the roof had collapsed.

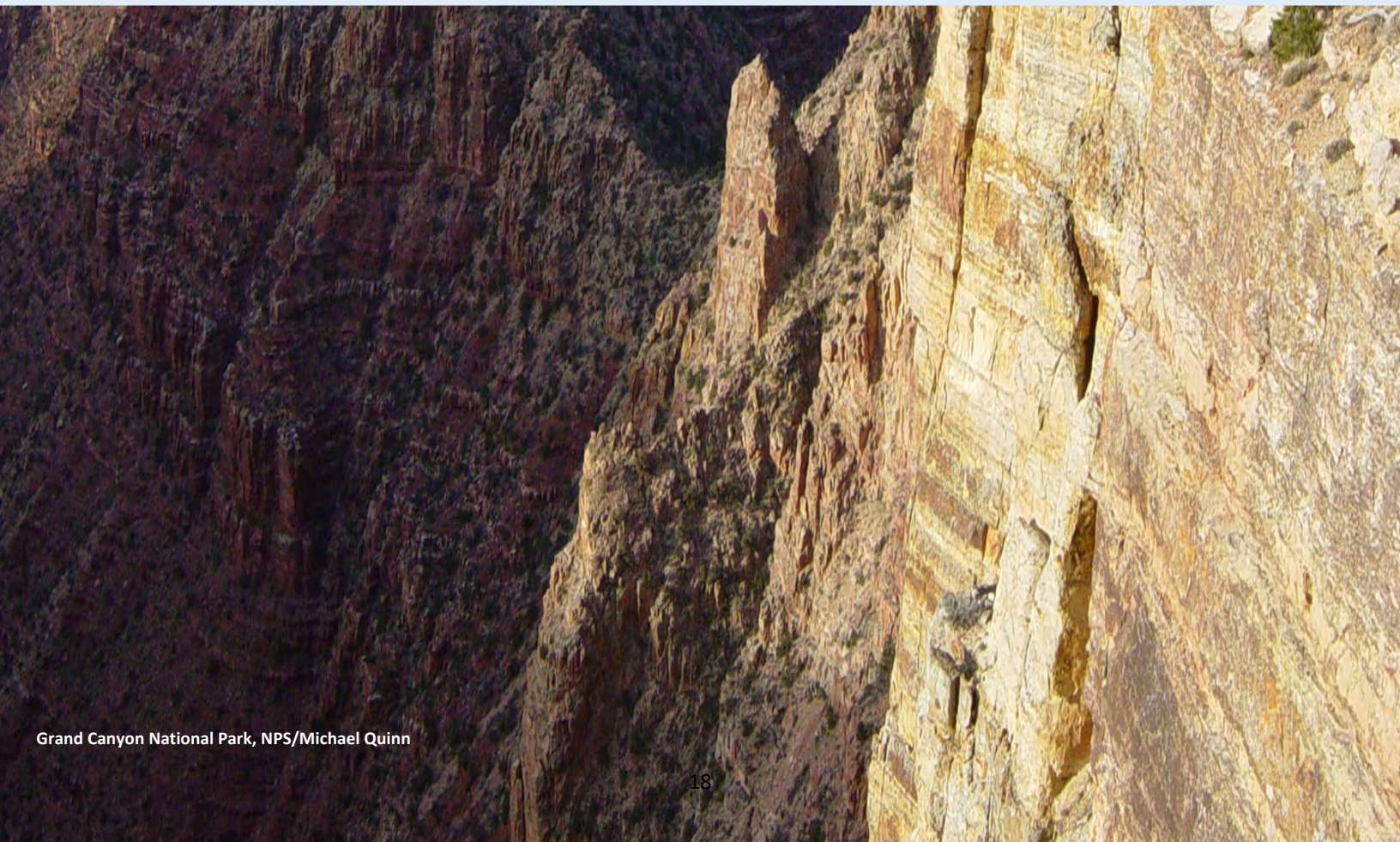


BLM photo, Lemley Mill

The BLM and HistoriCorps stabilized the building before removing the rotten structural components and replacing them. The mill roof was replaced, and the building envelope replaced with tar paper and wooden battens. Interpretative panels will be installed for public visitation. The Saloon at Miner's Delight townsite was in danger of collapsing when the BLM and HistoriCorps started the project. The building components were labeled, and the roof was removed. The walls were dismantled to assess the situation with the rotten sill logs. New sill logs were cut and tooled to match historic building techniques and the sill logs were replaced. The walls were painstakingly put back together using the labeling system and structure map. The roof replacement is scheduled to take place in the summer of 2023. The Saloon at Miner's Delight is a unique building. Based on the materials and building techniques, it is believed to be one of the earliest buildings to have been erected in the townsite, which is dated back to 1867. Miner's Delight (aka Hamilton City) was one of the first mining towns to establish itself and influenced the economic development of the region and Wyoming as a state. These two buildings, though they are of different eras, tell the story of the expansion of extractive industries in Wyoming, the cycles of booms and busts, the very fabric of what it means to live and work in Wyoming. This story continues today, and these buildings are a reminder of that story still being lived.



# Environmental Justice



# Environmental Justice



Horseshoe Bend on the Colorado River, NPS / Brent&Dawn Davis

## **Grand Canyon USBR, USGS, NPS-Tribal Monitoring Program, USBR, Partnership, Upper Colorado Basin.**

The Grand Canyon is an amazing place! Yet few know that a complex partnership of Department of the Interior Agencies and Tribes have monitored the Canyon's health and cultural resources for over 25 years. This nomination is to reward long-term stewardship of the Grand Canyon as a sacred place. Since 1997, the Hopi Tribe, the Hualapai Tribe, Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, the Navajo Nation, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, and the Zuni Tribe have worked with the National Park Service's Glen Canyon National Recreational Area and Grand Canyon National Park, the USGS's Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center and the Bureau of Reclamation's Glen Canyon Dam Program, to preserve the sacredness of the Colorado River and to ensure its cultural resources are protected from harm. Annual monitoring trips are scheduled to observe the physical and spiritual elements of the ecosystem and its prehistoric sites, and make recommendations for their protection, research, and spiritual well-being. The Canyon is a wellspring of spiritual renewal for many tribes. The program recognizes the spiritual and scientific values of an endearing geological wonder. The Canyon's hallowed shrines, ancient dwellings, and places of emergence into this world, are protected for future generations to walk in the pathways of their ancestors.



# Environmental Remediation and Restoration



# Environmental Remediation and Restoration

## Crab Orchard Lake Cleanup, FWS, Team, Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, Illinois.

Beginning in late summer 2021, the water level of the 7,000-acre Crab Orchard Lake on the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois, was intentionally lowered, and maintained at a level, four feet less than normal pool for approximately 9 months. The main purpose of this drawdown was to perform repair and replacement of concrete on the 80+ year old spillway structure. Besides the obvious boat ramp renovations, shoreline stabilization, and related infrastructure projects to be completed, the question was, “what could be accomplished to enhance the natural resources of the lake under those conditions?” The lake remained lowered from July of 2021 through March of 2022, creating unique environmental opportunities for cleanup, fish and aquatic flora habitat enhancement, sediment stabilization, and water quality improvement of the lake. One of the biggest environmental accomplishments during the drawdown was the removal of litter from the exposed lakebed, including 400 tires and countless bags of trash. The tires had historically been used as wave breaks, bumpers on the sides of old stationary boat docks, fish attractors, and simply disposed of improperly as litter over the course of many decades. Additionally, planting aquatic vegetation preferred by waterfowl and shorebirds in the temporarily exposed mudflats, along with the installation of fish structures to improve fish habitat helped cleanse Crab Orchard Lake, greatly improving the overall water quality of the lake and the health of the natural species who use it.



Milk carton and other debris in an emptied Crab Orchard Lake, FWS photo



Old tires exposed in a drained Crab Orchard Lake, FWS photo



Clean and restored area in Crab Orchard Lake, FWS photo

# Environmental Remediation and Restoration



Restored Goose Point Marsh, FWS Photo

## Goose Point Marsh Reclamation Project, FWS, Partnership, Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, Lacombe, LA.

In late August 2021, Big Branch Marsh NWR received extensive damage from Hurricane Ida. A breach in the marsh at Goose Point allowed swell and wave action from Lake Pontchartrain to erode the marsh, killing marsh grass, which in turn allowed more marsh to erode and continue the erosion cycle.



Goose Point Marsh before restoration, FWS photo



Bags of recycled glass in place, FWS photo



Volunteers forming breakwater, FWS photo

Through a coordinated effort with Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Glass Half Full, and the Coastal Technologies Corporation the staff at Big Branch Marsh NWR used recycled glass to seal the breach and rebuild marsh behind the breached area.

# Environmental Remediation and Restoration



BLM officials cleaning up an illegal tire dump on public lands. BLM photo

## **State Environmental Cleanup Action Plans (SECAPs), BLM, Team, National in Scope.**

A Bureau of Land Management (BLM) team drawn from Field, District, State, and BLM HQ offices developed State Environmental Cleanup Action Plans (SECAPs) for each state office to establish a multi-year approach to identify, verify, inventory, perform site investigation, cleanup, cost estimation, investigate potentially responsible parties, and manage follow-on activities at known and suspected sites with environmental contamination. The objective of this effort is to support an integrated strategy across all levels of BLM management to improve efficiency and use of best management practices in decision making, program planning and budgeting, and policy development for the environmental remediation & restoration of public lands and resources administered by BLM. This objective has been met and a framework has been established for improved communication between all levels of the BLM environmental staff and the successful leveraging of knowledge within BLM. The BLM SECAP framework is historically the first comprehensive cleanup framework within the Department of the Interior and can be readily replicated as a model for other bureaus.

# Environmental Remediation and Restoration



Joshua Tree at Mojave National Preserve, NPS Photo

**The Valgold Ore Processing Area – the largest abandoned mine land site remediated and restored in the Mojave National Preserve, NPS, Team, Mojave National Preserve, San Bernadino County, California.**

The Valgold Ore Processing Area (Site or Valgold Site) is the largest abandoned mine land (“AML”) site to be remediated on National Park Service land in the Mojave Desert. Legacy pollution resulting from mining and milling operations within this two-acre site impaired natural resources, limited recreational opportunities, and threatened human health and the environment for decades.

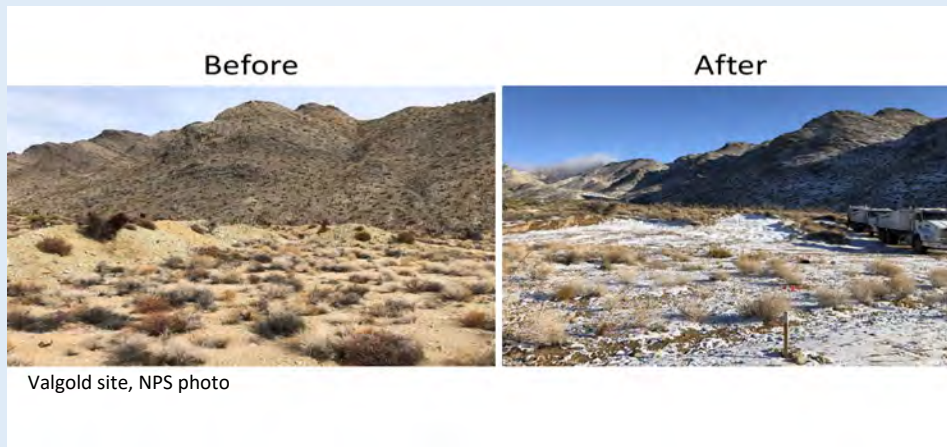


# Environmental Remediation and Restoration

The remediation and restoration of the Site in Mojave National Preserve ensures the preservation of natural and cultural resources, including the threatened desert tortoise, iconic Joshua tree, and more. The Valgold Ore Processing Area Site Remediation and Restoration Team worked collaboratively and carefully to successfully protect and pre-serve unique flora and fauna during the remediation and restoration of the Site.



Removal operations at Valgold site, NPS Photo



Valgold site, NPS photo

Cleanup of the Valgold Site preserves these exceptional lands for the benefit of future generations, lends continuity to the sacred connections between tribes and their ancient ways of life, advances the Federal Government's efforts to support and protect tribal interests, and provides safe habitat for unique and threatened species – the Joshua tree and the desert tortoise – to thrive.



Planting juvenile Joshua Trees. NPS photo



Planting juvenile Joshua Trees. NPS photo



# Environmental Conservation Stewardship

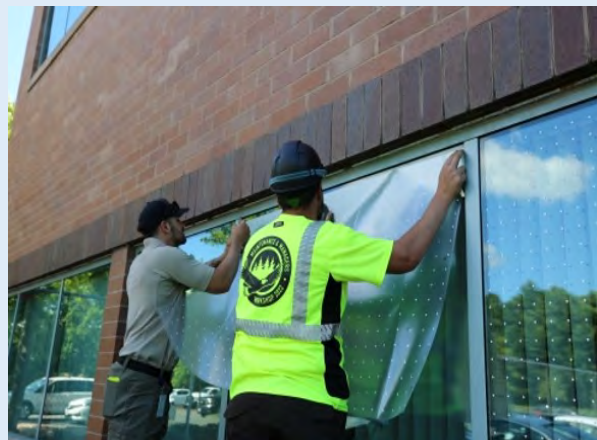


# Environmental Conservation Stewardship

## Northeast Region Bird Collision Prevention, FWS, USFWS Northeast Region - multiple facilities.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Region (FWS) embarked on an effort to stop bird collisions at their facilities, which will have an important conservation benefit to our trust resources and inspire others to take action. An estimated 1 billion birds die each year in the United States due to collisions with windows. Most of these collisions occur on homes and low-rise buildings, like government offices, with less than 1% occurring on skyscrapers. These are preventable mortalities.

The Northeast Region's Infrastructure Management Division trained all regional maintenance staff to install bird collision prevention materials in 2022, and then used their new skills to retrofit large and small buildings to be safe for birds. The Regional Office, with over 8000 square feet of glass, and a known collision problem that impacted at least 29 species of migratory birds, was retrofitted by a Maintenance Action Team, in partnership with the landlord. Preliminary data indicate this retrofit reduced bird collisions by 100%. The FWS Regional Business Advisor worked with the landlord to secure permission to install the retrofit and funding for the materials. The Regional Office Retrofit was followed by retrofitting actions to prevent collisions at 11 other sites in the region in 2022, and work is ongoing. The Office of Communications supported storytelling and media outreach, and now other offices are following suit and inspiring agencies and individuals to take action to save birds. This is part of a larger national effort to reduce bird building collisions in response to the loss of three billion birds since 1970.



Employees installing prevention material at the FWS Northeast Regional Office in Hadley, MA. Leah Riley/USFWS



Employees installing prevention material at Patuxent Research Refuge, MD. FWS photo



# Climate Champion



# Climate Champion



High-efficiency LEED Platinum-certified employee housing at Grand Canyon National Park. NPS/Michael Quinn

## **Natural Resource Stewardship and Science (NRSS) Climate Friendly Parks Project, NPS, Team, Lakewood & Fort Collins, CO.**

In Fiscal Year 2022, the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Directorate of the National Park Service published the results of a baseline, operational greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory. The effort broadly quantified GHGs resulting from Directorate offices and operations along the Colorado Front Range. Project leads collected annual data on Scope 1 and Scope 3 emissions sources associated with NRSS operations. This required developing new and novel methods for calculating emissions associated with business air travel and employee commuting—parameters not typically included in park-based inventories. Specific targets were developed for each of the top Scope 3 emission sources based upon span of control, known opportunities, and trends in technology, outlining a pathway to achieve an average reduction of 23% across all Scope 3 sources by 2025. The plan describes a series of graduated goals (Easy & Immediate, Greater Commitment, and Big Picture) for reducing emissions across operations. It also includes goals to improve communication and education around climate-smart management, including a desire to support similar efforts in other Departmental offices. In summary, the NRSS Climate Action Plan provides a broad snapshot of current emissions, establishes targets and timelines for reducing emissions, and documents reproducible methods for conducting similar inventories for centralized government office operations.



# Greening the Fleet



# Greening the Fleet

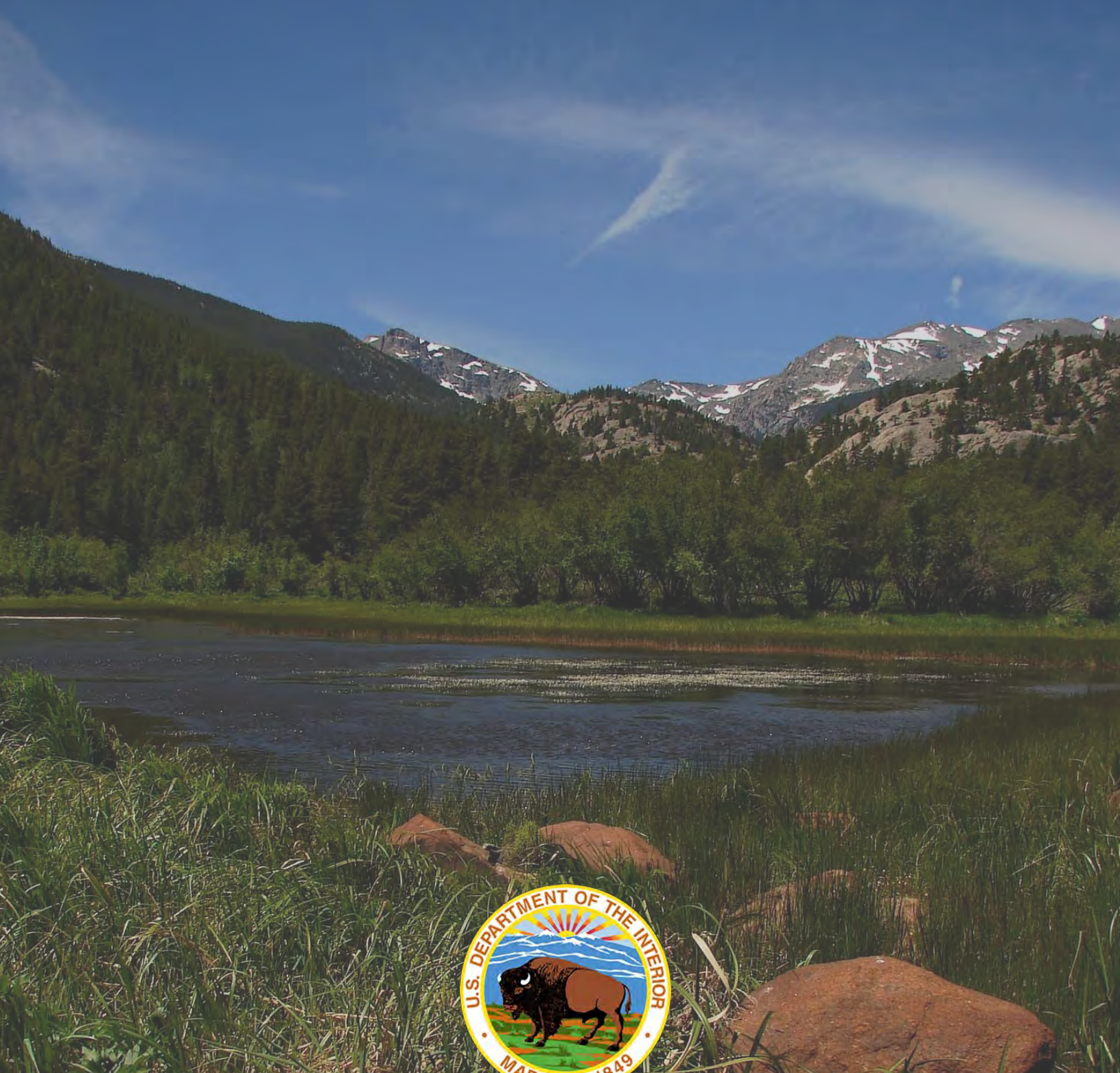
## Evaluating Efficient Transportation Solutions in a Post Pandemic Environment - Shuttle between MIB and Sterling VA, BSEE, Team, Sterling, VA and Washington DC.

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) Office of Administration Support Services Team was tasked with evaluating the resource and energy efficiency of the BSEE shuttle service between two BSEE offices in the DC metropolitan area. It was determined that the shuttle operated on a daily schedule regardless of ridership, emitted 56.63 metric tons of CO2 annually, and cost \$140,742.



Photo of a rideshare application Photo, GSA

Understanding the carbon inefficiency of the shuttle, the team researched options to meet the changing transportation needs of the Bureau. The team found a creative solution that is relatively new to the Federal government. In October 2022, the BSEE team partnered with the General Services Administration (GSA) and awarded Task Orders against GSA's Blanket Purchase Agreements with rideshare providers Uber and Lyft. By utilizing a rideshare service, trips are now only made as needed. Employees download either rideshare app to their personal or government furnished cell phone and easily create a business account which is internally billed to the agency. The team implemented internal controls so that the rides are only available between predefined locations, dates, and times. Replacing the BSEE shuttle with a rideshare solution resulted in an annual reduction of 54.52 metric tons in carbon emissions – a 96% reduction. The monetary savings are significant as well, with cost savings of 95%. While the BSEE rideshare solution was small, this transportation solution can be replicated and utilized by other bureaus and federal agencies to meet their changing transportation needs in areas with multiple federal facilities.



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