

Interior



Shelves

This issue highlights several bureau projects funded by the Department of the Interior (DOI) through an internal competition for Cultural & Scientific Collections.

Outside the Museum Walls: Making BLM Collections Accessible to Students

By Tricia Prewitt, Interior Museum Program

The BLM Grand Junction Field Office and its partner, Museums of Western Colorado (MWC), submitted a proposal for a four part project that highlighted BLM collections. The first part included hiring an intern to tackle the museum cataloging backlog of many BLM objects. He was able to catalog almost 1,000 BLM objects, which included taking approximately 4,000 photographs. These photographs were attached to the object's catalog records for easier identification by both BLM and MWC, as well as for researchers. The intern was also able to rehouse 10 linear feet of objects and update approximately 50 catalog records.

The other parts of the project involved education and outreach. First is an interactive website for MWC that highlights the various BLM collections housed at the museum. It is currently being developed. Another project component involves a partnership between MWC, BLM, and a local school district. Using BLM paleontological and archeological collections, MWC and BLM worked with Mesa County School District 51 to develop two traveling exhibits for classroom instruction, including curricula for multiple educational levels. These traveling exhibits also contain a message about stewardship of artifacts and fossils on public lands. Designed to be easily transportable, the goal of these exhibits is to reach communities that might not be able to physically visit a museum. The collaboration with the local school district has been invaluable in this endeavor. The kits will be available to teachers starting in the fall of 2016.



The last part of the project supported two student day camps that were held at various BLM and MWC locations. Students visited the Mica Mine, the Ute Learning Garden, the Dinosaur Hill Trail, and the Fruita Paleo Area in western Colorado. These two camps allowed 60 students from 12 elementary schools to take behind-the-scenes tours of MWC collections storage areas and learn about proper collections care for paleontological and archeological collections both in a museum setting and in the field. Students were given demonstrations and lectures about how fossils and artifacts are collected from the field; how to prepare fossils and artifacts for curation; rock art protection and prevention of vandalism of such sites; how to interact with various archeological objects, like wickiups, if they are encountered on public lands; and Leave-No-Trace methods when on public lands. The students learned BLM's mission and gained an increased sense of awareness for stewardship of artifacts and fossils on public lands and in museum collections. This program was extremely successful and there is great interest from the school district to continue the program at MWC. The Ute Mountain tribe also asked for a camp for their students to be held in the summer of 2016.

Remember the Bertrand: 1865-2015

By Dean Knudsen, Fish and Wildlife Service

April 1, 2015 marked the 150th year since the sinking of the Steamboat *Bertrand* on the Missouri River. One hundred years later the wreck of this ship was located within the boundaries of DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, and the artifacts that were recovered have formed the basis of a remarkable museum collection. To commemorate the anniversary of the *Bertrand*, Refuge staff submitted a proposal to plan and carry out a public celebration.

Owing to an early Easter, the weekend prior to the historic date was chosen as the primary focus for scheduled events at the refuge. The newly hired event coordinator also decided that, in the weeks leading up to the 150th anniversary, it would help get the word about the *Bertrand* to the public by developing a PowerPoint program and offering it to local school and civic groups. As a result, a program was delivered to a wide spectrum of audiences, including various college classes, Civil War Roundtables, public libraries, and state and local historical societies. The DOI grant al-

lowed for the purchase and development of a traveling display that told the story of the *Bertrand* and the collection of artifacts held by DeSoto NWR. The first recipient of this display was the county museum in Fort Benton, Montana – the intended destination of the *Bertrand* in 1865.

The Visitor Center at DeSoto NWR hosted a wide variety of events that were open to the public during the celebration. Two key speakers were invited; Ronald Switzer, a retired National Park Service Superintendent, who had begun his career by organizing the conservation efforts of the *Bertrand* objects. The second speaker was Megan Griffiths, a highly-trained conservator with the Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center. Megan has worked extensively in recent years to restore and preserve metal artifacts from the *Bertrand*. Both speakers were well received by the public, and were asked to offer encore presentations as the weekend progressed. The weekend also had a number of public activities for visitors of all ages. There were guided walks through the museum by docents in period costumes; story time and 19th century games for children; (Continue to p. 2)

a photo-op where people could stand at a ship's wheel with a photo of a steamboat as a backdrop; talks by two Fish and Wildlife archaeologists at the wreck's excavation site; and an oral history station where visitors who had witnessed the original dig in 1968-1969 could recount their memories. A total of 2,000 people attended the 3-day weekend events at DeSoto NWR. In addition, the national media picked up on local coverage of the weekend—in television, radio and print—and it is estimated that 250,000 people



across the country were informed about the commemoration. The efforts and energies that went into the planning and execution of those days served to not only to inform, remind, and educate visitors to the refuge of the story of a ship that had been lost – but also to invite the public to learn more about the mission and message of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Preserving the Lunar Training Vehicle “Grover”

By: Bruce Geyman, USGS

The Lunar Training Vehicle “Grover”, located at the USGS Science Center in Flagstaff, AZ, has a history that starts in 1970 between USGS and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Following the successful first landing on the Moon in 1969 by Apollo 11, NASA planned the Apollo 15, 16, and 17 missions to extend the length of time that astronauts could spend exploring the surface of the moon and increase surface mobility by using Lunar Roving Vehicles, or LRVs. Since the gravity of the Moon is one-sixth of the gravity of the Earth, the vehicles transported to the Moon could be comparatively lightweight. The LRV design evolved in complexity into what NASA characterized as a “manned spacecraft on wheels.”



Training astronauts on Earth to drive these highly specialized vehicles on the Moon and to use them for geological exploration, however, required a more robust terrestrial training vehicle that could withstand the effects of Earth's gravity. NASA commissioned several contractors and spent more than one million dollars on prototypes. None seemed to perform satisfactorily.

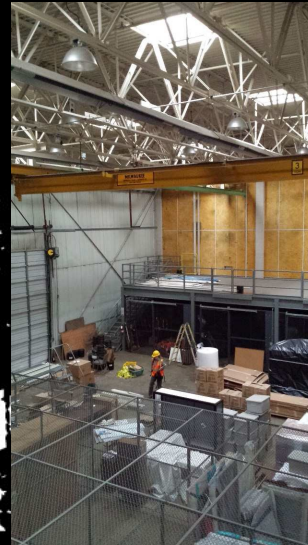
Then in 1970, NASA approached USGS with an urgent request to build an operable training vehicle that resembled the LRV to be sent to the Moon. Within 90 days, at a cost of approximately \$2,000, and improvising with spare automobile and aircraft parts, four USGS engineers created the Lunar Training Vehicle “Grover,” the Geologic Rover. It was used successfully for the next two years by Apollo 15, 16, and 17 astronauts on 20 different field trips in the deserts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada. It was continually revised and improved as a prototype, although some components, such as cameras and antennae, were mere mock-ups. Nonetheless, it withstood the harsh terrain and environment of the American Southwest, although not without a few scratches, dents, and superficial cracks. As a proposal to conserve this important artifact of USGS's history was sent to DOI for funding consideration, it was decided that these blemishes should be retained and stabilized in perpetuity as evidence of its use: a *concoirs d'elegance* show car it is not!

A professional conservation company conducted a thorough conservation assessment of “Grover” to provide the basis for contracting professional conservation work on the vehicle. The conservation assessment established a baseline for its present condition—an overall good condition—and specified areas needing detailed cleaning. It also identified some loose wiring and a few areas where inherently fragile materials, such as gold Mylar sheathing, steel mesh, and cardboard, were deteriorating. This professional evaluation is invaluable to continuing preservation of the artifact so it can be exhibited and interpreted for USGS employees and the public alike.

Designing a Partnership Curation Facility at Fort Vancouver

By Tricia Prewitt, Interior Museum Program

Consolidation of museum collections is an important tool for DOI bureaus that can be used to promote efficient care of and better access to collections by the public. In an effort to respond to these objectives, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site (FOVA) is designing a curation facility for DOI bureaus and others. Its location in the Portland, Oregon area, close to many universities and elementary, middle and high schools in Oregon and Washington, also makes it ideal for education and research using museum collections.



Caring for over 3 million objects from multiple bureaus, FOVA received DOI support to develop a conceptual design for a new facility, including estimates for the necessary renovations of a pre-existing building owned by the National Park Service (NPS) since 2012. The proposed design maximizes the available square footage of the building without altering the building's footprint beyond what is necessary. The completed facility will be 20,000 square feet of storage, work, and research areas and offices.

While this curation facility is meant to be mainly for collection storage, FOVA has also incorporated features into the building to increase public accessibility to DOI collections. One will be the visitors' lobby with viewing windows so visitors can look into the conservation and archaeology laboratories to see objects being treated and preserved. Another planned feature is visible storage that will display various objects from the collections stored in the facility. The design and consolidation of the collections space will also allow FOVA staff to conduct behind-the-scenes tours to school groups and other small groups. With an already robust outreach program and partnerships with local schools, FOVA also will be able to increase research and educational capabilities with a classroom for teaching and guest lectures. When funding and partners are secured for the new facility, FOVA will give visitors a unique glimpse into the museum world and the diverse collections of the NPS and other DOI bureaus.

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