

>> Anncr: The Bureau of Land Management presents

live from the BLM National Training Center in

Phoenix, Arizona...

A Human Resources Forum.

Today's topic...

Diversity...

Why it matters.

And now the host of your program, Leon Thomas.

>> L. Thomas: Hello.

Welcome to our Human Resources Forum on diversity

and why it matters.

This is a joint effort of the Arizona/New Mexico

Southwest EEO Zone and the National Training

Center.

This is a very exciting and dynamic topic which

has recently been reinforced by an Executive Order

issued by President Obama in August 2011.

BLM strives to be a model employer by building and

maintaining a workforce that reflects the rich

diversity of America.

In this program we'll hear from BLM Director Bob

Abbey, executive leaders and your peers.

Our message is that each of us offers something

unique to the workforce and that diversity

reflects the best part of BLM.

Some ask: what exactly is diversity and inclusion.

Diversity is greater than gender or race.

It's all-inclusive.

At BLM we actively seek out a winning combination

of academic backgrounds, ages, cultures, life

circumstances, thinking styles and interests.

We strive to pursue develop and champion unique

and talented employees at all levels.

Inclusion is about fully engaging and developing

employees, creating an inclusive workforce that

develops its people is BLM's goal and a key part

of enabling us to accomplish our mission.

In our first segment today, District Manager Angie

Bulletts is here to join us from the Phoenix

District Office.

Welcome.

>> A. Bulletts: I'm happy to be here today to

share you with our Arizona Youth Initiative and

happy to represent the Arizona district and BLM

Arizona.

>> L. Thomas: Also with us is a.

>> S. Cohn:.

>> S. Cohn: Hi, plea on.

Thanks for inviting me today.

>> L. Thomas: Completing our first panel, a STEP  
Range Tech with the District Office, Juan Ledezma.

>> J. Ledezma: Thanks, Leon.

Happy to be here.

>> L. Thomas: Before we get started I would like  
to thank all of you for joining us.

I would like to mention after the initial  
presentations we have a two sessions and a Q&A  
segment.

The first will focus on the Youth Initiative which  
is a component of Arizona's different program.

We will then take a 15-minute break and come back  
with another group of BLMers and share their  
thoughts of workplace diversity and inclusion  
followed by is a second Q&A section.

We look forward to your comments and questions.

Please, don't be shy about joining in on our  
discussions.

You can contact us at any time during this telecast by telephone, fax, e-mail or text message using the phone numbers and e-mail address on your screen.

We will let you know when we're ready to take your questions.

After our second session we will be joined by some upper level managers who will provides perspectives on diversity within BLM.

Now to get things started we have a message from our Director Bob Abbey, Steve Ellis, the acting deputy Director and Carole Carter-Pfisterer.

>> Dir. Abbey: The BLM embraces diversity at all levels of the organization.

We're committed to being the premier land management agency within the federal government.

An important part of our path to success is increasing diversity throughout the agency.

Managing the nation's public lands is a rewarding job.

It's one that requires balancing a variety of expectations the American public has for these resources.

This means understanding diverse points of view is

crucial.

Research has shown when managed properly, diverse organizations perform better than less diverse organizations.

Over the last decades we've made significant progress in improving diversity and establishing a more inclusive workforce.

>> S. Ellis: And we can do even better.

Our workforce must reflect America.

Diversity and inclusion may mean different things to different people, however, to be integral parts of the Bureau, these concepts must be rooted in action by all employees.

We need each employee to embrace the underlying values of this vision and the -- to demonstrate a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The best way to do this is to lead by example, working across the Bureau to ensure our managers, supervisors and employees understand the cornerstones of diversity and inclusion.

>> Dir. Abbey: I want to make clear this effort is not simply an EEO initiative.

Our objective is to recruit, develop, retain a

competent, committed and diverse workforce that provides exceptional service to our employees and the people we serve.

Diversity is about understanding, valuing and benefiting from individual differences.

It is about empowering people.

The changing demographics of our workforce and our stakeholders include youth, people with disabilities, aging workers, same-sex partners and parents, veterans, multi-lingual and multi-national families, recent immigrants and new citizens.

>> S. Ellis: They include dual-earner families, single parent families, single adults, parents with child care needs, foster families, families with adopted children, and employees caring for elderly parents or relatives.

Capitalizing on the strengths of each individual makes our organization more competitive and effective.

>> C. Carter-Pfisterer: Embracing diversity means actively welcoming and involving everyone.

It's having the courage to respect, capitalize on

and unify our talents and abilities to produce the best resource land management organization in the world.

We can begin our efforts by doing several things.

We can develop an atmosphere in which communication barriers are removed so that all employees feel safe to ask for the guidance and assistance they need to develop professionally and succeed.

We can actively involve people from a variety of backgrounds and beliefs, cultures, thoughts and opinions in the decision-making and problem-solving process.

We can develop a day-to-day business environment through individual action that includes people of diverse backgrounds in informal gatherings such as lunch and coffee breaks and last-minute meetings.

And we can also create a team spirit in which every member feels included and valued.

>> Dir. Abbey: We're committed to improving the diversity of our workforce because we understand that a diverse workforce makes us a stronger, more responsive and successful agency.

>> L. Thomas: We appreciate the Director and his staff for taking the time to share their thoughts with us.

Angie, as a BLM District Manager, from your perspective, why is it so important to have diversity and what drives that for the Arizona district of BLM?

>> A. Bullett: Leon, as a native person I believe that it is my inherent responsibility to care for the land, and that's what I bring to BLM.

As a District Manager, I believe it's incumbent upon me to have youth of all backgrounds get out into America's great outdoors to experience it and care for their public lands.

>> L. Thomas: We understand that in Arizona BLM has formalized the Youth Initiative. What drives this?

>> A. Bullett: At the core of our Arizona Youth Initiative are three tiers or focus areas. The first is to educate the mind. Get outdoors and have a basic appreciation for natural resources.

The second is to encourage the heart, to create an emotional connection and experience for the outdoors.

And, third, is to employ youth to provide a pathway to build tomorrow's resource professionals.

We have written a white paper so that other BLM or interior offices can read it and get a better understanding of our initiatives.

Steve has been extremely instrumental in building and expanding partnerships that provide diverse pathways.

>> L. Thomas: Steve, how did you become involved with the Youth Initiative for diversity, and did you see a bigger vision or picture for this program?

>> S. Cohn: Thanks, Leon.

We think of the Arizona Diversity and Youth Program as a pathway.

The BLM has always hired STEPs or seasonal employees.

However, we recognized we also needed to mentor them into pathways that lead to education and

employment.

Let me start in the beginning. Back in 2003, the BLM's Phoenix District Fire Program allowed emergency firefighter crew coordinator Dean Fernandez to teach wildland firefighting at an urban high school.

In Phoenix today, there is a high school dedicated to police and fire sciences, the Franklin Police and Fire high school.

So when I joined the district about four years ago as a Field Manager I had a big workload and I began to think of ways to use fire STEPs in other work during the off season.

I got to know these students and saw a lot of potential.

>> L. Thomas: Thanks, Steve, for sharing that overview of a great and dynamic program.

Now I would like to go to our STEP Range Tech Juan Ledezma who has offered to share his personal story about his experience with the fire crew at the Phoenix district.

Juan?

>> J. Ledezma: Thanks, Leon.

It's great to be here today and share my story  
with all of you.

I hope to inspire you to hire more youth and young  
adults like myself.

Today I am a member of the Phoenix district fire  
crew.

Just a few years ago when I was in high school I  
wasn't focused on school, especially my freshman  
and sophomore years.

When I wasn't in class I was working landscape  
jobs and I finally realized it wasn't the right  
pathway for me.

I had always been interested in a career as a fire  
fighting.

The Franklin police and fire high school, at first  
I was denied admission because of my poor GPA.  
I picked up my grades, changed my attitude, and  
did well in my classes, obtaining a 4.0 GPA my  
senior year.

I was accepted into Franklin and it changed my  
life.

I always wanted to be a firefighter, but I didn't  
know there was a difference between wildland and  
city firefighters.

Luckily, the BLM placed one of its firefighters

Franklin to teach the S-130/190 courses.

I knew successful students got hired at the BLM.

I told my instructor if not this year, next year,  
but I will work on your crew.

There was just one problem.

At the Phoenix district BLM hires seasonal fire  
students through a Student Temporary Employee  
Program, or STEP, to -- to become a STEP I had to  
enroll in college.

I never saw college in my future but I wasn't  
going to turn down the opportunity.

What I want to share with you BLM managers  
watching is that you really do have the  
opportunity to reach young people who never been  
out to public lands, young people of all ethnic  
backgrounds and people who might have never  
thought college was in their future like me.

BLM has done a lot for me about that learning  
wildland firefighting I lacked dedication and  
discipline.

Now these are my strengths.

My story doesn't end there.

During my second college semester, the STEPs were  
working with BLM law enforcement rangers.

Today I'm thinking to myself this job is

interesting.

I'm a full-time student and I'm motivated to become a Law Enforcement Ranger.

The STEPs in Arizona realize the paths are endless.

Through the BLM we've done many things besides firefighting.

We have worked in a different Field Office and seen career options, we can become biologists, monument rangers, public affairs specialists, geologists, anything else we desire.

I have traveled throughout the United States while on the job and learned a lot about myself.

I believe this Youth Initiative program has a potential to get more kids like myself into college and BLM careers.

It's not easy work, but as you can hear from my testimony, hard work pays off.

>> L. Thomas: That's great, Juan and a very inspiring story.

Thank you very much for sharing with us.

Now, Steve, if you could elaborate on how you can take a few high school classes and turn into it a statewide diversity and Youth Initiative program.

>> S. Cohn: Sure, Leon.

It helps when Secretary Ken Salazar provides guidance and sets the direction for the Department.

Interior is very serious about America's great outdoors and Youth In the Great Outdoors programs as well as ensuring we take diversity to heart.

Here our district was teaching fire sciences at a high school and decided to formalize.