

Modernizing public land management



Call for change

With roots that date back to America's independence, the mission of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of public lands. It manages land for recreational, commercial and conservation activities including energy development, livestock grazing, timber harvesting and more.

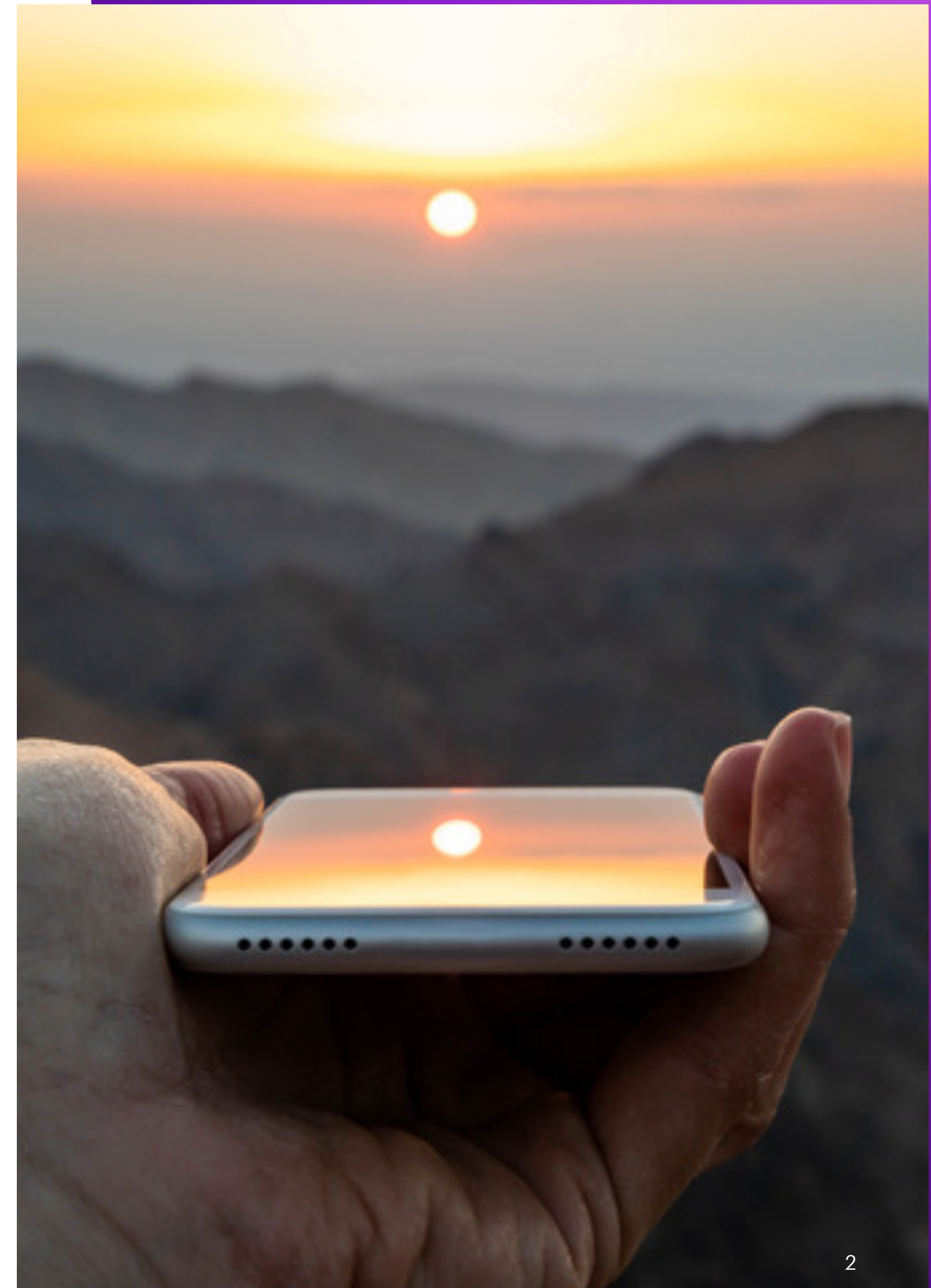
The Bureau has long wished to modernize the way it administers more than 245 million acres of federal surface land and 700 million acres of subsurface minerals. But for mining lands, decades-old legacy systems created a cumbersome and slow process to claim land and manage land status for more than 26,000 active mining customers. And the maintenance costs for those outdated systems grew each year.

At times, the only way for the public to research specific mining land was to visit one of BLM's offices and request to view physical maps, especially challenging for more remote locations, like Alaska.

Despite advancements in geospatial technology and digitization, updating these disparate records systems continued to be a significant challenge.

In addition, individuals or companies that applied to use land or checked their application status faced a backlog due to manual processes and paperwork. To process customer claims, land examiners needed to understand an extensive list of numbered codes that described federal regulations. Meanwhile, the old records system lacked data validation, which created inadvertent risk for human error, and an up-to-date customer payments system for fees.

As custodians of vast territory, the BLM wanted to build a reliable system to streamline processes into an easy-to-use, customer-driven experience that mitigates mistakes. And making its land records transparent and easier to access for the public would support its mission of increasing the productivity of public land on behalf of the American people.





When tech meets human ingenuity

To meet this challenge, Accenture Federal Services and BLM worked together to co-create, develop, test and deliver a tailored Salesforce application to provide an adaptable geospatially-enabled portal for the BLM's evolving mission and customer needs.

To start: Accenture and the BLM built a user-centric system that automates workflows and provides self-service tools to give more control to customers, after first listening to the BLM's needs and pain points. Based on the feedback customers provided to Accenture and the BLM, the portal displays key information they want to access, such as lead file numbers and maintenance fee prices. Applicants can easily log in to file a claim, save their application before submitting it, manage multiple claims in a single online account and pay fees electronically.

Launched in January 2021, the BLM's new Mineral and Land Records System (MLRS) integrates the latest geospatial technology through ESRI Geographic Information software, which was previously only accessible to specialists. The result is a modern geospatial land-status database that can visually showcase actual land status.

This geospatial data is not only easily within reach to BLM customers for the new digital claims process, but it's also available to the public for educational and research purposes. And because these maps and customer data are now on a cloud-based CRM platform (Salesforce), they are accessible via mobile or desktop without the management of servers.

MLRS can monitor transactions in real time, and customers no longer have to visit a physical BLM office to conduct land research.

Other integrations include two-factor account authentication through government identity provider Login.gov and digital payments through Pay.gov. Modern interface architecture via reusable APIs powered by MuleSoft allow the BLM to share data securely across internal and third-party applications. With less manual data entry and built-in data validations, checking or applying for a mining claim is faster and less prone to human error.

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The streamlined processes are making a sizeable impact on employee productivity. Even giving employees the ability to upload files in bulk for new cases is a major boost in efficiency, compared with the old way of scanning and uploading the same document for each separate case file. Land examiners no longer need to rely on a complex system of numerical codes, and the important work of BLM can be more equally shared among teams with greater collaboration on the cloud. The new system also makes information more transparent for financial accounting and reporting, a mandate from the Government Accountability Office.

Now that the BLM is no longer dependent on legacy systems and tedious processes, the workforce can focus on managing public lands for present and future use.



A valuable difference

With less manual work and shorter processing periods, customers have a better experience through effective self-service tools. Employees have shared positive feedback to the BLM about the more efficient way of working, without codes to memorize and the elimination of paperwork that sits in a stack for months.

After MLRS launched, the BLM saw a 100% increase in the number of claims filed in just one two-week period. As the Bureau sees a steady increase in productivity and incorporates additional case types beyond mining claims, it projects MLRS will process approximately one million annual transactions per year.

In just a short amount of time since launching, the MLRS has opened more possibilities for the BLM. The team is already working on modernizing the processes for other uses of public lands. As the BLM modernizes, it will continue to see even more benefits, such as supporting innovation, productivity and an increasingly collaborative workforce, all in support of the mission.

Moving forward, the BLM will continue to improve how it manages and conserves public lands for present and future generations.



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