



SUSTAINING LANDSCAPES AND HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE THROUGH COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION

- **Achieve record amounts of conservation funding**
- **Expand the number of cooperative conservation partnerships**
- **Improve habitat on millions of acres of public and private lands**
- **Strengthen the relationship with America's hunters and anglers**
- **Promote best management practices in managing multi-use public lands**
- **Achieve local environmental successes that are nationally significant**



These are the results that the Department is achieving under the leadership of President Bush and Vice President Cheney, both avid hunters and anglers. The Department is expanding cooperative conservation funding and partnerships, implementing the Healthy Forests Initiative, expanding hunting and fishing access, and promoting best management practices.

As one example of his personal commitment to conservation, last December President Bush met with leaders of the nation's top hunting and fishing conservation groups. President Bush listened closely to their concerns about the importance of protecting isolated wetlands, ponds and lakes that provide habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. In response to those concerns, the Bush Administration reaffirmed its commitment to the continued protection of isolated wetlands.

Record Conservation Funding Levels and Increase Partnerships

From 2002 through 2005, the Interior Department has provided **\$1.7 billion** in grants to states, private landowners, hunting and fishing groups, and other conservation groups to preserve open space, restore habitat and conserve species.

In FY 2006, DOI's budget proposes \$381 million in cooperative conservation programs, an increase of over \$246 million since 2000, **a 182% increase**. This funding is used for:

- **The Cooperative Conservation Challenge Cost Share program: President Bush proposes to spend \$21.5 million in FY 2006** to emphasize local input and cooperative decision making in accomplishing natural resource goals through a diverse set of cost share conservation programs in FWS, BLM, and NPS. In 2004, **challenge cost share grants funded 377 projects in 48 states** and Washington, D.C. with **1,164 partners**, including the Range Improvement Task Force of New Mexico State University and Friends of the Bosque del Apache Refuge. Projects include removal of invasive species that compete with native species and riparian restoration on more than 1,100 acres of Bosque del Apache Refuge.
- **North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants:** These dollars are used as matching funds to establish or enhance habitat benefiting waterfowl and many other wildlife species. This year, **\$49.9 million has been requested, an increase of \$12.4 million over FY 2005**. This requested increase – together with partner funds – is estimated to protect and restore an additional 2.2 million acres of valuable habitat in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. Since 2001, 6.1 million acres of habitat has been restored, protected, or enhanced. In addition, another 9 million acres of habitat in Canada and Mexico are influenced by NAWCA agreements that are providing education, outreach, and guidance to the local landowners regarding the use and value of these areas to wetlands and wildlife, for a total of close to 15 million acres.

- **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants:** Requested at \$74 million, these grants provide assistance for plans and on-the-ground conservation projects. This program has an increase of \$5 million over FY 2005 and 48 percent more than the \$50 million available in the first year of this program.
- **Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund:** Because more than half of all plant and animal species currently listed as endangered or threatened spend part of their life cycle on privately owned land, the President has proposed **\$80 million for this fund** -- level with what was funded in 2005. Other programs are the **Landowner Incentive Program**, which has a \$40 million request in FY 2006, an increase of \$18.3 million over the FY 2005 request, and **Private Stewardship Grants**, with a \$10 million FY 2006 request – more than \$3 million above FY 2005.

Fish and Wildlife Refuges, celebrating their 100th anniversary in 2003, **have received record levels of funding** in recent years. **The 2006 budget funds the refuge system at \$394 million, \$12.9 million above 2005.** Between 2001 and 2005, the refuge budget increased by **36 percent**, enhancing resources for operation and maintenance of refuges.

- The 545 refuges are vital in conserving migratory bird, wildlife, and fisheries habitat and are important destinations for wildlife dependent recreation. **Hunting opportunities can be found at 308 refuges and recreational fishing on 270 refuges** – enhancing access to millions of American to enjoy their favorite outdoor traditions.
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund:** The President's budget includes \$680.6 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund for 2006. This includes \$496 million for Interior programs and \$184.6 million for the Forest Service. The Interior request includes \$114.7 million for land acquisition and \$1.6 million for the state grant program. The 2006 budget continues funding to review the accountability and performance of grants provided in previous years.

Improve Habitat on Millions of Acres of Public and Private Lands

The Bush Administration is committed to continuing and expanding its non-regulatory, cooperative programs that protect and restore wetlands, forested areas and rangelands.

- **Healthy forests and rangelands:** A key element of the Administration's land management efforts is improving the health of forests, woodlands, and rangelands, as well as benefits to wildlife by the lessening of hazardous brush and woody fuels. **Under the Bush Administration, nearly 12 million acres have been treated by the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior.** These fuel reduction projects reduce the threat of catastrophic fires while also improving habitat for elk, deer, antelope, turkey, sage grouse, ruffed grouse, and woodcock. They have also benefited threatened and endangered species, including spotted owls, red-cockaded woodpeckers, and Florida scrub jays.

The 2006 budget will continue this success and further reduce risks to communities. The President's budget contains \$867 million to advance the goals of the Healthy Forests Initiative, including \$313 for Interior. The Healthy Forests Initiative gives land managers new tools to restore the health of forests and rangelands. Under the initiative, the Bureau of Land Management will reestablish native vegetation, restore riparian stream channels, and improve threatened and endangered wildlife and fisheries habitats.

- **Coastal Conservation:** The Bush Administration has used the **Coastal Program** to lead conservation efforts in bays, estuaries, and watersheds around the U.S. coastline. Since 2001, the program has been working, through over **342 partnership agreements**, to **restore** nearly **57,961 acres** of wetlands and **6,598 acres** of native grasslands and **476 miles** of stream and streamside habitat to their former healthy, functioning state. The Coastal Program has also assisted communities and non-government organizations to **protect** over **1.3 million** of wetland and native grasslands, and nearly **2,800 miles** of stream and streamside habitat. To add to the success of the Coastal Program, **20,000 acres** will be restored or protected in FY05.

- **Partners for Fish and Wildlife:** Through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the Department has worked closely with private landowners, recognizing that over 60 percent of our Nation's land is in private ownership and the health of wildlife populations depends on habitat found on such lands. Since 2001, **166,575 acres** of wetlands have been restored; over **614,851 acres** of native grasslands, prairie, and uplands; and **2,100 miles** of stream and streamside habitat through approximately **12,000** landowner agreements. The projects planned for FY05 will **increase this total by 35%**.
- **North American Waterfowl Management Plan:** The Interior Secretary reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to international waterfowl conservation efforts by signing an update to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The plan is a public-private approach to manage waterfowl in Canada, Mexico and the United States. **Partners have invested more than \$2.2 billion to protect, restore or enhance more than 8 million acres of habitat in the plan's history.**
- **Migratory bird habitat:** The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approves the acquisition of acres in fee title or conservation easements that are funded primarily from the sale of Duck Stamps. Sportsmen and women who purchase these stamps have contributed to the development of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Since 2001, 300,474 acres of migratory bird habitat has been protected.
- **The Fish and Wildlife Foundation has leveraged \$129 million from the Fish and Wildlife Service to provide \$412.6 million for on-the-ground projects that benefit conservation in all 50 States.** The Foundation has supported approximately 2,746 grants among 1,340 conservation partners resulting in the restoration of more than 1 million acres of habitat and over 2,400 stream miles. The 2006 budget for FWS funds continued Foundation activities at \$7.5 million.

Strengthen the Relationship with America's Hunters and Anglers

"In a civilized and cultivated country wild animals only continue to exist at all when preserved by sportsmen. The excellent people who protest against all hunting, and consider sportsmen as enemies of wild life, are ignorant of the fact that in reality the genuine sportsman is by all odds the most important factor in keeping the larger and more valuable wild creatures from total extermination."

-President Theodore Roosevelt

The Bush Administration implements what President Roosevelt preached by working with sportsmen and women in wildlife and habitat management. These efforts include:

- **Expanding hunting and fishing with 60 new programs on National Wildlife Refuges:** Today, 308 refuges and 37 wetland management districts are open to hunting and 270 are open to fishing.
- **Improved hunting access for people with disabilities:** January 2005 marked a groundbreaking partnership between the National Wildlife Refuge System and The National Wild Turkey Federation's Wheelin' Sportsmen Program. The partnership will develop new opportunities for people with disabilities to enjoy the outdoors.
- **Improving access to public lands for sportsmen:** The Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service have signed an agreement with 17 sportsmen organizations to improve hunting and fishing access to federal lands.
- **Conserving wildlife along the Rocky Mountain Front:** The Bureau of Land Management terminated work on an environmental impact statement that could allow oil and gas development in the Blackleaf area along the Rocky Mountain Front. In the same area, the Fish and Wildlife Service is launching an effort to establish a voluntary, incentive-based easement program to conserve wildlife on private land.
- **Supporting the statutorily established freedom to hunt and fish within the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System:** Hunting and fishing, expressly authorized by Congress, are

necessary resource management and conservation tools when conducted in cooperation with state wildlife management agencies and consistent with biological data and goals. Both the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service have successfully defended legal challenges to hunting programs. **The Fish and Wildlife Service is currently defending a lawsuit brought by animal rights activists challenging public hunting programs on 37 national wildlife refuges. Over 30 of our hunting and fishing conservation partners have joined us and voiced their opposition to this lawsuit.**

- **Consulting with state agencies, sportsmen and conservation groups on policies:** The Fish and Wildlife Service has listened to state agencies, sportsmen and other conservation organizations as it has worked on policies governing the operation of the refuge system, migratory birds, fish hatcheries, chronic wasting disease in deer and other issues.
- **Encouraging hunters, anglers and others to volunteer to help on public lands:** The public lands component of the President's USA Freedom Corps, the Take Pride in America program increases awareness of public lands and natural and cultural resources, and encourages volunteers to care for such lands and resources to preserve open space and restore habitat. Take Pride is supported by the American Sportfishing Association, Bass Pro Shops, Bowhunting Preservation Alliance, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Izaak Walton League of America, National Shooting Sports Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Pheasants Forever, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. The 2006 budget proposes to fund the Take Pride in America program at \$1 million, in order to increase capacity for volunteer efforts that enhance stewardship of parks, refuges, and other public lands and resources.
- **Increasing services at national parks:** President Bush has proposed \$4.9 billion toward improving maintenance and service at National Parks. **Between 2002 and 2005, more than \$3.7 billion has been provided to address deferred maintenance needs.** The 2006 budget includes \$717 million for construction and park facility maintenance, an increase of \$27 million over 2005. The funds are producing tangible benefits for visitors, including hunters and anglers, by improving boat ramps, docks, and marine facilities.
- **Ensuring that hunting and fishing excise taxes are appropriately administered to States:** In 2005 more than \$492 million in excise taxes were apportioned to States. Including hunter education programs and Clean Vessel Act Grants, a total of 540 million is available in 2005 to improve habitat and conditions for sport fish and wildlife funded from excise taxes.
- **Improving Fish Passage:** Since 2001, the Fish Passage Program has removed nearly 250 barriers across the country. FWS, working with local communities and partner agencies, is using a voluntary approach to restore natural flows and fish migration. Completion of the 2004 projects alone will open 19,364 acres and more than 3,048 miles of waterways for fish, contributing to larger populations and more recreational fishing opportunities. Rivers are running their natural course, habitat has been restored, and the fish are coming back.

Promote Best Management Practices in Managing Multi-Use Lands and Welcome Full Public Participation in Developing Land Use Plans that Have Energy Components

The Interior Department manages Bureau of Land Management lands through its multiple-use mission, including managing lands and waters that supply 30% of the Nation's domestic energy supply. The President's National Energy Plan calls for increasing domestic energy production through environmentally responsible means. Energy development occurs when appropriate environmental safeguards are in place.

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for most onshore land use plans that have an energy component. BLM manages over 261 million acres of surface lands and 700 million acres of subsurface minerals. At the end of fiscal year 2004, there was over 35 million acres of public land leased for oil and gas development. Additionally, there are almost 460,000 acres leased for coal development and over 550,000 acres leased for geothermal development. This means about 5.1 % of the total available federal mineral estate is leased for energy minerals. Only about 1.7% of the available federal minerals are classified as producing for oil and gas resources.

BLM lands are managed through 162 resource management plans. Since 2001, BLM has completed three land use management plans focused on energy: the San Juan River Basin plan; the Farmington, New Mexico area; the Powder River Basin in Wyoming; and the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska (Northwest). Each plan utilizes adaptive management for wildlife that allows field managers to modify activities based on wildlife needs. All of these plans were developed after extensive environmental review and after seeking, receiving and analyzing comments made in public meetings and in writing.

- The Farmington Resource Management Plan includes seasonal restrictions to protect big game winter habitat, migration routes and calving areas. **The plan sets aside 400,000 acres (30% of the planning area) as Specially Designated Areas to protect wildlife. Each Specially Designated Area has a set of management rules that minimize habitat loss and human disturbances during critical periods. There is no drilling, pipeline construction, seismic exploration or well pad construction during spring fawning and calving and bald eagle and raptor roosting periods.**
- The Powder River Basin final decision, for example, **affects less than 1% of winter habitat** for resident pronghorn, white-tail deer, mule deer and elk. The plan imposes seasonal closures, adaptive management, mitigation measures and special conditions of approval to protect wildlife.
- Of the 8.8 million acres of BLM land in the NPR-A (NW) planning area in Alaska, 7.3 million acres would be available for leasing, but under very strict guidelines. The NPR-A (NW) plan would impose seasonal restrictions to protect birds and other sensitive species. It also imposes strict study requirements for caribou and water fowl that must be satisfied prior to development. Other stipulations and required operating procedures will establish restrictions designed to prevent waste spills, unnecessary water use and pollution and help us to manage winter overland moves of equipment, seismic activity, exploratory drilling and aircraft use. **Leasing is prohibited in the 102,000 acres designated as the Kasegaluk Lagoon Area, a sensitive marine habitat** that is important to migratory bird and marine mammals featuring marine tidal flats rare to the North Slope. **Leasing is also prohibited on 1.5 million acres along rivers, lakes, ponds, and the coast to protect riparian habitat, nesting areas and subsistence resources for North Slope residents.**

BLM has developed Best Management Practices (BMPs) for land use plans and energy permits to protect wildlife, air and water quality, cultural and visual resources, and to improve reclamation and restoration.

- BMPs are guided by the principle of least intrusion on the land. This includes minimizing the “footprint” during the exploration and drilling process to return the land to its original state when development is complete. Examples include the use of multiple wells drilled from the same pad and intermediate reclamation of roads and surrounding areas with re-planting to mitigate habitat loss.
- BMPs seek to minimize wildlife habitat fragmentation. Burying power lines and flow-lines, eliminating hazards to wildlife, reducing noise, and remote production monitoring are all examples of efforts the BLM promote to lessen the footprint of oil and gas development on public lands.

Achieve Local Environmental Successes that Are Nationally Significant

Conservation funding, partnerships and best management practices produce results one acre, one stream, one project at a time. Cumulatively, these projects are building blocks for national conservation achievements. Here are just a few local environmental success stories underway that are nationally significant:

- **The High Plains Partnership** conserves declining habitats on private lands in Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. Its goals are to restore, protect, or enhance 2 million acres of High Plains habitat over 10 years to reduce threats to the lesser prairie-chicken and the black-tailed prairie dog and avoid listing under the ESA.
- **Restoring and preserving bottomland hardwood forests at the Bushley Bayou unit in Louisiana** with the acquisition of 18,000 acres for the Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge. The Fish and Wildlife Service purchased 8,000 acres and American Electric Power donated 10,000 acres. Of the 18,000, almost 10,000 will be restored to the original hardwood forest and wetland ecosystem.
- **The Aleutian Canada Goose** is no longer an endangered species, thanks to an effort to remove introduced foxes from nesting islands, establish new breeding areas by translocating family groups of birds, provide protection throughout its range, and manage wintering habitat in California and Oregon.
- **The Leon River Restoration Project** is a broad-based, grassroots public-private initiative to improve the quality and quantity of water and vigor of native plant communities, through the treatment of Ashe juniper, an invasive plant of central Texas. Such activities also assist in the recovery of the endangered black-capped vireo and provide additional benefits to the endangered golden-cheeked warbler.
- The Bureau of Reclamation and the State of Idaho have worked in partnership with the Bonneville Power Administration, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and private landowners to consolidate water diversion structures, install screens, and **improve fish passage along approximately 60 miles** of the main stem Lemhi River to facilitate salmon migration.
- Under the Cooperative Conservation Challenge Cost Share Program, the Department has funded projects such as:
 - The Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, and the Yuma Valley Rod & Gun Club have partnered with FWS to **rehabilitate watering areas for desert bighorn sheep** in the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, Arizona. The Juniper Inlet Area of Critical Environmental Concern, the BLM and Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management partnered to restore wildlife habitat. Federal funds were equally matched for this project that removed thousands of non-native trees and planted native plants.
 - The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and the National Wild Turkey Federation have partnered with the National Park Service to establish and **restore elk habitat** at Buffalo National River, Arkansas. At Bosque del Apache Refuge, project partners matched Federal funds to remove tamarisk and restore 1,100 acres of riparian habitat.
 - Trout Unlimited, the University of Tennessee Student Conservation Association, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Tennessee Brookies, and Little River Outfitters have partnered with the National Park Service to **restore native brook trout** at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, North Carolina. The National Park Service partnered with the Alaska Sea Life Center, a tribal corporation, the University of Alaska, Prince William Sound Regional Citizen's Advisory Council, and nine other partners to mitigate the trend of declining marine populations in the Kenai Fjords.