

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the U.S. Department of the Interior's mission is to encourage and provide for the appropriate management, preservation, and operation of the Nation's public lands and natural resources for use and enjoyment both now and in the future; to carry out related scientific research and investigations in support of these objectives; to develop and use resources in an environmentally sound manner and provide an equitable return on these resources to the American taxpayer; and to carry out trust responsibilities of the U.S. Government with respect to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

From its establishment in 1849, the Department has been charged with the responsibility of managing a wide variety of programs. In the last half of the 19th century, the Department's programs ran the gamut of overseeing Indian affairs, exploring western wildernesses, constructing the National Capital's water system, managing hospitals and universities, marking boundaries, improving western emigrant routes, conducting the census, and conducting research on the geological resources of the land.

Following the conservation movement at the beginning of the 20th century, the Department's programs shifted to the preservation, management, understanding, and use of the great natural and cultural resources of the land based on an increasing sense of the fragile nature of those resources. Departmental programs and activities now include park and refuge operations of the National Park Service (NPS) and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS); land management responsibilities of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); delivery by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) of quality services to American Indians and Alaska Natives; mineral leasing and revenue collection programs of the Minerals Management Service (MMS); research, data collection and scientific activities of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS); water resources programs of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR); regulatory responsibilities and reclamation activities of the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM); and support for U.S. Territories and other insular areas.

Interior's Mission

"To protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to tribes."

Managing and Protecting America's Natural Resources

Over the years, the American people have made enormous investments in the public lands and resources of this Nation, investments that reflected their conservation values, their recreational preferences, and their reverence for their cultural heritage. Our magnificent National Park System, extensive National Wildlife Refuge System, and the vast expanse of public lands under the stewardship of the Department stand as a tribute to the sacrifices of generations of Americans.

As the caretaker for America's public lands and natural and cultural resources, the Department is committed to providing the resources necessary to protect and preserve the Nation's national parks and public lands for current and future generations. This includes maintaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the millions of acres of public lands and their myriad resources, including energy and minerals, timber, forage, wild horse and burro populations, fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, wilderness areas, and archaeological and historical sites. At the same time, the Department is expanding the opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation in National Wildlife Refuges and improving services provided to the people who visit or work on public lands.

These public lands and resources span approximately 429 million acres in all 50 States -- or about one-sixth of the United States land mass.

A MESSAGE FROM JOHN GARAMENDI DEPUTY SECRETARY OF INTERIOR



As we look toward celebrating both the 150th birthday of the Department of the Interior and a new century, we can see that the Department is changing, reflecting changes in the Nation whose cultural and natural resources we protect and manage. Sometimes, change is sudden and easy to see, but most often, it is incremental and comes in stages.

We are in the midst of a vast incremental change -- America is becoming more diverse as women and people of all nationalities and ethnic groups continue to arrive here, enter the work force, and begin to add their own chapters to the American story.

Last spring, I convened a Task Force on Diversity, composed of representatives from each of the Interior bureaus and offices. Our goal was -- and is -- identifying how to help the Department of the Interior hire, and retain, more women and more ethnic groups. The Task Force began work on a strategic plan to improve diversity in all employment categories.

We looked for new approaches and new ideas, but the more we looked, the more we realized that the tools that were needed were already in existence. What we needed was not so much new systems and programs, but new ways of thinking. We needed managers and bureau leaders to realize that their bureaus and agencies needed to be more diverse, and that they needed to bring about this diversity through actions specific to their organizations.

The plan was signed by the Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, Bureau Directors, and me as a display of our personal support and commitment to this effort. The strategic plan focuses on recruitment, retention, accountability, training, and zero tolerance for discrimination. Bureaus then developed individual implementation plans on how they will reach the goals and objectives of the Department's Plan.

In this case, change is incremental but real. We will meet regularly with bureau heads and senior officials to make sure they are meeting the goals of achieving and maintaining a diverse workforce. We want a Department of the Interior workforce that -- as President Clinton said of his administration -- "looks like America."

We are stewards of this Nation's most precious heritage -- our parks, lands, and streams. As we celebrate our 150th birthday, we must continue to evolve toward a work force that mirrors the people of our Nation -- all of them.

Restoring the Environment

One of the commitments of the Department is to restore America's natural and cultural heritage through regional partnerships with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, community groups, and the private sector. During 1997, the Department continued pursuing partnership efforts to address some of the Nation's most pressing regional environmental problems and challenges. Partnerships are pioneering methods for protecting the environment that are more efficient and more effective than traditional approaches. The process of partnership building with States, localities, and private stakeholders ensures the consideration of divergent interests and the development of consensus solutions and strategies, thereby avoiding the time-consuming and expensive litigation that produced gridlock in the past. The partnership approach also enables Interior to leverage its scarce resources with

those of other partners to conduct work that might otherwise be unaffordable.

Major 1997 partnerships undertaken by the Department include the following:

- *Everglades Watershed Restoration* -- a partnership to restore the natural hydrologic functions of the Everglades.
- *California Bay-Delta Ecosystem Restoration* -- a partnership to restore and protect the Bay-Delta ecosystem (the region where the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers meet the San Francisco Bay) while providing a reliable water supply to support the State's long-term economic health.
- *Habitat Conservation Plans* -- partnerships between the Department, private, local, and State

landowners to find endangered species habitat solutions that are biologically and economically feasible for all parties.

- *Northwest Forest Plan* -- a comprehensive and innovative design to manage public forests in Washington, Oregon, and Northern California.
- *Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative* -- an inter-agency effort led by the Office of Surface Mining to address the problem of acid mine drainage in Appalachia.

Details concerning these partnership initiatives are provided in the "Natural Resources" section of this report.

Using Science and Research to Solve Problems

As a Nation, we face serious questions concerning our global environment. How can we ensure an adequate supply of critical water, energy, and mineral resources in the future? In what way are we irreversibly altering our natural environment when we use these resources? How has the global environment changed over geologic time, and what can the past tell us about the future? How can we predict, prevent, and mitigate the effects of natural hazards?

Collecting, analyzing, and disseminating the scientific information needed to answer these questions, and providing the other critical science needed to underpin resource management decisions, is a Departmental major responsibility. The emphasis on good science covers a broad range of research on natural hazards, studies of biological resources, and resource assets.

The U.S. Geological Survey is the Nation's primary provider of earth and biological science information related to natural hazards; certain aspects of the environment; and mineral, energy, water, and biological resources. The Survey carries out scientific research that contributes to the improvement of the health and welfare of the American people, helps to resolve the Nation's environmental issues and aids in the formulation of sound Federal land management and natural resource policies. The Survey is the Federal Government's principal civilian mapping agency and a primary source of data on the quality and quantity of the Nation's water resources.



California Bay-Delta area (photo by Department of the Interior).

Promoting and Supporting Tribal Sovereignty

In the last two centuries, the Congress has passed more Federal laws dealing with Indians than any other group of people in the United States. Congress has placed the major responsibility for Indian matters in the Department of the Interior, primarily the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Bureau's mission is to fulfill trust responsibilities and promote self-determination on behalf of Tribal Governments, American Indians, and Alaska natives.

Today there are more than 550 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal governments in the United States. All share one thing in common: each possesses inherent governmental authority deriving from its original sovereignty, a recognized principle of U.S. Constitutional law. The Federal Indian trust responsibility is a legal duty on the part of the United States to protect Indian land and resources, fulfill treaty obligations, and carry out the mandates of Federal law for the benefit of American Indian and Native Alaskan tribal members. One of the most important aspects of the trust responsibility is its application to Indian lands and resources.

Under the self-determination and self-governance policies, tribes are assuming more and more of the day-to-day management responsibilities over trust assets. While these laws contain clear provisions that the Federal trust responsibility is not diminished, the Federal role in the actual operation of trust-related programs may be substantially reduced. Achievement of self-determination demands a Federal commitment to investing sufficient resources over the long-term to assist Tribes in developing self-government, an economic



Artifacts from the Indian Arts and Crafts Board's Sioux Indian Museum are exhibited at The Journey, a new museum in Rapid City, South Dakota (photo by Indian Arts and Crafts Board).

base, and social and educational institutions so that they too may share in the full bounty of America's prosperity while preserving the tribal culture that is an integral part of the American Indian character. In 1997, more than \$887 million was made available to tribal governments for operating programs and construction projects under contracts, grants, and compacts.

In 1997, the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) was established, under authority provided by the American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act of 1994, to oversee all facets of trust management improvement for the Department. In Feb-

ruary, 1996, the Office of Trust Funds Management (OTFM) was transferred from the BIA to the OST. The Special Trustee has since re delegated program and administrative authority to the Director, OTFM.

The OTFM manages all trust activities associated with the receipt, accounting, investing, and disbursement of funds for American Indians and Alaska Natives in accordance with public laws, regulations, policies, and procedures. OTFM is working with the Special Trustee to mitigate deficiencies in all processes, and to improve the overall administrative activities while providing efficient, timely service to the account holders.