

## Looking to the Future Partners in Stewardship

**Serving Our Customers** - The Department of the Interior continuously seeks to improve its performance, provide our customers with responsive service, and produce solid results. We measure our success in pursuit of our mission against our five strategic goals. Linking the key programs and outcomes of individual Interior bureaus to the Department's priorities and initiatives reinforces Interior's stewardship of our critical resources, especially important in light of increasing developmental pressures, shifting public wants and needs, and accelerating changes in science and technology. Interior must respond to the greater demands on the vital resources it oversees by efficiently and wisely using and managing those resources. The goals that we set, like the missions behind them, are a critical part of our continuous effort to provide the best results to our customers—the American public.

**The Long Look Ahead** - At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Theodore Roosevelt had the foresight to embrace a conservation legacy that is still cherished. “It is the growing Nation with a future which takes the long look ahead,” he said.

Today as we begin the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this country has an opportunity to take that long look, asking the questions that will define our future. How will we live on our landscape? What kind of open space do we want? What kind of development and natural resource use do we need? America has been blessed with unparalleled natural gifts. What must we preserve for future generations?

People and the environment are interdependent. So we must ensure that our lands, waters, and other resources remain healthy if our communities are to thrive. This challenge defines the Department's first strategic goal, protecting the environment and preserving our Nation's natural and cultural resources. It is a mission with many elements: protecting lands of national significance and helping communities tackle the future; nurturing public lands and restoring natural systems and habitats; helping native species; and protecting cultural resources. We approach their care systematically, using a watershed or ecosystems strategy, involving our partners and other interested persons in decisionmaking. We are determined to be guided by state-of-the-art scientific research.

The Department and its partners have been able to expand efforts to save nationally significant tracts of land from inappropriate development and protect existing parks, refuges, and other public lands from encroachment or degradation. However, it is not enough to save America's crown jewels. We must work every day to preserve the natural wonders in our back yard. Protecting local green spaces helps improve air and water quality, sustain wildlife, provide families with places to plan and relax, and make our communities livable.

There is also the need to conserve public lands. Whatever the case or cause, the Department is responsible for the renewal and stewardship of the land it manages. From the ongoing restoration of the Everglades ecosystems, to improving and enhancing wildlife habitats, the Department works to conserve public lands.

**The People’s “Pleasuring Ground”** - America has turned to its public lands for escape and inspiration since 1872, when Congress designated Yellowstone as the Nation’s first “pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” Hiking the floor of the Grand Canyon, recapturing family history at Ellis Island, surf casting off the great Outer Beach of Cape Cod, visiting the newly restored Washington Monument, or climbing the peaks of the Grand Tetons, millions of citizens, year after year, seek out their national parks, refuges, and public lands. They come to renew their sense of self, for adventure and relaxation, to sample the rich diversity of our landscape and culture on water or land. They do so at sea level or thousands of feet above, in scuba gear or on mountain bikes, and while hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, boating, white-water rafting, and birding. Providing these recreation opportunities, consistent with other land uses and our stewardship responsibility, is the Department’s second strategic goal. But given their popularity, some say our public recreation areas are being “loved to death” and call for a limit on the number of visitors. We believe you cannot love a park or refuge too much. The challenge is to learn to love them more wisely.

**Balancing Sustainable Use and Fair Return** - Managing the vast resources of America’s public lands has been a core Interior responsibility since the Department was founded in 1849. It was basic land office work back then, focused on development, handling land sales and title adjudication as the Nation expanded westward. As gold and silver were discovered it included managing the mineral resources, too. Today, through the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Minerals Management Service, the Department continues that work. But the stakes have gotten bigger: fees from federal offshore oil and gas leases currently provide the federal government one of its greatest sources of non-tax revenue. The focus has changed. The emphasis now is on stewardship: multiple use; sustained yield; environmental protection; and managing the public domain to accommodate many different needs, while sustaining its long-term health, diversity, and productivity.

Managing natural resources for a healthy environment and a strong economy is the Department’s third strategic goal. It requires a complex balancing of interests. The need to protect healthy landscapes and restore damaged ecosystems, to sustain the production of renewable resources and conserve nonrenewable ones, must be balanced with the economic health of the community. Both taxpayers and commercial interests deserve a fair return on any resources used. Consensus building is critical; partnerships should be sought with state, local, and tribal government and private nonprofit and commercial groups. Decisions need to be based on science, with much of the decisionmaking moved to the local level such as through more than two dozen BLM-sponsored State Resource Advisory Councils, thus eliminating “one-size-fits-all” management.

**Science for A Changing World** - As a nation, we face vital and perplexing questions concerning our environment and natural resources. How can we ensure an adequate supply of critical water, energy, and mineral resources now and in the future? Are we irreversibly altering our natural environment when we use these resources? How has the global environment changed over geological time, and what can the past tell us about the future? How can we predict, prevent, and mitigate the effects of natural hazards? Good stewardship depends on good science. The fourth strategic goal of the Department is to provide that science—sound, objective, current, and usable—both by adding to the environmental and physical science knowledge base and by improving hazard knowledge and warning systems.

**Building Communities of Hope** - America's 1.4 million native people are committed to revitalized communities, spiritually strong and economically vibrant, where people are secure in their culture, heritage, and government, and hopeful for the future of their children. It is a commitment that the Department shares. As a nation, we have a unique legal, moral, and ethical responsibility to ensure the economic and cultural viability of the more than 550 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments in the United States. Too often our efforts have fallen short. Although a handful of tribes are prospering, today more than 30 percent of Native Americans have incomes below the national poverty line. Forty percent of Indian households are overcrowded or have inadequate dwellings. The death rate of Native Americans from alcoholism is four times the national average. Meeting our trust responsibility to Indian tribes, along with our commitments to island communities, is the Department's fifth strategic goal.

Through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other major offices and agencies, the Department works with tribal groups and governments to protect their lands and natural resources, fulfill treaty obligations and the mandates of federal law, and help them to help themselves. Our goal must be to help create jobs, education, and a quality of life that builds communities of hope. The role of the BIA has changed significantly over the past two decades. The emphasis today is on tribal self-determination and self-governance, in accord with tribes' sovereign authority. Like a county government, the BIA supplies such critical programs as education, housing, law enforcement, natural resource management, and road maintenance, administered by the tribes themselves, by the bureau, or in partnership.

The Nation has an historic obligation to protect tribal financial assets and protect the value of tribal natural resources, the lands, waters, forests, and minerals vital to their economic and social interests. The BIA administers more than 45 million acres of tribally owned land, approximately 10 million acres of individually owned land, and an estimated 309,000 acres of federally owned land held in trust status. The Minerals Management Service collects and distributes mineral revenues. The Bureau Land Management makes certain that the required analyses of oil, gas, and mining exploration, development, and production have been completed; conducts operational and enforcement inspections; and provides technical assistance to tribes to support six coal leases and 107 other solid mineral leases. The Bureau of Reclamation provides technical expertise and resources to the departmental Indian water rights settlement program and supports tribal efforts to construct, operate, and maintain their water systems. The Fish and Wildlife Service partners with tribal governments to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife resources. The Department places a high priority on eliminating long-standing trust management deficiencies by moving to make management reforms mandated by the 1994 American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act.

**Stewardship Management** - We are stewards of taxpayer resources. The Department is a large and complex operation, with an estimated 75,000 employees at hundreds of locations throughout the country. The demands on our resources keep growing, with new parks to manage, new and more complicated restoration projects, and a growing Native American population. We've gotten significantly leaner since 1993, with FTE staffing levels down approximately 13 percent. Authority and accountability are pushed to the field. Our mission success, and our future, depend on our continued ability to hire and retain exceptionally talented men and women at all levels. We continue to enhance the quality of work life, expand our workforce diversity, and increase accountability at all levels. We are upgrading our technology, too, and beginning to integrate our information technology architecture. Innovation flourishes, producing a steady stream of new ways to provide better service through smarter and more cost-efficient operations. The result is stewardship management—and the accountability and performance the American taxpayer deserves.