

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## SUSTAINING LANDSCAPES AND HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE THROUGH COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION

- Achieve record amounts of conservation funding
- 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
- Recover wildlife populations through cooperative conservation
- Achieve local environmental successes that are nationally significant
- Expand the number of cooperative conservation partnerships



These are the results that the U.S. Department of the Interior has achieved under the leadership of Secretary Gale Norton. Through her vision, Interior has conserved millions of acres of public and private lands and steered the nation toward cooperative conservation by working with landowners and local groups.

### *Record Conservation Funding Levels and Increased Partnerships*

From 2001 through 2006, the Interior Department has provided almost **\$2.4 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 2007, the Department's budget proposes \$322.3 million in cooperative conservation programs. This is an increase of more than \$227 million over FY 2000, a **239% increase**. This funding is used for:

- **The Cooperative Conservation Challenge Cost Share program: President Bush proposes to spend \$18.4 million in FY 2007** to emphasize local input and cooperative decision making in accomplishing natural resource goals through a diverse set of cost share conservation programs in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the National Park Service (NPS). In 2005, **challenge cost share grants** supported 831 projects in 45 states with **1,372 partners**. **More than \$168 million has supported this program since 2001.**
- **North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants:** Since 2001, more than \$216 million has been provided as matching funds to establish or enhance habitat benefiting waterfowl and many other wildlife species. This year, \$41.6 million has been requested, an increase of \$2.2 million over FY 2006. Since 2001, 16 million acres of habitat have been restored, protected, or enhanced. In addition, at least another 9 million acres of habitat in Canada and Mexico are influenced by NAWCA agreements providing education, outreach, and guidance to local landowners regarding the use and value of these areas to wetlands and wildlife. This represents a total of close to 25 million acres.
- **Avian Flu Preparedness:** The President's 2007 budget requests \$11.2 million for avian flu monitoring as part of a broader U.S. Interagency Strategic Plan, an early detection system for H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in wild migratory birds. FWS, NPS and USGS will help monitor wild bird populations and work with others to investigate sick or dead wild birds.

- **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants:** Requested at \$75 million, these grants provide assistance for planning and on-the-ground conservation projects. This program represents an increase of \$7 million over FY 2006 and 50 percent more than the \$50 million available in the first year of this program. Close to \$380 million has been provided in grants since 2001.
- **Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund:** Because more than half of all plant and animal species currently listed as endangered or threatened spend at least part of their life cycle on privately owned land, the President has proposed **\$80 million for this fund** – level with what was funded in 2006. Other programs are the **Landowner Incentive Program**, which has a \$24 million request in FY 2007, and **Private Stewardship Grants**, with a \$9 million FY 2007 request – more than \$5 million above FY 2006 for the two programs. Since 2001, these programs have provided a combined total of close to \$690 million to assist private landowners with conservation.
- **The National Wildlife Refuge System:** NWRS celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2003 and **has received record levels of funding** in recent years. **The 2007 budget funds the refuge system at \$382 million.** Between 2001 and 2006, the refuge budget increased by **27** percent, enhancing resources for operation and maintenance of 545 refuges.
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund:** Many of the programs above are funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) which has contributed \$2.7 billion to Interior programs from 2001 - 2006. The President's 2007 budget includes \$390 million for Interior in 2007. The Interior request includes \$64.3 million for land acquisition and \$1.6 million for the State grant program. The 2007 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 creating benefits to wildlife by reducing hazardous brush and woody fuels. **Under the Bush Administration, more than 16 million acres have been treated by the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior (whose share exceeds 6 million acres).** These fuel reduction projects lessen 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.
- **Healthy Forests Initiative:** The 2007 budget will continue this success and further reduce risks to communities. The President's budget contains \$912.6 million to advance the goals of the Healthy Forests Initiative, including \$302.3 million for Interior. The Healthy Forests Initiative gives land managers new tools to restore the health of forests and rangelands. Under the initiative, the BLM 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 364 partnership agreements to restore nearly 64,855 acres of wetlands, 12,331 acres of native grasslands, and 659 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 735,890 acres of wetlands and native grasslands, and nearly 118 miles of stream and streamside habitat. To add to the success of the Coastal Program, the President's FY 2007 budget request is \$13 million.

- **National Fish Habitat Initiative:** Modeled in part on the successful North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the National Fish Habitat Initiative seeks to improve fish habitat and population restoration by implementing the National Fish Action Plan through multi-state partnership efforts. The FY 2007 budget request for the program is \$2.9 million. As a result of this investment and the work of the partnerships, it is likely that 18 barriers to fish passage will be removed or bypassed, resulting in an additional 43 miles of stream access.
- **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, 174,463 acres of wetlands; over 954,486 acres of native grasslands, prairie, and uplands; and 2,401 miles of stream and streamside habitat have been restored through approximately 10,600 landowner agreements.
- **North American Waterfowl Management Plan:** Interior Secretary Gale Norton 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 managing waterfowl in Canada, Mexico and the United States. **Partners have invested more than \$3.2 billion to protect, restore or enhance more than 13 million acres of habitat throughout the plan's history.**
- **Migratory Bird Habitat Conservation:** Chaired by Secretary Norton, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approves the acquisition of acres in fee title or conservation easements 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 Secretary Norton has served as Chairman, 364,000 acres of migratory bird habitat have been protected.
- **The Fish and Wildlife Foundation** has leveraged \$137 million from FWS 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 2007 budget for FWS funds continued Foundation activities at \$7.7 million.
- **National Sage-Grouse Strategy:** BLM has made substantial progress implementing its National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy in 2005. Accomplishments include restoring 400,000 acres of habitat reclaiming 275,000 acres following several wild fires; reclaiming 6,300 acres disturbed by mineral development activity; restoring 1,500 acres of riparian habitat and adjusting livestock grazing on 1.6 million acres to improve habitat for sage-grouse.

### ***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**

Secretary Norton has implemented what President Roosevelt preached by working with sportsmen and women in wildlife and habitat management. These efforts include:

- **Listening to sportsmen and women:** In May 2005, Secretary Norton and top level Interior officials participated in the first ever conference sponsored by the American Wildlife Conservation Partners for the Department to discuss conflicts and solutions in natural resources policy. In June 2005, the Office of Surface Mining held a symposium at the request of Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to discuss opportunities to create wildlife habitat through mine reclamation.

- **Sporting Conservation Council:** In March 2006, Secretary Norton created a Federal advisory committee for wildlife conservation to ensure continuing dialog between sportsmen/sportswomen and Interior.
- **Expanding hunting and fishing with 60 new programs on National Wildlife Refuges:** Today, 317 refuges and 37 wetland management districts are open to hunting and 271 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 FWS, BLM and the U.S. Forest Service are implementing an agreement with 17 sportsmen organizations to improve hunting and fishing access to Federal lands.
- **Consulting with State agencies, sportsmen and conservation groups on policies:** The FWS, BLM and other agencies have listened to State agencies, sportsmen and other conservation organizations as they have worked on policies governing management of fish and wildlife and their habitat. This puts Secretary Norton's communication, cooperation and consultation in the service of conservation philosophy in action.
- **Increasing services at national parks:** President Bush has proposed more than \$4.9 billion toward improving maintenance and service at National Parks. **Between 2002 and 2006, more than \$4.7 billion has been provided to address deferred maintenance needs.** The 2007 budget includes \$622.8 million for construction and park facility maintenance. The funds are producing tangible benefits for hunters, anglers, and other visitors by improving boat ramps, docks, and marine facilities.
- **Ensuring that hunting and fishing excise taxes are appropriately administered to States:** In 2006, \$521.5 million in excise taxes were apportioned to States. Including hunter education programs and Clean Vessel Act Grants, a total of \$540.4 million is available in 2006 to improve habitat and conditions for sport fish and wildlife funded from excise taxes. Since 2001, \$3.5 billion has been made available to States for this purpose.
- **Improving fish passage:** Since 2001, the Fish Passage Program has removed 370 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 2006 projects alone will open 1,440 acres and more than 556 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 BLM manages lands through its multiple-use mission, including lands that supply 5.39% of the oil and 18.2% of the natural gas produced nation-wide. The President's National Energy Policy and the Energy Policy Act of 2005 call for increasing domestic energy production through environmentally responsible means. Energy development occurs in areas designated as available in BLM land use plans and when appropriate environmental safeguards are in place.

- BLM manages over 261 million acres of surface lands and 700 million acres of subsurface minerals. At the end of fiscal year 2005, there were over 36 million acres of public land leased for oil and gas development, almost 460,000 acres leased for coal development and over 550,000 acres leased for geothermal development.

- **This means about 5.2 % of the total available Federal mineral estate is leased for energy minerals. Only about 1.8% of the available Federal minerals are classified as producing for oil and gas resources.**

### **Land use plans**

- BLM land use planning plays a critical role in furthering BLM's mission, goals, and identified emphasis areas, including developing renewable and nonrenewable domestic energy; managing rangelands and forests to achieve healthy watersheds; improving recreational opportunities; and protecting cultural and heritage resources.
- During the past 20 years, changing demands and conditions in the Western United States have included increased demand for new energy sources, new additions to the National Landscape Conservation System, and new legislation related to public lands and the environment. Accurate, up-to-date land use plans are integral to the effective management of BLM's public lands because plan decisions are the basis for every action the BLM implements. Beginning in 2001, BLM received funding to commence a multi-year planning initiative to amend or revise 162 outdated land use plans and to develop new plans for designated land units under the National Landscape Conservation System.
- Since 2001, 38 plans and major amendments have been completed, including 15 of 21 Time Sensitive Plans many involving public lands with high energy development potential. There are currently over 50 land use plans under development, and half of them involve renewable or nonrenewable energy. The BLM welcomes public input throughout the planning and development process.

### **Addressing wildlife needs: two examples**

- The Farmington, New Mexico, 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 in designated habitat. 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 BLM has developed criteria in coordination with the New Mexico Dept. of Game & Fish to allow exceptions under special circumstances in big game winter range closure areas.
- The Powder River Basin final decision for oil and natural gas development on Federal leases in northeastern Wyoming 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.

**Best Management Practices reduce development's "footprint."** 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, drilling and production phases 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 interim reclamation of roads, pads, and surrounding areas with re-planting to mitigate habitat loss during the production phase.
- BMPs seek to minimize wildlife habitat fragmentation. Burying power lines and flow-lines, eliminating hazards to wildlife, reducing noise, and monitoring production from remote are examples of BMPs that lessen the footprint of oil and gas development on public lands.

## ***Recover Wildlife Populations Through Cooperative Conservation***

Through cooperative conservation and a strong commitment to recovery programs, the FWS has taken major strides towards recovering some of the most vulnerable species.

- **Gila trout in New Mexico and Arizona** have recovered to the point that limited recreational fishing could be opened, and the population of American crocodiles has recovered to an estimated 500 to 1,000 in Florida alone.
- **The bald eagle, our Nation's symbol, has recovered** from the threat of extinction. Today this number has risen to an estimated 7,066 nesting pairs, due to recovery efforts by thousands of partners, including government, non-governmental organizations and private individuals. The FWS is reopening the public comment period on its original 1999 proposal to remove the bald eagle from the Federal list of threatened and endangered species and has proposed voluntary guidelines and a regulatory definition designed to help landowners and others understand how they can help protect bald eagles.
- Responding to the dramatic 2004 rediscovery of the **ivory-billed woodpecker** at the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas, the Interior Secretary has established a multi-year, multi-million dollar partnership effort to aid the rare bird's survival. The FWS and local citizens have developed a Corridor of Hope Cooperative Conservation Plan, referring to the Big Woods of Arkansas where the Ivory-billed woodpecker was rediscovered. To date, the FWS has spent \$5.9 million on efforts to protect habitat for the bird. The President's FY 2007 budget requests more than \$2.1 million for ivory-billed woodpecker recovery.
- FWS has proposed to remove the greater Yellowstone area population of **grizzly bears** from the Federal list of threatened and endangered species. Evidence suggests the grizzly bear in the Yellowstone area has made a remarkable recovery (more than 600 animals as of 2005) due to State and Federal cooperation and habitat management. The population has been increasing at a rate of 4 to 7 percent per year since the mid 1990s. Occupied habitat has increased more than 48 percent since the 1970s. Bear range and numbers continue to increase.
- Joint recovery efforts of the FWS, partners, and State managers have led to the recovery of **gray wolves** in the West and Great Lakes regions. The Secretary of the Interior transferred most of the responsibility for managing gray wolves in central Idaho and Montana from FWS to State wildlife officials. The two States now implement control actions for problem wolves, monitor wolf packs, coordinate research, conduct public information programs and take wolves for scientific and other purposes in accordance with Federal regulations. Great Lakes gray wolves have also recovered from the threat of extinction in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, prompting the FWS to propose removing the wolves in this region from the Federal list of threatened and endangered species.
- Working with California, Arizona and Nevada, Interior approved a \$626 million, 50-year program to protect river habitat for **endangered species along and near the Colorado River** between Las Vegas and Mexico.



## ***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 Bureau of Reclamation improves fish passages:** The Bureau of Reclamation and States of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington have worked in partnership with the Bonneville Power Administration tribes, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, conservation organizations, and private landowners to improve migration, spawning, and rearing conditions in a number of important tributaries to the Columbia River. Since 2001, the partners have completed more than 40 projects to screen diversions, improve streamflow, eliminate passage barriers, and restore and reconnect instream spawning and rearing areas in the Lemhi, Upper Salmon, Little Salmon, John Day, Methow, Entiat, and Wenatchee River basins.
- **Improving desert bighorn sheep habitat:** BLM has been working with New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep to replace dilapidated water catchments in the Peloncillo Mountains of southern New Mexico in order to restore a self-sustaining population of desert bighorn sheep.
- **Tracking sage-grouse:** In Nevada, a BLM cooperative project to track the movements of greater sage-grouse has provided valuable information on seasonal habitats used by the grouse. Across the West, similar cooperative efforts with State wildlife agencies are underway to better understand sage-grouse habitat requirements and improve conservation planning.
- **Critical winter range improvements:** In California, the BLM is making progress in the long-term restoration of over 5,000 acres of mule deer winter range that was burned by a 1995 wildfire. The BLM is also cooperating with the California Department of Fish and Game, sportsmen groups and livestock permittees to help restore the critical winter range habitat.

## ***Expand Cooperative Conservation Partnerships To Benefit Wildlife***

Highlighted below are just six among hundreds of Cooperative Conservation efforts where Interior Department agencies are helping to improve habitat on lands and waters across the nation. These projects and others were featured at the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation held in August 2005 in St. Louis, Missouri. For more success stories, go to <http://conservation.ceq.gov/agenda.html> and click on "Faces and Places of Cooperative Conservation."

- **Blackfoot Challenge: Restoring the River that "Runs Through It"**  
Three Interior Department agencies (BLM, FWS and USGS) are actively involved in this award-winning, nationally-recognized partnership of communities in western Montana's rural Blackfoot River Valley, made famous by the 1992 movie *A River Runs Through It*. Together, private landowners, Federal and State land managers, local government officials and corporate landowners are working to balance protection of natural resources and rural lifestyles with the increasing demands of destination recreation, floating, fishing and vacationing.
- **Nisqually River Watershed: A Balanced Approach to Stewardship in Olympia Washington**  
The FWS and NPS are active partners in the Nisqually River Council dedicated to collaborative management of the Nisqually River watershed. The river nourishes a diversity of fish and wildlife habitats as it flows from the glaciers of Mt. Rainier through subalpine meadows to forests and prairies, finally reaching estuaries and tidal flats as it empties into southern Puget Sound.

- **Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership in Arizona Benefits Desert Grasslands and Riparian Areas**  
The Sonoita Valley is an ecologically unique area of desert grasslands and riparian areas east of Tucson, Arizona. The BLM and FWS are key partners in a diverse coalition of volunteers, government agencies and private organizations who overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles to enable establishment of Las Cienegas National Conservation Area.
- **White Mountain Apache Tribe: Restoring Wolves, Owls, Trout and Ecosystems in Arizona**  
The FWS is partnering with the White Mountain Apache Tribe to integrate the sustainable protection of sensitive species with inherent cultural values and primary economic benefits for present and future generations. Logging, ranching, world-class trophy elk hunting and a thriving outdoor recreation program co-exist with successful management programs for spotted owls, Mexican wolves and Apache trout.
- **Water Without War: Cooperative Salmon Restoration in the Walla Walla Basin**  
Several Federal agencies, including FWS, were involved in this comprehensive cooperative conservation project that involves local, State, Federal, environmental, agricultural and Tribal entities working together for the recovery and protection of salmon, steelhead and bull trout populations and habitat. This effort in the Walla Walla Basin of southeast Washington and northeast Oregon also seeks to preserve local agricultural economies and tribal customs.
- **Restoring Habitat in California Wine Country: Community-Based Sustainable Grape Growing**  
The FWS is partnering with wine producers in California to incorporate wildlife-friendly practices into wine grape growing such as placing lands in conservation easements, replanting eroded riparian areas and native oaks, encouraging migratory bird habitat, and providing for endangered species.