

Management of Natural Resources

The management of natural resources requires the balancing of many diverse and often conflicting objectives and interests. On one hand, the Department ensures public access to the Nation's resources in the form of recreational and commercial uses. At the same time, the Department must also ensure that these resources are preserved for future generations.

In managing the natural resources entrusted to it, the Department strives to accomplish the objectives of public access and preservation in a manner that respects both ecological and economic principles.

Ecology Based Management

Natural resources management in the Department is based on the awareness that natural and cultural resources and the environmental processes that affect them are fundamentally influenced by society and vice versa. Often, regional economic prosperity is closely linked to environmental integrity. The resources under the Department's protection by are not isolated from the surrounding environment and communities, rather they are inextricably linked to them.

The long-term sustainability of the environmental, societal, and economic systems on which Federal lands and their surrounding human communities depend, requires a collaborative and participatory approach that integrates scientific knowledge and maintains flexibility in order to make adjustments over time.

“Ecosystem management” represents a new way of managing natural resources, taking into account the entire ecological system rather than considering individual parts separately. This management approach acknowledges that there is a connection between healthy ecosystems and human livelihoods. Natural systems and processes must be sustained in order to meet the social and economic needs of future generations. Ecosystem management also calls for those affected by conservation decisions to be involved in those decisions.

To make this approach work, Interior Department bureaus are forming new partnerships among themselves and with State and county governments, Tribes, business and civic groups, and individual landowners. In this way, interested agencies and citizens can set priorities and work together to accomplish mutually agreed-upon goals. The result

Acquisition of the Public Domain of the United States
1781 through 1867

| Acquisition | Date | Cost (\$ millions) | Land Acres Acquired (in millions) | Percent of Total U.S. Land Mass |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Ceded from Original States | 1781 - 1802 | \$ 6.2 | 233.5 | 10.2% |
| Louisiana Purchase | 1803 | 23.2 | 523.4 | 22.9% |
| Red River Basin | 1782 - 1817 | 0.0 | 29.1 | 1.3% |
| Ceded from Spain | 1819 | 6.7 | 43.3 | 2.0% |
| Oregon Compromise | 1846 | 0.0 | 180.6 | 7.9% |
| Ceded from Mexico | 1848 | 16.3 | 334.5 | 14.6% |
| Purchased from Texas | 1850 | 15.5 | 78.8 | 3.4% |
| Gadsden Purchase | 1853 | 10.0 | 19.0 | 0.8% |
| Alaska Purchase | 1867 | 7.2 | 365.3 | 16.3% |
| | | \$85.1 | 1,807.5 | 79.4% |

Between 1781 and 1867, the Federal government acquired land equal to 79.4 percent of the current total acreage of the United States, spending a total of only \$85.1 million. Included in these acquisitions were lands ceded from Mexico including what is now California, Nevada, Utah, most of Arizona and portions of three other states. This acquisition cost of this territory totaled \$16.3 million.

will be better understanding among participants and more efficient use of limited resources. The ultimate goal is that ecosystem management will help identify and solve problems early, before the onset of a costly economic or environmental crisis.

Diversity and its Values

The loss of biological diversity is an accelerating, world-wide phenomenon. The aurochs, the wild ancestor of domestic cattle, disappeared in Europe in 1627. In central Asia, the tarpan, ancestor of the domestic horse, became extinct in the mid-1800's. Extinctions continue today, and obscure species like the noonday snail as well as spectacular ones like the whooping crane are endangered.

Wild species are necessary to ensure the continued productivity of our cultivated foods. Of an estimated 80,000 types of plants known to be edible, only about 150 are extensively cultivated. A mere three crops - corn, wheat, and rice - supply two-thirds of the world's total grain harvest. The potato blight in Ireland during the 1840s led to the starvation of two million people and prompted mass emigration to the United States. Eventually, the potato was cross-bred with several of its wild, disease-resistant relatives, producing the many reliable varieties in use today.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service confiscates endangered species products.

Biological diversity is thus a form of insurance. If cultivated varieties of food fail due to disease or global changes, we can look for genetic infusions from the natural world. National parks and other preserves help ensure that vital wild resources and their genetic information will continue to exist.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service releases tagged striped bass in Apalachicola River, Florida.