

CREATING A 21ST CENTURY YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS



President-elect Obama has a bold vision for youth programs across America, which I share. I created the Youth in Natural Resources program to educate...young people about Colorado's natural resources. I saw firsthand what a difference it made in their lives.

Senator Ken Salazar
January 15, 2009

The future success of resource conservation efforts and effective stewardship of public lands and resources is reliant on an engaged public that values nature. Informed citizens and stewards are developed and nurtured over time. According to Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, "Studies have shown that most conservation leaders credit their commitment to the environment to two sources: many hours spent outdoors, when they were children...and an adult who taught respect for nature." The initial childhood wonder about the natural world can be sustained through hands-on experiences during the school-age years and enriched through long-term engagement and involvement in natural resource programs.

Hunting and fishing have long played an important role in our Nation's development and served as the roots of today's conservation movement. Today, hunting and fishing groups help guide and influence our conservation policies. In his campaign for President, Barack Obama committed to support America's hunting and fishing traditions, including providing State fish and game agencies with additional resources and encouragement to reach out and educate young men and women about hunting and fishing opportunities, hunter safety, and the basic principles of fish and wildlife management.

The Department's 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps initiative makes a commitment to energized youth involvement. The 2010 budget recognizes the importance of youth to the future of natural resource conservation and the importance of nature to youth and their well-being. Interior's efforts seek to engage, educate, and develop new generations of Americans with an ethic for conservation and resource stew-

ardship. The 2010 budget recognizes that there is an expanding gap in knowledge, engagement, and appreciation for nature and seeks an increase of \$50.0 million to expand public engagement, particularly youth and underrepresented groups, in the management of the Nation's resources and to prepare young people for careers in conservation.

21ST CENTURY YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS (dollars in millions)

Initiative	2009	2010	Change
Educating Young Hunters and Anglers	0	30.0	+30.0
Youth and Careers in Nature	20.0	40.0	+20.0
Total	20.0	70.0	+50.0

Overview — The Department's 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps initiative, with increases totaling \$50.0 million, will strengthen existing programs and create new ways to engage youth in nature to develop an environmental awareness and respect for resources. The initiative will do more than simply build upon existing youth education programs in BLM, USGS, FWS, and NPS. Interior bureaus will implement new, creative ways to energize youth and instill a life-long commitment to protect, preserve and enjoy our natural environment and cultural treasures. The initiative will build on bureau strengths in youth programs and introduces new ways to significantly expand upon their successes through two components—educating young hunters and anglers and encouraging youth to seek careers in nature through environmental education.

21ST CENTURY YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS

The Interior Department's 2010 budget includes \$70.0 million for youth programs. This includes a \$50.0 million increase for the 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps initiative and \$20.0 million in existing base programs. Interior's bureaus have a long history of engaging youth through a diverse set of programs.

Environmental Education involves students and teachers and provides outdoor laboratories that support school curricula. Parks, refuges and Interior programs throughout the Nation offer opportunities for environmental education.

Recreation programs, such as hiking, fishing, wildlife observation, and hunting, offer outstanding opportunities for youth to enjoy the natural world and build stronger relationships with their families, peers, and communities. Parks, refuges, and other public lands provide recreational opportunities throughout the year. The Department's recreation programs fund about \$1.7 billion annually through visitor services, hunting and fishing programs, and access to public lands. There are 317 national wildlife refuges that are open to hunting and many that are open to fishing. In 2010, the Land and Water Conservation Fund State Grants program will provide \$40.0 million in grants to States to address outdoor recreation needs.

Youth Conservation Corps provide opportunities for young adults from diverse backgrounds to work on conservation projects such as maintenance and construction, habitat management, and visitor services. Enrollees learn about potential career opportunities and are offered guidance and training. Working collaboratively with partners, the Department provides almost \$7.0 million in 2009 to promote the effective engagement of youth through these types of programs.

Volunteer and Community Service Programs involve tens of thousands of Americans each year in parks, refuges, and other public lands. Interior volunteers work with school and youth groups and support organizations, such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Volunteers often serve as important role models and mentors for our Nation's youth. Over 240,000 volunteers contributed eight million hours of their time to Interior programs at a value of \$150 million.

The **Student Career Experience Program** was established to recruit high quality employees into Federal service, support equal employment opportunity objectives, provide exposure to public service, and promote education. This program includes positions in all occupational groups, professional, administrative, technical, clerical, and wage grade, within the Department of the Interior bureaus.

The **Student Temporary Employment Program** is designed to introduce talented students to the advantages and challenges of working for the Federal government, combining academic study with on-the-job work experience in parks, refuges, and other public lands.



EDUCATING YOUNG HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

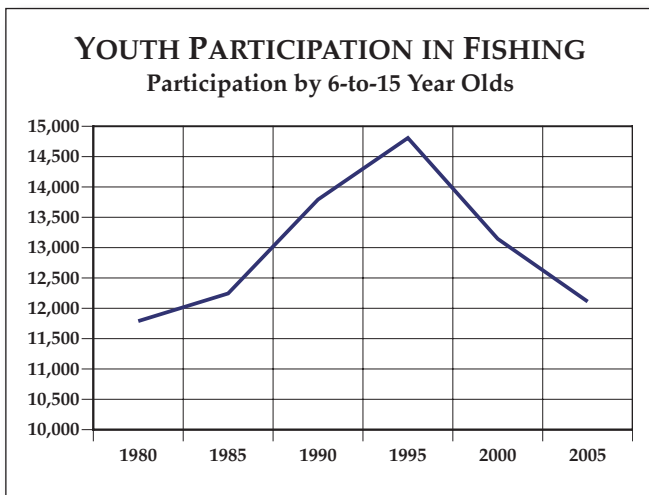
Hunting and fishing have helped forge conservation values for years. This has led to a strong environmental ethic today. A number of changes, however, threaten our Nation's hunting and fishing legacy. With Americans' move to urban areas, loss of small family farms, and more indoor recreational pursuits, many of the Nation's youth have lost touch with traditional outdoor recreational activities. There is a widening gap in knowledge about natural resources including the role of hunting and fishing in resource management and the importance of these activities in sustaining natural populations and keeping them in check. This knowledge gap poses

a serious threat to the future of natural resource conservation. The 2006 FWS Fishing and Hunting Survey documents reduced recruitment of youth into fishing experiences since 1995 and an overall reduction in anglers since 1980.

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Grants — The 2010 budget includes an increase of \$30.0 million to help set the stage for the next wave of hunters, anglers, wildlife, and other natural resource managers. The request includes \$28.0 million for a new discretionary Federal Aid in Wildlife grants program to help States, Territories, and Tribes establish new creative programs to educate and energize young hunters and anglers. Special emphasis will be placed on rapidly growing under-represented groups.

Included within the \$28.0 million request is \$2.8 million targeted specifically for Tribes. Funding will be administered as a grant program and will be available to tribal governments, representing organizations, or entities specifically identified by Tribes as qualifying organizations capable of delivering a youth hunter and angler education project.

Experts in environmental education underscore the importance of youth interaction with healthy, diverse natural environments. Childhood and young adult experiences with the natural world stay with them in a way that shapes their involvement and awareness of the natural environment. In America's increasingly urbanized, electronically based society, fewer youth are exposed to traditional outdoor recreation pursuits, diminishing public support and engagement in fish and wildlife related activities.





National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Partnerships — Congress created the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to foster private sector-government partnerships for the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, and plant resources of the United States. The budget provides an increase of \$1.0 million for the Foundation to forge public-private partnerships to help get the Nation's youth excited again about going outdoors, hunting, fishing, and just being in nature. The Foundation will seek matching funds for Federal grants through partnerships with corporations who participate in the commerce of recreational goods and services. By reaching out to private partners, the Foundation and FWS will be able to engage a broader audience and introduce these activities to youth who have never been exposed to hunting and angling. Historically, the Foundation has leveraged Federal funds with non-Federal matching contributions at a 2:1 or greater ratio.



National Conservation Training Center Capacity Building — The budget provides an increase of \$1.0 million for NCTC to develop the capacity of Federal, State, and tribal agencies. The NCTC will coordinate the hunters and anglers program and provide workshops and training to communicate

new and creative methods to increase interest and participation among young men and women in hunting, fishing, and wildlife management.

YOUTH AND CAREERS IN NATURE

Interior manages hundreds of millions of acres of public land, within the national park system, the national wildlife refuge system, and BLM public lands. These lands are astounding in their natural beauty and cultural significance. The Department also oversees significant science and research programs such as those conducted by USGS. Continued advancement in science and research programs are important to ensure the Nation's lands are managed and preserved for future generations.

Attendance and participation in parks programs indicate a reduced engagement of the public in nature and natural programs. Reduced engagement is most acute in the younger generations—the most important population component relative to the protection and conservation of natural resources. Studies show that vast numbers of children spend much of their lives in windowless rooms playing video games or watching television, with little contact, understanding or appreciation of the natural world. A large body of evidence now exists that attributes improved health, particularly in youth, to nature and exposure to the natural environment. There is also a linkage between environmental awareness and environmentally responsible behavior. A body of research exists that suggests that childhood experiences with nature are associated with increased environmentalism.

In the past, young people would aspire to careers in public service, working as park rangers, biologists, and recreation managers. Today, the appeal



to work in natural resource jobs must compete with new vocational interests and careers that reflect our changing society. The Department must be proactive in its efforts to ensure that talented and capable young people are interested in entering public service as natural resource professionals.

The Department's 2010 budget initiative identifies a three-pronged approach to:

- Engage youth in public service.
- Enhance science-based programs offered through schools and community partners.
- Improve curricula of national environmental education programs.

The 2010 budget request includes a total increase of \$20.0 million to expand Interior programs that engage youth in outdoor activities and encourage them to seek careers in nature. The request includes increases of \$8.0 million to expand existing FWS education programs and other opportunities for youth participation in nature; \$5.0 million for NPS to increase youth internship programs; \$5.0 million for BLM to expand programs for children and families, school-age youth, high school and college-age youth, and also to recruit and retain youth in natural resource professions; and \$2.0 million for USGS youth internships, programs and training.



Fish and Wildlife Service — The 2010 budget request includes an increase of \$8.0 million for the 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps initiative coordination, capacity building, and development of a career awareness curriculum through the National Conservation Training Center. In concert with NCTC activities, FWS will expand youth education programs conducted in the national wildlife refuge system, national fish hatchery system, and introduce

YOUTH AND CAREERS IN NATURE
(dollars in millions)

Bureau	2009	2010	Change
BLM	2.6	7.6	+5.0
USGS	2.3	4.3	+2.0
FWS	4.7	12.7	+8.0
NPS	10.4	15.4	+5.0
Total	20.0	40.0	+20.0

youth programs under the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds.

National Conservation Training Center — The NCTC will coordinate training and program support activities with all Interior bureaus to provide the skills, best practices, and program resources needed to engage and mentor young people. With an increase of \$4.2 million, NCTC will hold classroom training, workshops, and “community of practice” sessions to bring the best practices to bureau professionals to engage the 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps. The initiative will employ new media and social networking tools for effective communication with today's young people.

Coordination and Collaboration — An Interior Youth and Careers in Nature Council, to be facilitated by the NCTC, will coordinate and collaborate on programs, resources, and information. The NCTC will develop cutting-edge, electronic collaboration tools to share resources, target specific audiences, network, and facilitate communication. This will better enable participants to share success stories, learn from best practices, and develop new tools to attract youth to careers in the natural resource community. The NCTC will also develop and conduct a comprehensive stakeholder needs assessment, improve program alignment, and conduct national strategic planning workshops.

Capacity Building — To build capacity and reach the largest number of young people, NCTC will provide leadership in curricula development and identification of best practices and provide technical assistance for youth programs throughout the Interior Department. The NCTC will focus on building the Department's internal capability through professional development opportunities for employees and technical assistance and consultation for participating bureaus.

The NCTC will also develop and deliver new youth programs that immerse students in nature-based careers. A new program, the Youth Conservation Career Institute program, will target college students. It will offer a three-week introduction to conservation careers in the Department of the Interior followed by a residential internship at an Interior facility such as a national wildlife refuge, national park, or public lands managed by the BLM. Following completion, graduates will be recruited for Federal employment programs, such as the Student Career Experience program, or the Student Temporary Employment program. A Department-wide youth mentoring program will be initiated to assist field personnel to identify and support young people interested in natural resource careers. This will be accomplished through the use of a collaborative, web-based system that links students and their natural resource professional mentors. The NCTC will also provide program support and share newly developed training modules and curricula with other bureau training centers to help them build their capacity and increase student participation. Finally, the NCTC will develop evaluation criteria and processes to ensure that bureau programs are effective and valuable.

Career Awareness — Critical to the success of the 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps initiative is ensuring that students interested in natural resource careers gain the necessary knowledge and skills to qualify for Interior positions. The NCTC will work with learning institutions at elementary, middle and high schools, and at the college level to meet this goal. Working in close coordination with workforce planning programs in the bureaus, NCTC will engage colleges and universities offering natural resource



related degrees to ensure alignment between their curricula and Federal job requirements.

The NCTC will also initiate a program targeting young individuals with the greatest potential for possible employment with the Department. This work will step beyond the traditional “job fair” model to a more targeted approach, working directly with university biology, wildlife management, and environmental studies departments. The NCTC will work with partner organizations to:

- Establish quarterly electronic field trip programs for schools to highlight careers and encourage participation in outdoor activities, including “virtual” career days. These programs will be available to all schools on tribal lands through the National Indian Programs Training Center's 188 satellite downlinks, and through BLM, USGS, FWS, and NPS websites.
- Conduct summer career awareness institutes for teachers from all 50 States to provide a foundation in natural resource concepts and associated careers, with plans to integrate into year round curricula. To ensure maximum participation, initiative funding will allow NCTC to offer scholarships and grants to participants, and to work with institutions to obtain college credit for the training.
- Design and develop “grab and go” kits for Interior employees to use with students during career days at schools. Materials will be available for use on-line, with interactive activities for youth.
- Create a formalized partnership with a national student work/internship conservation program to match potential interns and summer employees with appropriate positions in the bureaus.
- Coordinate regularly with college administrators to guide curricula development, discuss course offerings, and identify high achieving students interested in careers with Interior.

National Wildlife Refuge System — Wildlife refuges offer multiple opportunities to connect children and youth to nature. Hundreds of national wildlife refuges offer a variety of employment, education,

and recreation opportunities to connect youth with the outdoors. These connections foster understanding and appreciation of America's natural resources and instill a conservation ethic. Wildlife refuges also provide opportunities to educate youth about career opportunities and promote public service. The budget includes \$2.0 million for the refuge system to build upon existing programs to offer public service opportunities, support science-based education and outdoor learning laboratories, and engage young Americans in wildlife-dependent recreation such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and photography. These programs will be managed through mentoring and partnerships with friends organizations, volunteers, educational institutions, and local conservation organizations.

National Fish Hatchery System — The Fisheries program has long been engaged in community level, recreationally oriented activities that provide hands-



on learning experiences that foster an early appreciation for nature. Through the FWS nationwide network of facilities, the Fisheries program reaches over 30,000 youth annually with a variety of outdoor events from fishing derbies to celebrating Earth Day and National Hunting and Fishing Day. Student temporary employment programs, tribal youth conservation corps projects, and the biologist-in-training programs complement these early learning experiences to interest youth in careers in conservation and natural resources management.

The National Fish Hatchery System Volunteer Act of 2006 elevated the Fisheries program's status as a focal point for aquatic conservation education. Under authority of the Act, FWS has undertaken

two outdoor classroom pilot projects at national fish hatcheries to demonstrate the capability of these facilities to enhance outdoor education, foster stewardship, and increase understanding of the importance of natural resource work. These projects involve local schools, fisheries friends groups, and other volunteers, and have leveraged contributed funds and services. The 2010 budget includes an increase of \$1.3 million to expand these projects to approximately 14 other fisheries facilities within two years, with particular emphasis at facilities located on or near tribal lands and economically depressed and underserved communities.

Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds — The Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds is a unique, collaborative effort between FWS and participating U.S. cities, bringing together private citizens, Federal, State, and municipal agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Launched in 1999, this program combines Federal grants with matching funds or in-kind services to create partnerships promoting bird conservation. An increase of \$250,000 will promote outdoor bird-related experiences, foster environmental education with a focus on birds, and build natural resource career development opportunities. It will increase awareness of the value of migratory birds and their habitats, especially for their intrinsic, ecological, recreational, and economic significance. There are currently nine cities in the program. Additional funding will support three new cities and increase funding to successful established programs.

Junior Duck Stamp Program — The Junior Duck Stamp program has been in existence for sixteen years. It provides an art and science based environmental education curriculum to teach wildlife conserva-

**CITIES WITH
URBAN CONSERVATION TREATIES
FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS**

- New Orleans, Louisiana
- Chicago, Illinois
- Houston, Texas
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Portland, Oregon
- St. Louis, Missouri
- Nashville, Tennessee
- Anchorage, Alaska
- New York City, New York

tion to American schoolchildren. This kind of environmental education curricula has proven to be an effective way to promote wildlife stewardship, and can easily incorporate a component to promote careers in nature. With dedicated new funding of \$250,000 in 2010, the Junior Duck Stamp program will modernize its long-standing curriculum developed in 1991 and incorporate a new section specifically focused on careers in nature.

National Park Service — With longstanding traditions of preserving and protecting national treasures, the National Park Service works to ensure that young Americans age five to 24 from different economic, ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds gain access to the national parks. The NPS invests more than \$10.4 million each year in programs that directly expand recreational opportunities for America's children and families and expand the use of volunteers through groups such as the Youth Conservation Corps and Student Conservation Association. These programs foster a strong relationship between youth and the natural and cultural resources managed by NPS. Participating youth learn valuable natural and cultural resource management skills and develop a greater appreciation of American history and our Nation's most renowned ecosystems.

The 2010 budget includes an increase of \$5.0 million for the NPS Youth Internship program, which introduces high school and college-aged youth to career opportunities through internships related to occupations in natural and cultural resource management. The program is open to all interested students, but parks will be encouraged to recruit candidates for this program through partnerships with non-profit institutions serving minority and economically disadvantaged youth.

This program is designed to reach students early in their career decisionmaking process. These students will be involved in intellectually challenging



assignments that allow them to work side-by-side with park staff on projects in resource protection, research, and the visitor experience at NPS sites. Students will also learn about multiple career opportunities throughout the national park system. Each student employee will participate in a mentoring program that will help with career and life skills development.

The NPS will coordinate with NCTC on programs, resources, and information. Parks will utilize the 17 NPS National Research Learning Centers, which give young people opportunities to collaborate with researchers, gain access to research data, and understand science based management decisions.

Internships will be offered through cooperative agreements with the Student Conservation Association, Youth Conservation Corps, and Public Land Corps. The cooperative agreements encompass a wide array of missions and responsibilities. Through these programs, NPS provides opportunities to develop a life-long commitment to support national parks and protect the natural environment and America's cultural heritage. Through efforts of non-profit partners such as the Student Conservation Association, diversity is maintained by reaching underrepresented populations and preparing them for possible NPS careers. At present, there are over 25 youth programs operating throughout the national park system.

Bureau of Land Management — The BLM has a long history of involving the public in all facets of its resource planning and decisionmaking. The BLM youth and young adult-oriented programs build on the initial childhood wonder about the natural world and sustain that interest through hands-on experiences during the school-age and college years to lead to long-term engagement and stewardship. The 2010 budget includes an additional \$5.0 million for BLM to support education, interpretation, and internship programs that offer young people and families opportunities to actively learn and participate in outdoor conservation activities. The programs will target underserved populations who might not ordinarily have a chance to experience the outdoors or consider a career in natural resources. The BLM will collaborate with NCTC on programs, resources and information to expand its portfolio of programs that focus on youth engagement.

The funding increase will expand and enhance programs for children and families at BLM visitor and interpretative centers that introduce young people



to the natural and cultural resources; recreational programs that engage children in outdoor experiences; outdoor educational programs developed in partnership with local schools; and special programs for underserved youth that strengthen youth engagement in nature. Many programs operate with the support of partnerships. These programs help America's young people establish life-long connections that benefit Interior and the Nation. As BLM better engages the next generation of land stewards, it improves the overall health of the Nation's families, children, and communities. The BLM youth programs are particularly well placed to reconnect youth to the outdoors as much of its public lands are backyards to many rapidly growing urban communities such as Denver, Phoenix, and Las Vegas.

The BLM will work through youth corps partnerships to offer high school and college age youth internships that introduce students to natural resource management and provide real-world conservation-related experiences and skills, such as restoring and rehabilitating natural, cultural, and recreational resources on public lands. Participants will learn while serving, and can earn stipends as well as college credits. For those interested in pursuing careers with natural resource management agencies, the Student Career Experience Program provides the gateway into Federal service. This program introduces students to the BLM work experience. Many students in SCEP have the opportunity to assist with on the ground conservation activities and work in various fields such as botany, rangeland management, and wildlife biology performing tasks such as inventorying, monitoring, and trail maintenance.

U. S. Geological Survey — The 2010 budget includes an increase of \$2.0 million for USGS to expand educa-

tion, training, workshop opportunities, and in-depth coursework and internships for high school and college students. The youth programs supported by USGS are carried out in cooperation with well-established university-based programs designed to introduce under-represented youth to earth science as an education and career option.

The USGS programs bring groups of junior high and high school students together during the summer to travel to locations throughout the U.S. to explore science topics such as climate change, natural hazards, energy, oceans, ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resource use and conservation. These programs are frequently conducted on public lands and in cooperation with other Interior bureaus to leverage access to expertise and provide educational experiences cost-effectively.

The USGS will establish an under-represented student internships and youth program to enhance career opportunities for under-represented populations and increase awareness and affinity for science careers for America's youth. The program will increase the total number of internships and fellowships supported or facilitated by the USGS educational program.

In addition, USGS will build on existing programs offering scientific and technical training for Native Americans and Alaska Natives. The program engages tribal youth in natural resource studies through such activities as cooperative research and monitoring projects; geographic information systems and remote sensing training; technical assistance for disaster and emergency planning; and scientific and technical workshops on topics relevant to Native American and Alaska Native interests. Tribal participation is at each Tribe's discretion. Tribes benefit from participation by obtaining information which can be applied to tribal resource management practices that can further lead to economic opportunities for the Tribe and its members.

